tinual threat to the agreement price. Moreover, few, if any international commodity agreements include all producers, and the agreement price may simply represent an invitation to non-members to expand greatly their output and increase their share of the world market while, at the same time, benefiting from the relatively high agreement price.

International commodity agreements are, of course, strengthened by the inclusion of consuming countries that will agree to establish import quotas or assist the producing countries in policing their own export quotas. On the other hand, there are always some consuming countries that will refuse to join in an agreement. Moreover, the negotiation of an agreement which will satisfy the interests of both consuming and producing countries may involve serious conflicts and constitute sources of tension both in the negotiation of the agreement and its implementation.

There are many commodities which are produced both by the industrially advanced countries and by the less developed countries, but which are normally imported by the industrially advanced countries. These include agricultural commodities, such as grains and fibers, and minerals, such as lead and petroleum. Frequently, however, the industrially advanced countries adopt quotas or other restrictions on imports in order to provide protection for their domestic producers. There are also primary commodities such as cotton and wheat, which industrially advanced countries may be exporting in competition with the exports of less developed countries, and problems arise regarding export subsidies and other competitive practices. In these cases, special commodity agreements or informal arrangements may be desirable in order to eliminate conflicts over commercial policies and to assure growing markets for the products of the less developed countries.

3. Study groups and informal commodity arrangements

The problems of the type indicated in the previous paragraph are usually best dealt with, not by formal intergovernmental commodity agreements which seek to maintain prices through the establishment of export quotas or the use of buffer stocks, but rather by means of study groups and informal arangements and agreements of various kinds. There exist a number of committees and study groups which deal with particular commodities or commodity groups. There are also United Nations groups, such as the Commission on International Commodity Trade and the FAO Committee on commodity problems, which deal with a broad range of primary commodities traded in international markets. There exist study groups on lead and zinc, cocoa, citrus fruits, and copper; there is the International Cotton Advisory Committee, the International Olive Council, the International Rice Commission, the International Rubber Study Group, and the International Tea Committee, to name a few. These organs provide a ready forum in which problems of fluctuating prices and surpluses, commercial policy conflicts, and proposals for dealing with them can be discussed. Frequently informal or ad hoc accords are reached by these groups, but such agreements tend to be flexible and deal with short-term problems such as, for example, the application of temporary import quotas on particular commodities.