



INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF NON-TARIFF MEASURES

2019 VERSION



UNITED NATIONS



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The *International Classification of Non-tariff Measures* was developed by numerous staff members of several international organizations forming the Multi-Agency Support Team, commonly known as the MAST group. The MAST group is composed of the following organizations:

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- International Trade Centre
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- World Bank
- World Trade Organization

Many experts contributed to the development of the classification. UNCTAD coordinated the work. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the MAST group, its officials or member States.

INTRODUCTION

What are non-tariff measures, and why is a classification needed?

Non-tariff measures are generally defined as “policy measures other than ordinary customs tariffs that can potentially have an economic effect on international trade in goods, changing quantities traded, or prices or both.”¹ Since this definition is broad, a detailed classification is necessary to better identify and distinguish among the various forms of non-tariff measures.

Development of the International Classification of Non-tariff Measures, 2012 version

The classification of non-tariff measures presented here is a taxonomy of all those measures considered relevant in international trade today. It builds on a previous classification developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) known as the Coding System of Trade Control Measures and was developed by several international organizations forming the Multi-Agency Support Team, commonly known as the MAST group. This group was set up to support the Group of Eminent Persons on Non-tariff Barriers established by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in 2006. The final proposal of the MAST group was revised by UNCTAD and all relevant divisions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Secretariat and tested for data collection in the field by the International Trade Centre and UNCTAD. The work resulted in the 2012 version of the publication. The classification is considered to be an evolving one, adaptable to the reality of international trade and data collection needs.

The MAST group, which discussed and proposed this classification, is composed of the following organizations: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Trade Centre, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), UNCTAD, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Bank and WTO.

Revision of the classification leading to the 2019 version: *International Classification of Non-tariff Measures*

To address the growing complexities of international trade, the MAST group, other experts and government officials refined the 2012 version from 2015–2018. The group revised existing chapters A to I and chapter P and worked on the definition and taxonomy of the classification for chapters J to O, which lacked a disaggregated taxonomy. The MAST group created six open working groups to address the following areas:

¹ UNCTAD, 2010, *Non-tariff Measures: Evidence from Selected Developing Countries and Future Research Agenda* (United Nations publication, New York and Geneva), p. 99.

- (a) General issues: chapters A to I and chapter P; working group chaired by UNCTAD;
- (b) Post-sales services and distribution restrictions: chapters J and K; working group chaired by the World Bank;
- (c) Subsidies: chapter L; working group chaired by WTO;
- (d) Government procurement: chapter M; working group chaired by OECD;
- (e) Intellectual property: chapter N; working group chaired by UNCTAD;
- (f) Rules of origin: chapter O; working group chaired by the International Trade Centre.

The groups interacted regularly, and progress was presented annually to a wider audience at the UNCTAD Non-tariff Measures Week and MAST meeting, as well as at other trade and regulator meetings. The revised version was adopted by all working groups in 2018/2019.

The work on the chapter dealing with government procurement coincided with efforts by OECD on the development of a taxonomy of measures affecting government procurement as part of its own work programme.² Given the commonalities between the projects of the MAST group and those relating to the OECD government procurement classification, both groups worked together closely to develop a government procurement taxonomy. The World Intellectual Property Organization contributed to the chapter on intellectual property, and the World Customs Organization, to the chapter on rules of origin.

Becoming an international classification of the United Nations Statistical Commission

In December 2019, the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers, Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics and Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics endorsed the International Classification of Non-tariff Measures in a joint report (E/CN.3/2019/1). In March 2019, the United Nations Statistical Commission endorsed the classification for data collection across countries and for reporting on internationally comparable data on non-tariff measures.

Classification structure

This classification comprises technical measures, such as sanitary or environmental protection measures, as well as others traditionally used as commercial policy instruments. These include, for example, quotas, price control, export restrictions and contingent trade protective measures, as well as other behind-the-border measures, such as competition- and trade-related investment measures and government procurement or distribution restrictions.

This classification does not judge on the legitimacy, adequacy, necessity or discrimination of any form of policy intervention used in international trade. It acknowledges the existence of policy intervention and is designed to set information out in a database format. Transparent, reliable and comparable information can contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon and help exporters worldwide to access

² J Gourdon, V Bastien and L Folliot-Lalliot, 2017, OECD taxonomy of measures affecting trade in government procurement processes, OECD Trade Policy Papers, No. 198 (OECD Publishing, Paris).

information, as is the case with tariffs. Transparent information is also needed for any negotiations that could lead to harmonization and mutual recognition and thus enhance trade.

The classification develops a tree/branch structure whereby measures are divided into chapters, depending on their scope and/or design. Each chapter is further differentiated into several subgroups to allow a finer classification of the regulations affecting trade. The International Classification of Non-tariff Measures consists of 16 chapters (A to P), and each chapter is divided into groupings with a depth of up to three levels (one, two and three digits, following the same logic of the Harmonized System (HS) Nomenclature for product classification). In addition, measures are listed by number in each subgroup; the digit 9 is reserved for all cases not listed within that subgroup. Although a few chapters reach the three-digit level of disaggregation, most of them stop at two digits. The chapters, listed in the following table, reflect the requirements of the importing country concerning its imports, with the exception of measures imposed on exports by the exporting country (chapter P).

Classification of non-tariff measures by chapter

Imports	Technical measures	A	Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
		B	Technical barriers to trade
		C	Pre-shipment inspection and other formalities
	Non-technical measures	D	Contingent trade-protective measures
		E	Non-automatic import licensing, quotas, prohibitions, quantity-control measures and other restrictions not including sanitary and phytosanitary measures or measures relating to technical barriers to trade
		F	Price-control measures, including additional taxes and charges
		G	Finance measures
		H	Measures affecting competition
		I	Trade-related investment measures
		J	Distribution restrictions
		K	Restrictions on post-sales services
		L	Subsidies and other forms of support

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