World Trade Organization

2. Economic statistics (World Trade Organization)

2.6 International trade and balance of payments (World Trade Organization)

International Merchandise Trade Statistics and Tariff and Trade Databases

Ongoing work:

The WTO produces aggregate annual, quarterly, and monthly total merchandise trade statistics. For disaggregated merchandise trade statistics, the WTO is largely a user of other agencies' data. It complements these data with own estimates and adjustments to build country and product aggregates according to WTO definitions. In addition, through the inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TF IMTS) and other bodies, the WTO supports actively ongoing efforts to improve coordination in data collection and dissemination, development of concepts and definitions, and analysis of trade data.

On tariffs and tariff-related imports, the WTO collects primary data from national compilers. The WTO actively cooperates with UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to enhance the exchange and publication of tariff information and also maintains a database containing WTO Members' legal commitments on goods.

The WTO also coordinates the inter-agency MDG-Trade group of Geneva (ITC/UNCTAD/WTO) that monitors market access conditions for developing and least-developed countries and produces corresponding MDG indicators. Besides compiling the relevant information, work focuses on improving the measurement and interpretation of related MDG statistics by extending coverage and developing complementary indicators (http://www.mdg-trade.org).

Priority objectives:

To actively contribute to the development of a consistent, internationally recognized set of up-to-date international trade statistics and tariff information.

To implement an enhanced framework for the collection of WTO Members' submissions of tariffs and tariff-related import statistics for filling existing gaps of data.

New activities:

In response to the globalization of production in manufacturing, the WTO has actively engaged in extending traditional trade statistics to identify the countries' respective domestic (value-added) content. In 2010/2011, an 'atlas-type' publication of the Asian region will be produced in co-operation with IDE-JETRO aiming at analyzing the impact of global value chains on trade flows and regional integration in Eastern Asia. Co-operation on methodological and data issues is also developing with OECD, as well as other stakeholders pertaining to the World Input-Output Project (WIOD), supported by the European Union.

Following a change in data confidentiality policy, the WTO has made available to the public its tariff databases at tariff line level in January 2010 via the Tariff Analysis Online. The public already had previously access to tariff and trade information at the Harmonized System six-digit level only, via the Tariff Download Facility.

A study on historical developments of tariffs is also under way. The first phase of the project, under implementation, is to augment the collection of historical archives in WTO custody. The second phase contemplates the digitalization of the information gathered.

International Trade in Services Statistics

Ongoing work:

Active participation in the work of the inter-agency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services with particular emphasis on improving data quality of the international agencies' released statistics. Assist in developing compilation guidance for the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (MSITS 2010); and organize and carry out statistical capacity building.

Priority objectives:

• cooperate with other agencies to improve data quality, and
• carry out statistical capacity building seminars and developing e-training modules (national and regional seminars).

Inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics

The Task Force has been established by the UN Statistical Commission. The World Trade Organization (WTO) convenes this Task Force and maintains a website for it providing relevant material on classifications, concepts and definitions, an inter-agency Common Data Set on the countries' total merchandise exports and imports, and technical assistance (http://imts.wto.org/).

Ongoing work:

• Methodological work: Implementation of IMTS 2010 and assisting in developing respective Compilation Guidance.
• Data collection and processing: Maintain the inter-agency Common Dataset (CDS) of aggregate merchandise trade values that includes officially reported data and reconciled data (UNSD, IMF, UNCTAD, OECD, Eurostat, WTO).

Priority objectives:

• Through inter-agency collaboration, improve the coverage, consistency, quality and timeliness of aggregate and detailed merchandise trade statistics; and identify and analyze emerging statistical issues related to globalization and trade;

• Provide analysts, policy-makers and other users with easily accessible, analytically valuable data by maintaining an online, interactive database on the Task Force's website for the inter-agency Common Data Set (http://imts.wto.org/common_dataset_e.htm).

New activities:

• Analysis of cross-cutting issues to help assisting implementation and preparation of Compilation Guidance for IMTS and MSITS 2010.
• Analysis of the impact of global value chains on trade statistics.