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Rodríguez-Clare is a professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, director of the Trade Research Programme at the International Growth Centre, and a research associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research. He received his Ph.D. at Stanford University in 1993. He was Associate Professor of Business Economics at the University of Chicago before moving to Costa Rica to serve as Chairman of the Council of Presidential Advisors from 1998 to 2002. He was Visiting Professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 2002 and the M.I.T. Department of Economics in 2005, and Senior Research Economist at the Research Department of the Inter-American Development Bank from 2002 to 2005. In 2005 he became professor of economics at Pennsylvania State University, where he stayed until 2011, the year he joined the Berkeley faculty.