

Foreword by the WTO Director General

We live in a time of rapid technological change that has the possibility of profoundly altering the conduct of international trade. For many people keeping up to date with the latest technology and fully understanding its implications can be daunting. This report will help illuminate the so-called “disruptive technologies” that are most relevant to border management, as well as assist governments to better understand the challenges and benefits of their use by Customs.

Technologies of the kind referred to in this publication hold enormous potential to aid governments in efficient and effective administration of WTO trade rules. As this publication shows, our Members have found that the use of blockchain and the internet of things can play an instrumental role in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, for example, through improved transparency and inter-agency cooperation, and the use of data mining for more effective risk management. These technologies can also enhance administration of health and safety requirements through better monitoring the movement of perishable goods to detect and avoid spoilage, and they can enable implementation of electronic certification such as e-Phyto certificates in a more efficient, secure and trusted manner. In addition, these technologies can allow Customs and other agencies to capture massive amounts of data that can be used to support the administration of trade rules.

The WTO is very pleased to have this opportunity to collaborate with the WCO on this publication. Both of our organizations are interested in providing information to our Members about the impact of digital technologies on trade and its administration, the opportunities they open and the challenges that stand on the way to their broader adoption. Together we are in a unique position to gather the experience of our Members to provide a global picture of the use of these technologies to enhance border management.

I hope that this publication will provide a useful resource to inform policy debate and guide Members on how they might harness the benefits of these technologies.



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Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
WTO Director General