

The Law on Subsidies & Countervailing Measures

Semester: Spring semester- FS 2025

Root Number: 446636

ECTS: 3

Lecturer: Luca Rubini & James Flett

Dates: 3 - 6 February 2025 (Take home assessment on 7 February 2025)

Room: Silva Casa Auditorium, World Trade Institute, Hallerstrasse 6, Bern

Audience:

- Government officials; Embassy staff; people working for international organizations; NGOs, industry and in legal practice, or people who have an interest in trade remedy issues
- Master of Advanced Studies of International Law and Economics (MILE) Students- World Trade Institute / Faculty of Law, Unibe
- Joint LL.M. / Diploma of Advanced Studies Trade and Investment Law (TRAIL+) Students - World Trade Institute / Faculty of Law, Unibe
- Certificate of Advanced Studies / Diploma of Advanced Studies in International Law and Economics (CAS ILE & DAS ILE) Students - World Trade Institute, Unibe
- Students from different universities across Switzerland

Course Description

This course will examine the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, their relationship with other WTO agreements, and the manner in which they have been interpreted and applied, particularly by the Appellate Body.

The course will be divided into seven main parts: (i) introduction to the design and architecture of the SCM Agreement, including the constituent elements of a subsidy and the different types of subsidy; (ii) the constituent elements of a subsidy (financial contribution, benefit, specificity); (iii) prohibited subsidies (export contingent subsidies and import substitution subsidies); (iv) actionable subsidies (a subsidy as a genuine and substantial cause of adverse effects to trading partners (material injury, price, and volume effects); (v) countervailing duties; (vi) the relationship between the SCM Agreement and other WTO agreements (including the GATT 1994 and the Anti-Dumping Agreement); and (vii) possible reforms of WTO subsidies law. Legal and practical questions will be raised

during the course, and where appropriate examples of dispute settlement cases will be discussed.

Lecturers

Luca Rubini

Luca Rubini is a Senior Research Fellow in International Law at the Law Department of the University of Turin, Italy. Previously, he held positions at the Law Schools of the University of Birmingham (where he was a Reader in International Economic Law) and Leicester. He is a visiting professor at the World Trade Institute (Switzerland) and the Freie Universität Berlin and a visiting fellow at the Centre of European Law of King's College London. In the past, he served as legal secretary in the cabinet of Advocate General Jacobs at the European Court of Justice. Luca has a special interest in the governance and regulation of State intervention in the market at both the international and European levels. He has published extensively on these (and other) topics. His 2010 monograph, *The Definition of Subsidy and State Aid: WTO Law and EC Law in Comparative Perspective* (OUP), was recently translated into Chinese (more details on his publications can be found [here](#)). Luca has law degrees from the Catholic University in Milan (*laurea in giurisprudenza*) and King's College London (MA in Advanced European Legal Studies; PhD).

James Flett

James Flett was, until recently, Deputy to the Director of the Trade Policy and WTO Team of the European Commission Legal Service. He has more than thirty years of experience practicing international law, particularly international trade law. He has represented the European Commission before the European Court of Justice in more than 100 cases and the European Union before the WTO in more than 200 proceedings. Mr. Flett graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and has a Master's degree in European law from the College of Europe, Bruges. He is a qualified solicitor. Before joining the Commission Legal Service in 1995, when the WTO was founded, Mr. Flett spent several years working for two international law firms in London and Brussels. He is a frequent speaker at conferences and universities and has published widely on international trade law. He teaches WTO Law at Leuven University and WTO Dispute Settlement Law at the Academy of International Economic Law and Policy (Athens) (AIELPO).

Learning Objectives

- Students are expected to read, study and assimilate the basics: the relevant provisions of the GATT 1994 and the SCM Agreement and the content of *The Law and Policy of the World Trade Organization, Text, Cases and Materials, Fifth Edition*, Peter Van den Bossche and Werner Zdouc, Chapter 12, Subsidies, preferably before the course begins, and to demonstrate this in response to direct questions from the lecturers during class
- To acquire an overview of the subject, an awareness of the design and architecture of the relevant legal provisions and case law, and an awareness of the issues, so that they know where to look for answers to specific problems.
- To focus on specific conceptual problems that have arisen, and how they have been resolved in practice in the case law. Thus, to develop an understanding of and

facility with the principles and analytical tools and methods that are habitually used in this field: a skillset that they can then use themselves to deal with problems yet to be resolved.

- To develop the capacity for independent critical thinking about past case law, that is, the ability to agree or disagree with how the Appellate Body has resolved particular issues, and support their point of view with well-structured and logical analysis.
- To imagine how WTO subsidies law may develop in the future, both on the basis of the existing agreements, and on the basis of possible legislative changes, and to be able to argue in favour or against particular propositions based on a well-structured and logical analysis.

Exams and Grades

- Students' knowledge will be assessed through an open-book, take-home exam that needs to be completed individually. The exam will consist of two case studies.
- The take-home assignment will be made available on Thursday, 6 February 2025, after class and must be submitted before Friday, 7 February 2025, at 17:00 to masters.wti@unibe.ch
- One case study from Luca Rubini, carries 50% weight in the final course grade
- One case study from James Flett, carries 50% weight in the final course grade

Course Overview

Date	Day	Time	Lecturer/s	Topic
3 Feb	Monday	9:00-12:00 13:00 15:00	Luca Rubini	Introduction to subsidies and their control; definition: action of the government
4 Feb.	Tuesday	9:00 - 12:00	Luca Rubini	Definition: benefit analysis; specificity
4 Feb.	Tuesday	13:00 - 15:00	Luca Rubini	Prohibited subsidies
5 Feb.	Wednesday	9:00 - 12:00	James Flett	Actionable subsidies
5 Feb.	Wednesday	13:00 - 15:00	James Flett	Actionable subsidies
6 Feb.	Thursday	9:00 - 12:00	James Flett	Countervailing duties - green subsidies
6 Feb.	Thursday	13:00 - 15:00	James Flett	SCM and other agreements Reform of WTO subsidies law
7 Feb.	Friday	17:00		Take-home assessment

MONDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2025**Lecturer: Luca Rubini****Topics**Morning

- Subsidies and their control: law and economics
- The GATT/WTO disciplines on subsidies: an overview
- The legal and policy issue of the definition
- Art 1 of the WTO ASCM
- Financial contribution and income or price support

Afternoon

- Attribution, government, public and private bodies
- Public bodies and the SOE issue
- Transnational subsidies

Readings

Rubini, *The definition of subsidy and State aid* (2009, Oxford University Press), Chapter 2

Rubini. *State Aid and International Trade Law* in: (eds.): Hancher L, Piernaz-Lopez, JJ, *Research Handbook on European State Aid Law. Research Handbook in European Law*, Cheltenham, UK/Northampton (2021, MA: Edward Elgar), 103-133

Mavroidis, *Trade in Goods* (Oxford University Press, 2012) chapters 8 and 11 (part 2 on the 'Agreement on Agriculture')

Browse through the following panel reports, concentrating on the Art 1 SCM issues and findings:

- Panel Report, *US – Measures Treating Export Restraints as Subsidies* (DS 194)
- Various Panel and Appellate Body Reports in *US – Tax Treatment for “Foreign Sales Corporations”* (DS 108) and *US – Tax Treatment for “Foreign Sales Corporations”*, Article 21.5 (DS 108), especially the section on the interpretation of the 'otherwise due' language
- Appellate Body Report, *US – Definitive Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Measures on Certain Products from China* (DS379), especially paras. 276-356 (concept of 'public body')
- Panel Report, *China – GOES* (DS414) especially the section on the interpretation of the 'price support' terminology
- Panel, *US – Large Civil Aircraft* (DS353) especially paras. 7.429-7.480 (on the meaning of 'general infrastructure')
- Go through the request for consultation in [EU – CVD and AD on Stainless Steel Products from Indonesia \(DS616\)](#) and any available Panel report circulated by the time of class (concentrate on subsidy issues)

Optional readings

Cartland, M, G Depayre and J Woznowski (2012), "Is Something Going Wrong in the WTO Dispute Settlement?", *Journal of World Trade* 46(5): 979

Rubini, "Transcending territoriality: Expanding EU State aid control through consensus and coercion" in [Leigh Hancher, Juan-Jorge Piernaz-Lopez, Luca Rubini \(eds.\)](#) *The Future of EU State Aid Law – Consolidation and Expansion* (2023, Madrid: EU Law Live Press) 119-134

Sykes, 'The Questionable Case for Subsidies Regulation: A Comparative Perspective' (2010) *Journal of Legal Analysis*, pages 473-523

Wu, "The 'China, Inc.' Challenge to Global Trade Governance" (2016) *Harvard International Law Journal* 57: 1001-1063.

TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2025**Lecturer: Luca Rubini****Topics**Morning

- The benefit and its issues
- Case-study: *Canada – Renewable Energy/FIT*
- Specificity (de jure; de facto; objective requirements; regional specificity)

Afternoon

- Introduction to the categories of subsidies: 'prohibited', 'actionable' and 'non-actionable' subsidies
- Prohibited subsidies: the contingency test
- Remedies

Reading

Rubini. State Aid and International Trade Law in: (eds.): Hancher L, Piernaz-Lopez, JJ, Research Handbook on European State Aid Law. Research Handbook in European Law, Cheltenham, UK/Northampton (2021, MA: Edward Elgar),103-133

Mavroidis, *Trade in Goods* (Oxford University Press, 2012) Chapter 8

Browse through the following panel reports, concentrating on the Art 1 SCM issues and findings:

- Appellate Body Report, *Canada – Measures Affecting the Export of Civilian Aircraft* (DS 70), especially paras. 157-158 (on the 'benefit'); read also paras. with examples of the application of the principle
- Appellate Body Report, *Canada – Measures Affecting the Renewable Energy Generation Sector / Measures Relating to the Feed-In Tariff Program* (DS 412 and 426)
- Panel Report, *US – Cotton* (DS267), especially paras. 7.1136-7.1155 (on 'specificity')
- Panel Report, *US – Softwood Lumber IV* (DS257), especially paras. 7.114-7.125 (idem)
- Panel Report, *US – Aircraft* (DS353) especially paras. 7.429-7.480 (on the meaning of 'general infrastructure')

- Appellate Body Report, *EC and certain Member States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft* (DS 316), especially paras 1036-1056 (on the notion of ‘export contingency’)
- Appellate Body Report, *US – Conditional Tax Incentives for Large Civil Aircraft* (DS 487) (on contingency test)
- Appellate Body Report, *EC and certain Member States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft*, Article 21.5 (DS 316) (on contingency test)
- Panel Report, *Australia – Leather (Article 21.5 of the DSU)* (DS126)
- Panel Report, *US – Olive Oil from Spain*, paras. 7.19-7.33 (specificity)
- Go through the request for consultation in [US – Certain Tax Credits under IRA \(DS623\)](#) (subsidy issues)

Optional reading

Cosbey and Mavroidis, ‘A Turquoise Mess: Green Subsidies, Blue Industrial Policy and Renewable Energy: The Case for Redrafting the Subsidies Agreement of the WTO; (2014) *Journal of International Economic Law* 11-47

Crivelli and Rubini, ‘Flying High in a Plane’ Appellate Body Report, *European Communities and Certain Member States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft* (WT/DS316/AB/RW), RSC Working Paper, 2020

Grane, ‘Remedies Under WTO Law’ (2001) *Journal of International Economic Law* 755-772

“Joint Statement on Trilateral Meeting of the Trade Ministers of the United States, Japan, and the European Union”, 31 May 2018

Rubini, “The Age of Innocence. The evolution of the case-law of the WTO dispute settlement. Subsidies as case-study”, in M Elsig, B Hoekman, and J Pauwelyn (eds) *Assessing the World Trade Organization. Fit for Purpose?*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 276-317.

Rubini, “The never-ending story. The puzzle of subsidies” in Meredith Crowley (ed) *Trade war. The Clash of Economic Systems Endangering Global Prosperity* (CEPR, London, 2019), 85-90

Rubini, ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. Lessons on Legal Methodology from the Recent WTO Litigation on Renewable Energy Subsidies’ (2014) *Journal of World Trade*, 895-938

Rubini, ‘The Wide and the Narrow Gate. Benchmarking in the SCM Agreement after the *Canada – Renewable Energy/FIT Ruling*’ (2015) *World Trade Review*, 211-237

WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2025**Lecturer: James Flett****Topics**

1. Actionable subsidies

1.1 Subsidies causing injury

1.1.1 Like product

1.1.2 Domestic industry

1.1.3 Injury

1.1.4 Causation

1.2 Subsidies causing nullification or impairment

1.3 Subsidies causing serious prejudice

1.3.1 The relevant geographic market

1.3.2 The relevant product market

1.3.3 The reference period

1.3.4 Price undercutting, depression, and suppression

1.3.5 Displacement or impedance of imports or exports

1.3.6 Lost sales

1.3.7 Causation and non-attribution

1.3.8 Non-subsidized like product

1.3.9 Threat of serious prejudice

1.4 Other matters

1.4.1 Temporal application of Article 5 of the SCM Agreement

1.4.2 Pass-through of subsidies

1.4.3 Aggregation and Cumulation

1.4.4 Annex V of the SCM Agreement

Compulsory Reading Material

SCM Agreement, particularly Articles 5 and 6.

The Law and Policy of the World Trade Organization, Text, Cases and Materials, Fifth Edition, Peter Van den Bossche and Werner Zdouc, Chapter 12, Subsidies. The whole chapter.

Appellate Body Report, *European Communities and Certain Member States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft*, WT/DS316/AB/R:

Paras. 650-690 (temporal scope of Article 5 of the SCM Agreement) Paras.
698-715 (the life of a subsidy and intervening events)
Paras. 1105-1138 (serious prejudice, relevant product market) Paras.
1229-1241 (causation)

Appellate Body Report, *European Communities and Certain Member States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft (Recourse to Article 21.5 of the DSU by the United States)*, WT/DS316/AB/RW:

Paras. 5.351-5.383 (Article 7.8 of the SCM Agreement)
Paras. 5.419-5.455 (non-subsidised like product)

Appellate Body Report, *United States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft (Second Complaint)*, WT/DS353/AB/R:

Paras. 480-549 (procedures under Annex V of the SCM Agreement) Paras.
1275-1349 (collective assessment of subsidies and their effects)

Appellate Body Report, *United States – Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft (Second Complaint) (Recourse to Article 21.5 of the DSU by the European Union)*, WT/DS353/AB/RW:

Paras. 5.463-5.526 (analysis of the tied tax subsidies)

Optional Reading Material

WTO Analytical Index (to research case law pertaining to particular agreements and provisions related to subsidies):

https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/ai17_e/ai17_e.htm

For general research purposes:

www.tradelawguide.com

www.worldtradelaw.net

Dominic Coppens, *WTO Disciplines on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, Balancing Policy Space and Legal Constraints*, Cambridge University Press (2014) (as a general reference source).

Luca Rubini, *The Definition of Subsidy and State Aid*, Oxford University Press (2009) (as a source for reflections on some of the underlying concepts in subsidies law).

For further research, see the list of Further Readings at the end of Chapter 12 (Subsidies) of *The Law and Policy of the World Trade Organization, Text, Cases and Materials, Fifth Edition*, Peter Van den Bossche and Werner Zdouc, and the Bibliography at the end of *WTO Disciplines on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures*, Dominic Coppens.

THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2025**Lecturer: James Flett****Topics**

1. Countervailing duties
 - 1.1 Conditions for the imposition of countervailing duties
 - 1.2 Conduct of countervailing duty investigations
2. Relationship between the SCM Agreement and other covered agreements
 - 2.1 The GATT 1994
 - 2.2 The Agreement on Agriculture
 - 2.3 The Anti-Dumping Agreement
3. The problem of green subsidies
4. Possible reforms of the SCM Agreement

Compulsory Reading Material

SCM Agreement, particularly Part V (including Article 10) and Article 32.1. The GATT 1994, Articles III, VI, and XVI.

Agreement on Agriculture, Articles 1, 2, 6-10, 13 and 21. Anti-Dumping Agreement, Article 2.

The Law and Policy of the World Trade Organization, Text, Cases and Materials, Fifth Edition, Peter Van den Bossche and Werner Zdouc, Chapter 12, Subsidies. The whole chapter.

Appellate Body Report, *United States – Final Countervailing Duty Determination with Respect to Certain Softwood Lumber from Canada*, WT/DS257/AB/R, paras 82-120 (use by investigating authorities of an out-of-country benefit benchmark).

Appellate Body Report, *United States - Definitive Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duties on Certain Products from China*, WT/DS379/AB/R, paras. 541-545, 550-572, and 582-583 ("double remedies").

Bartels, Lorand. 'The Relationship between the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and the SCM Agreement: An Analysis of Hierarchy Rules in the WTO Legal System'. *Journal of World Trade* 50, no. 1 (2016): 7–20.

Optional Reading Material

See the previous list.

FRIDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2025

Take-home assessment due Friday, 7 February 2025 at 17:00