

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

NON-TARIFF MEASURES: Evidence from Selected Developing Countries and Future Research Agenda

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE STUDIES



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FOREWORD

The severe contraction of world trade volume during the current global economic and financial crisis – the steepest since the Great Depression – put pressure on the trade policies of many importing and exporting countries around the world. One result of the crisis in developed and developing countries has been the contemplation or use of trade policy instruments, mainly taking the form of non-tariff measures (NTMs), to protect domestic producers.

In spite of their growing importance in regulating trade, the exact implications of NTMs on trade flows, export-led growth and social welfare are not very well understood. There are significant gaps in the existing knowledge of NTMs and their effects on international trade. It is for this reason that, in 2006, I established a Group of Eminent Persons on Non-Tariff Barriers (GNTB) to consider the definition, classification, data collection and quantification of NTBs, identify data requirements, as well as gain a better understanding of the implications of NTMs on international trade. A Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) was also formed to work on a new classification of NTMs and advise on the feasibility of data collection.

In addition, UNCTAD, in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO), fielded a pilot project in seven developing countries (Brazil, Chile, India, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Uganda) to gauge how firms in those countries were affected by NTMs. The project tested the new classification of NTMs prepared by MAST under the overall leadership of UNCTAD. This new classification is a significant breakthrough for researchers and policymakers who now have a homogeneous instrument that can facilitate data collection and play a supporting role in trade negotiations.

The principal financial support for the project was received from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Government of Switzerland, and contributions were also received from the Department for International Development (UK-DFID) and the Global Trust Fund of the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO).

The present publication brings to a culmination a four-year multi-agency effort to better understand NTMs. I am confident that such an initiative will provide practical help to UNCTAD member States, particularly developing countries. Such help can strengthen their capacity to understand non-tariff measures and the potentially negative spill-over effects of NTMs in trade, as well as support countries in formulating and implementing sound trade and development policies and strategies.



Supachai Panitchpakdi
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
OVERVIEW: UNCTAD initiatives on non-tariff measures.....	xi
 PART I	
COUNTRY REPORTS ON NON-TARIFF MEASURES.....	1
 BRAZIL	3
I. General Overview.....	3
A. Current economic structure and growth	3
B. Trade structure	4
C. Recent trade and tariff policies	5
1. Tariff policy	5
2. Tax policy on imports.....	7
3. Export policies	8
D. Recent and new commitments and regulations related to SPS and TBT	9
1. Technical regulations and standards.....	9
2. Sanitary and phytosanitary measures.....	11
3. Bilateral and regional trade agreements.....	14
II. NTMs applied by Brazil	16
A. National data sources	16
B. NTMs applied by Brazil	16
III. Challenges.....	16
A. Business survey: Challenges faced and lessons learned.....	16
IV. Conclusions	17

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

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