



KEY STATISTICS AND TRENDS in Trade Policy **2020**



THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP





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United Nations publication issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

UNCTAD/DITC/TAB/2020/3

eISBN 978-92-1-005604-5

Print ISSN 2409-7713

Online ISSN 2707-7160

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NOTE

Key Statistics and Trends in Trade Policy is a yearly publication of the Trade Analysis Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD secretariat. The main purpose of this publication is to inform on the use and effects of a wide range of trade policies influencing international trade.

The series is part of a larger effort by UNCTAD to analyse trade-related issues of particular importance to developing countries in terms of their participation in the international trading system, as requested by the mandate of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. This study was prepared by Alessandro Nicita.

OVERVIEW

With the notable exception of the increase in bilateral tariffs between the United States and China, tariffs have remained substantially stable during the last few years with tariff protection remaining a critical factor only in certain sectors in a limited number of markets. On the other hand, the use of regulatory measures and other non-tariff measures remains widespread.

As of 2019, trade costs directly related to tariffs were at about 2 per cent for developed countries and at about 4 per cent for developing countries. Tariff restrictiveness remains substantial in many developing countries, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan African countries. Moreover, tariffs remain relatively high in some sectors where tariff peaks are present. Those sectors include some of key interest to low income countries such as agriculture, apparel, textiles and leather products. Tariffs also remain substantial for most South–South trade.

International trade is subject to and influenced by a wide array of policies and instruments reaching beyond tariffs. Technical measures and requirements regulate about two thirds of world trade, while various forms of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) are applied to almost all agricultural trade. Border measures contribute substantially to trade costs. On average the compliance costs of such measures are generally higher than tariffs. The World Trade Organization (WTO) remains an important arbiter of trade disputes, however the past few years have seen a general decrease in the number of trade defence investigations brought to the WTO.

The process of deeper economic integration has remained strong at the regional and bilateral levels, with an increasing number of preferential trade agreements (PTAs) being negotiated and implemented. Most of the recent PTAs address not only goods but also services and increasingly deal with rules beyond reciprocal tariff concessions to cover a wide range of behind the border issues. As of 2019, about half of world trade has occurred under some form of PTA.

This report is structured in two parts. The first part provides a discussion and statistics on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The second part presents and discusses trends in selected trade policy instruments including illustrative statistics. The second part is divided into four chapters: tariffs, trade agreements, non-tariff measures, and trade defence measures. Trade trends and statistics are provided at various levels of aggregation illustrating the use of the trade policy measures across economic sectors and geographic regions.

DATA SOURCES

All statistics in this publication have been produced by the UNCTAD secretariat by using data from various sources. Data on tariffs and non-tariff measures originate from the UNCTAD Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS) database (<http://trains.unctad.org/>), while data on bound tariffs derive from the WTO's Consolidated Tariff Schedules database (<tdf.wto.org>). Trade data are from the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (COMTRADE; <comtrade.un.org>). Data on trade defence measures are sourced from the WTO I-TIP (<i-tip.wto.org>). Tariff and trade data are at the Harmonized System 6-digit level and have been standardized to ensure comparability across countries. Data related to preferential trade agreements are derived from various databases, including the WTO regional trade agreement gateway (<rtais.wto.org>) and the World Bank global preferential agreements database (wits.worldbank.org/gptad/trade_database.html). Other macro level data used in the figures originate from UNCTADstat (<unctadstat.unctad.org>). Unless otherwise specified, aggregated data cover more than 160 countries representing over 95 per cent of world trade. Data on non-tariff measures covers around 80 countries, covering about 90 per cent of world trade.

Countries are categorized by geographic region as defined by the United Nations classification (UNSD M49). Developed countries comprise those commonly categorized as such in United Nations statistics. For the purpose of this report, transition economies, when not treated as a single group, are included in the broad aggregate of developing countries. Product sectors are categorized according to the Broad Economic Categories (BEC) and the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). Preferential trade agreements that relate to both goods and services are counted as one. Non-tariff measures are classified according to UNCTAD classification 2019 (https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ditctab2019d5_en.pdf).

Further information relating to the construction of data, statistics, tables and graphs contained in this publication can be made available by contacting tab@unctad.org.

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