

What we stand for



Improving people's lives

The fundamental goal of the WTO is to improve the welfare of people around the world. The WTO's founding Marrakesh Agreement recognizes that trade should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and increasing real income while allowing for the optimal use of the world's resources.



Inclusive trade

The WTO seeks to build a more inclusive trading system that will allow more women and small businesses to participate in trade and to reap the economic benefits of global trading. The WTO also recognizes the importance of addressing the digital divide so that economies across the world can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital economy.



Protection of the environment

Protection and preservation of the environment are fundamental goals of the WTO. The WTO agreements permit members to take measures to protect not only public, animal and plant health but also the environment. However, these measures must be applied in the same way to both local and foreign businesses.



Predictability and transparency

Foreign companies, investors and governments should be confident that trade barriers will not be raised arbitrarily. With stability and predictability provided by WTO rules, investment is encouraged, jobs are created and consumers can fully enjoy the benefits of competition – such as increased choice and lower prices.



Opening trade

The WTO seeks to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. Lowering trade barriers is an obvious way to encourage trade; these barriers include customs duties – or tariffs – and measures such as import bans.



Fair competition

“Unfair” practices, such as export subsidies and dumping products at below normal value to gain market share, are discouraged. WTO rules try to establish what is fair or unfair and how governments can respond, in particular by charging additional import duties calculated to compensate for damage caused by unfair trade.



Non-discrimination

Under WTO rules, a WTO member should not discriminate between its trading partners, and should not discriminate between its own and foreign products, services or citizens.



Support for less developed economies

Over three-quarters of WTO members are developing economies or in transition to market economies. The WTO agreements give them transition periods to adjust to WTO provisions and, in the case of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, provide for practical support for implementation of the Agreement.



Partnerships

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with civil society, labour unions, universities, the business community and other intergovernmental organizations to enhance cooperation and build partnerships. The WTO's Trade Dialogues initiative and the annual Public Forum provide a platform for civil society, business groups and others to discuss the latest developments in world trade and to propose ways of enhancing the multilateral trading system.