

Eco-innovation, firms' growth, and the mediating role of export activities

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This paper analyses the growth-enhancing effect of different types of innovative activities, i.e., standard-innovation and eco-innovation by focusing on the potential role of exports in mediating the innovation-growth nexus. The empirical study is carried out on a representative sample of Italian firms built by integrating data from the Italian CIS-Community Innovation Survey with the ASIA-FRAME database of the Italian National Statistical Office (ISTAT), which reports information on export values and employment dynamics. The econometric analysis applies Structural Equations Models (SEM) and a two-step counterfactual analysis. Results show that export activities, spurred by engagement in innovation efforts, represent a powerful transmission channel through which innovation displays its effect on firms' growth. Moreover, results highlight the existence of some heterogeneity in the capacity of different types of innovation activities, i.e., standard-innovation and eco-innovation to leverage the export channel to foster firms' growth. In particular, the empirical evidence has identified a stronger indirect export-mediated impact for Efficiency-improving (EFI) than for Pollution-reducing (PR) Eco-innovation.