

MAKING REGIONAL INTEGRATION WORK

Company perspectives on non-tariff measures in Arab States



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IN ARAB STATES

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This report forms part of an ITC series of developing-country survey projects on non-tariff measures (NTMs), for which 25 reports have been issued to date. This is the first report to look at country surveys in a regional context. It analyses four business surveys conducted by ITC in Egypt, Morocco, the State of Palestine and Tunisia, giving governments a glimpse into what businesses perceive as their main challenges to trade, within and beyond the region, and offers insights into the major bottlenecks hampering international and regional trade in the Arab region, by sharing the perspectives of exporters and importers in the region. The surveys focus on NTMs that governments impose; procedures that make compliance difficult; and inefficiencies in the trade-related business environment.

Descriptors: **Arab States, Non-Tariff Measures, Regional Integration, Intraregional Trade, Market Surveys.**

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English

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FOREWORD

In today's global trade landscape, deeper regional integration is an important policy choice that governments can make to ensure the creation of markets for their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Arab region has made integration and better connection of its markets a priority, but the figures show that compared with other regions, intra-Arab trade remains low, despite a number of existing regional trade agreements.

This publication on intra-Arab trade seeks to provide greater information and transparency on the integration story in the region and to do this through the lens of the SMEs. It brings a new perspective to some of the underlying economic forces at work, and suggests that the move to enhanced integration is on an upward trajectory. By boosting the trade capacity of regional SMEs, and their opportunities to access markets, growth and job creation will follow. But there is a need to better identify and address the existing constraints they face.

ITC's enterprise-level analysis of four economies in the region provides insight into the practical day-to-day challenges these enterprises face. Addressing non-tariff measures (NTMs), and ensuring regional market regulation compliance, are just two of the areas that are examined in the publication.

The analysis, however, suggests that many of these barriers can be addressed locally, nationally and regionally. The key message is that market access begins at home, and that there is greater scope for governments to streamline processes, harmonize regulations in the region, and work with exporters to provide consistent, transparent and timely information.



The good news is that Arab leaders and institutions recognize the untapped opportunity for business and investment. They are taking action through regional dialogue, transparency and efficiency initiatives, and through ensuring that enabling policies are in place to ease the cost and time of doing business and of trading in the region.

This publication is the latest in ITC's series of publications that capture company perspectives on NTMs. Over the past five years, ITC has documented business experiences through its NTM Surveys and has interviewed over 15,000 exporters and importers in 30 developing countries.

We hope that this publication will serve as a foundation to facilitate trade, particularly for the SMEs in the region. ITC remains committed to supporting the Arab region in achieving regional trade impact for good.

Arancha González
ITC Executive Director

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	viii
CHAPTER 1: REGIONAL OVERVIEW	1
OVERLAPPING PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS	2
TARIFF PREFERENCES HAVE NOT TRANSLATED INTO REGIONAL INTEGRATION	2
NON-TARIFF MEASURES – PREVENTING TRADE AMONG ARAB STATES?.....	2
SURVEYS POINT TO INTRAREGIONAL TRADE OBSTACLES	2
CHAPTER 2: NTM SURVEY FINDINGS IN ARAB STATES	5
BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY	6
A SNAPSHOT OF NTM SURVEY FINDINGS.....	8
CHAPTER 3: PRODUCT QUALITY AND CONFORMITY	17
COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES WITH TECHNICAL REGULATIONS.....	18
PRODUCT TESTING AND CERTIFICATION	20
PRODUCT REGISTRATION AND IMPORT AUTHORIZATION.....	22
CHAPTER 4: RULES OF ORIGIN AND OTHER TRADE-RELATED MEASURES	25
RULES OF ORIGIN	26
OTHER TRADE-RELATED MEASURES	30
CHAPTER 5: CUSTOMS CLEARANCE AND BORDER CONTROLS	35
INFRASTRUCTURE	37
AVAILABILITY AND TRAINING OF OFFICIALS.....	37
PREDICTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY	37
COORDINATION BETWEEN AGENCIES.....	38
LENGTH AND COSTS OF CUSTOMS CLEARANCE.....	38
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	41
THE HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE ON NTMS.....	42
TRANSPARENCY – A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE	42
QUALITY AND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS	44
ADDRESSING TRADE-RELATED MEASURES.....	46
CUSTOMS CLEARANCE AND BORDER CONTROLS.....	49
ANNEXES: DATA SOURCES, REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING	53
THE ITC PUBLICATION SERIES ON NON-TARIFF MEASURES	54

TABLES

Table 1: NTM Surveys in Morocco, Egypt, State of Palestine and Tunisia	6
Table 2: Procedural obstacles affecting exports in agencies at home and in Arab States, by type and institution	13
Table 3: Technical NTM-related procedural obstacles reported by exporters, by type and institution	19
Table 4: Incidence of procedural obstacles related to non-technical NTMs reported by exporters, by type and institution	27

FIGURES

Figure 1: Trade agreements involving Arab States.....	3
Figure 2: Share of the surveyed economies in total Arab States' exports.....	7
Figure 3: Breakdown of burdensome NTM cases reported by exporters in Arab States.....	9
Figure 4: Burdensome NTM cases vs. export share	9
Figure 5: Agricultural exports: burdensome NTMs applied by partner countries.....	10
Figure 6: Manufacturing exports: burdensome NTMs applied by partner countries.....	11
Figure 7: Burdensome NTMs applied at home.....	11
Figure 8: Why exporters find NTMs a burden.....	12
Figure 9: Where exporters encounter procedural obstacles.....	12
Figure 10: Burdensome technical NTMs applied by Arab States	18
Figure 11: Burdensome non-technical NTMs applied by Arab States to exports.....	26
Figure 12: Burdensome inspection requirements applied by Arab States to exports from the surveyed economies as a share of all reported non-technical NTMs.....	36

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