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).

The WTO also develops a new database called I-TIP. It allows users to access via one portal all trade policy information notified to the WTO by its members. Known as the Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal (I-TIP), the new application will encompass tariffs, non-tariff measures and related trade statistics.

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:

The WTO is actively pursuing the extension of activities to identify the countries' respective domestic (value-added) content. An OECD-WTO co-operation in 2012 will offer a methodological note on measuring trade in value added and a database on trade in value added terms. Other stakeholders will be consulted as needed.

The WTO will continue work on its I-TIP throughout 2012.

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).

New activities:

The WTO pursues co-operation with other agencies active in the compilation and dissemination of trade in services data to provide consistent and high quality data.

For technical assistance activities, WTO is building up database on ongoing activities at international, regional, and bilateral level, including a register of international experts that can assist implementation processes.

Alongside the I-TIP project, the WTO will also engage in an activity to develop a database on applied regimes for services and relevant trade flows.

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/).

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).

The Task Force decided to reconvene a formal meeting only in 2013 and will use OECD's Working Party on Trade in Goods and Services Statistics to hold informal discussions on the 2013 agenda.