

Agricultural interests and Irish trade policy over the last half-century: a tale told without recourse to heroes.

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## Agricultural interests and Irish trade policy over the last half-century : a tale told without recourse to heroes

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Title: Agricultural interests and Irish trade policy over the last half-century : a tale told without recourse to heroes

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Authors: Barry, Frank

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Abstract: Irish accounts of the demise of protectionist thinking in the late 1950s and early 1960s emphasise the importance of the disastrous economic performance of the 1950s and the policy learning that it engendered. Other small peripheral European economies such as Finland and Portugal also abandoned protectionism at the same time however, despite much stronger economic performances over the decade. The present paper identifies the formation of EFTA as the common underlying factor, and traces how all the subsequent twists and turns in Irish trade policy can be understood as the playing out of dominant agricultural interests. Once Ireland joined the European Community, for example, it turned protectionist again. The analysis forces one to think more carefully about the role of leadership and ideas in economic policy-making.

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