



5

Conclusion: Looking back to look ahead

This overview of the WTO's response to the pandemic is not intended to be exhaustive or authoritative and focuses exclusively on the critical period of the pandemic from 2020 to 2023. The review of actions taken and of the issues addressed illustrates the complex interactions between different areas of trade policy and diverse trade measures that had major implications for the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This publication is intended to illustrate how the WTO's transparency tools, its analytical capacity and its coordination functions can be deployed to build resilience to future pandemics and health crises under the guidance of members and in partnership with other international organizations.

Key insights from the publication are as follows:

- **The WTO's transparency and monitoring functions are central to illuminating the practical and policy measures taken by members in response to a pandemic and the global health situation more generally.**
- **The full range of members' trade policy measures, including trade opening in the area of goods, relevant services sectors, the intellectual property system and other specific sectors such as agriculture and electronic commerce, have an impact on global health.**
- **The fundamental principles underpinning the multilateral trading system are of utmost importance. The legitimate scope for members to make specific interventions in the course of a health emergency is also essential.**
- **The restrictive trade measures imposed by members early in the pandemic were quickly reversed. Subsequently, there was a growing emphasis on trade-facilitating and trade-opening measures as the pandemic response evolved.**
- **Open dialogue and sharing of experience between members across the full spectrum of WTO bodies are of fundamental benefit.**
- **Trade policy considerations and trade policy analysis are essential elements of a connected and comprehensive international response to a global pandemic. Trade policy must be examined in partnership, and dialogue needs to be maintained with international partners and intergovernmental organizations responsible for related policy fields, ranging from public health to customs administration and food security.**