

Expanding CER and ASEAN-Initial policy scan: economic rationale and creating wins for all

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As global trade becomes more contested and the prospects for new trade agreements narrow, small countries like New Zealand must extract greater value from existing arrangements. This presentation explores how New Zealand can deepen its economic integration with ASEAN and Australia by focusing on behind-the-border barriers—technical, non-technical, and institutional—and enhancing regulatory cooperation.

Drawing from NZIER's recent policy analysis, the session will outline the estimated GDP contributions from improved skilled labor mobility, trade flow increases, and cross-border investment facilitation. The emphasis is on realistic, implementable approaches: mutual recognition of professional qualifications, regulatory alignment in services and capital markets, and practical tools to reduce procedural trade frictions.

While the approach examines the potential economic gains for New Zealand, it also presents a framework for understanding how targeted regulatory cooperation can deliver strategic benefits in a time of rising protectionism. This work is intended to inform ongoing dialogue around trade policy adaptation, with a focus on New Zealand's options and agency in shaping regional outcomes.