

A message from the Director-General

Pascal Lamy



To balance options and base decision-making on facts, analysts need to be able to gauge the impact of their interaction with the rest of the world. Firms need to know their competitive position in international markets. To this end, policy-makers, experts and the public at large rely on international trade statistics and trade policy information. The remarkable efforts by national statistical institutions over the last decade has led to considerable progress in enhancing availability of information, in particular statistics on trade in services. This publication is an illustration of these improvements.

The 2012 edition of International Trade Statistics, which is complemented by World Tariff Profiles and Trade Profiles, provides the comprehensive and detailed data required to describe major trends and developments in international trade and market access.

The WTO is committed to providing access to consistent and comprehensive trade data. The 2008-2009 global crisis accentuated the need for more transparency on market access data and for higher-frequency trade statistics. The WTO responded to this demand by providing unrestricted public access to its tariff databases and producing consistent and comparable short-term

trade statistics (monthly and quarterly) on merchandise and commercial services for individual countries as well as by deriving estimates at the regional and world level. These are available on the WTO website: www.wto.org/statistics.

In addition to our free-of-charge online data dissemination, the WTO provides policy-makers and the public at large with periodic publications on trade flows and trade policy measures to help them analyse the impact of international trade on jobs, growth and development. An example of this is the 2012 World Trade Report devoted to non-tariff measures. While the present publication provides statistics on trade flows, two other publications give information on tariff and country-specific trade profiles: World Tariff Profiles and Trade Profiles.

We also work on concepts and definitions of trade statistics to reflect changing trade patterns and related developments. The WTO Secretariat has been actively participating in the recent revisions of statistical frameworks related to international trade: the System of National Accounts, the Balance of Payments, the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services and International Merchandise Trade Statistics Concepts and Definitions. As the new standards will be implemented by countries in the coming years, statistics in this publication are based on previous guidelines.

The WTO also provides technical assistance in the area of tariffs, merchandise trade and trade in services statistics, for which the WTO is a focal point of inter-agency activities. An e-learning module will be launched next year.

Looking forward, we want to invest in ensuring that our trade statistics adequately reflect the trade patterns of global supply chains, where products are “made in the world”. We need to understand better which industries and economies add value in the different phases of the supply chain. The guiding principle behind “measuring trade in value added” is to make better use of all statistical information available (national accounts and input-output matrices, business registers) to have a better view of global value chains and the relationship between trade and domestic production. The WTO and

OECD have teamed up to provide such tools to help policy-makers in their decisions. This work is benefiting from academic input and active co-operation with other institutions, such as the US International Trade Commission (US ITC), the Institute of Developing Economies - Japan External Trade Organization (IDE-JETRO) and the World Input-Output Database (WIOD) project, which have advanced research in this area. We hope to see the first results of this work by the end of 2012.

Pascal Lamy
Director-General

