

World Trade Report 2012



Trade and public policies:
A closer look at non-tariff
measures in the 21st
century



Major themes of World Trade Report 2012

- Motivation behind NTMs is changing (public policies becoming more prevalent)
- NTMs raise a transparency issue
- Public policies have ambiguous trade effects
- Public policies require deeper cooperation



Motivations behind NTMs

- Governments employ NTMs to achieve public policy objectives such as:
 - Protection of public health or the environment
 - Addressing information asymmetries
- Archetypical examples of public policy NTMs: TBT/SPS measures and domestic regulation in services
- Public policy concerns have grown, adding significantly to the complex nature and variety of NTMs deployed by governments
- The expansion of the policy agenda implies that NTMs will not shrink in relevance like tariffs have done...



Motivations behind NTMs

- ...but NTMs can also serve a dual purpose: they may be designed or administered in ways that intentionally restrict trade even if their primary purpose is to serve a public policy
- The potential for dual purpose underlies the difficulty of:
 - Distinguishing between “legitimate” and “protectionist” motivations for NTMs
 - Identifying instances where NTMs create “unnecessary” trade costs



Transparency

- Transparency is a major issue with regard to both NTMs and services measures
- Information on public policies is not as easily accessible as information on border measures
- Public policy measures are diverse and difficult to compare across countries and sectors (AVEs are needed)
- Their effects depend on how they are applied



Transparency

- The report taps diverse sources of data: notifications, data collected from official sources, concerns raised at the WTO, disputes, business surveys
- None of the available data sources provides comprehensive coverage
- Some stylized facts:
 - Inconclusive evidence of a rising trend in NTM incidence over the last 20 years (=>)
 - Some evidence of upward trend in TBT/SPS measures (=>)
 - TBT/SPS measures are major impediment to exporters (=>)
 - Procedural obstacles matter (=>)



Trade effects

- Trade effects depend on the measure and are highly variable
- Calculation of AVEs raises both methodological and practical issues
 - Value chains amplify the effect of trade costs and this is difficult to document
 - The effect of specific measures is difficult to single out
- In the case of standards, trade effects hinge on the degree of policy heterogeneity
- Harmonization of TBT/SPS measures increases trade, in particular by enhancing the presence of small and medium sized firms in export markets



Cooperation

- Historically, regulation of NTMs in trade agreements has addressed the problem of tariffs being replaced by NTMs
- Global supply chains create a need for deeper forms of institutional integration to prevent distortions of trade and investment decisions along the supply chains
- The increased prominence of public policies driven by consumer concerns has also created a need to develop rules to identify efficient and legitimate uses of NTMs

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_7323

