

What we do



Trade negotiations

The WTO agreements – covering goods, services and intellectual property – are not static; they are altered from time to time and new agreements can be added to the package. Changes to the rules of trade require the agreement of WTO members, who must reach consensus through negotiations. Recent agreements include the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement adopted by WTO members at the 12th Ministerial Conference in June 2022 (see page 48).



Implementation and monitoring

WTO agreements require governments to make their trade policies transparent by notifying the WTO about laws in force and measures adopted. Various WTO councils and committees seek to ensure these requirements are being followed and that WTO agreements are being properly implemented. All WTO members must undergo periodic scrutiny of their trade policies and practices, while trade monitoring reports regularly review trade developments for the WTO membership as a whole (see page 74).



Building trade capacity

WTO agreements contain special provisions for developing economies, including longer time periods to implement agreements and commitments, and support to help them build their trade capacity. The WTO organizes hundreds of training activities for developing economies annually. The Aid for Trade initiative aims to help developing economies improve the skills and infrastructure needed to expand their participation in global trade (see page 136).



Outreach

The WTO maintains regular dialogue with non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians, other international organizations, the business sector, universities and the general public on various aspects of the WTO, with the aim of enhancing cooperation and increasing awareness of WTO activities (see page 152).



Dispute settlement

The WTO's procedures for resolving trade disputes are vital for enforcing the rules and for ensuring trade flows smoothly. WTO members bring disputes to the WTO if they think their rights under the agreements are being infringed. Rulings by specially appointed independent experts are based on interpretations of the agreements and individual members' commitments (see page 132).

