

Setting Priorities Right in Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Insights from ARTNeT

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In Brief

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Introduction: IT in TF for SMEs

- Robust knowledge base – sustained support for and interest by young scholars on TF issues inside and outside ARTNeT
- Development of NSW – concentrating on single portal nationally and regional interface
- Understanding impacts of TF on SMEs remains nascent and not-so-clear
- Use of IT for TF and impacts on SMEs also remains nascent and not-so-clear

- More empirical work and insights on distinction between SMEs in production and in trade
 - In the Philippines, for example, while SMEs (10-199 workers) account for only 9 percent of all enterprises (the bulk micro), they make up 70% of 10,000 firms exporting (2008) but less than 25% of export revenue comes from MSME
 - In the AP region international commerce is done through network firms and multinationals (large firms); SMEs have to overcome these existing barriers (Tulus 2013)

Characteristics of SMEs in Trade

- Size, being the primary definition of SME, is associated with many other characteristics
- GFPTT lists 14 barriers SMEs face in becoming internationalized – entrepreneurial/managerial skills, bureaucracy, information, finance/capital, technology, quality/standardization, language, risks, competition of indigenous SMEs in foreign markets, supply-supporting programs, documentation, incentives for internationalization, inadequate intellectual property protection

- Poor record-keeping, often manually organized
- Generic term to describe these characteristics – an *informal* system
- Relying on information and finance sources outside the formal structures available to large enterprises – in some countries (e.g. Mongolia) heavy reliance on family/friends for sources of finance and information
- In terms of engaging in international trade, SMEs undertake their own process of goods declaration (export and import), directly arrange for cargo release and transport, and comply or settle any dispute regarding classification, valuation, etc.

- SME characteristics are general across different countries – developed and developing

→US-Canada border trade characterized by many SMEs sorting through “...thousands of regulations and paperwork requirements, trying to find answers to specific border/trade questions, trying to fit into a program or policy designed for much larger firms, simply trying to understand the ‘language’ of importing or exporting without having to hire outside professionals, and worrying about the seemingly arbitrary application of rules by border officials...”

→At least 44 Canadian/US agencies have border jurisdictions and some 4,500 new/revised regulations are introduced by federal/provincial governments each year

→Even with a free-trade-agreement (NAFTA), barriers SMEs face remain formidable including classification of products, certificates of origin, duty drawback, and access to information, use of brokers and couriers, and infrastructure

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