

# Trade policy developments

To understand the developments of trade flows over time, it is important to see them in the context of changes in the global trade policy environment. To enhance the transparency of trade policy developments, notifications from WTO members complemented by semi-annual trade policy monitoring exercises undertaken by the WTO are made available to the public. The following chapter draws on these two sources and provides some highlights of the current trends as well as an overview of the stockpile of trade policy measures in place.

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## Trends in trade policy making

Since 2009 the WTO has been monitoring trade policy trends and developments and has published regular trade monitoring reports. These reports aim to enhance the transparency of trade policy developments and to provide WTO members and observers with an up-to-date picture of overall trends in international trade policy-making as well as the implementation of trade-restrictive measures and trade-liberalizing measures. The monitoring exercise was initiated immediately after the onset of the financial crisis at the end of 2008 and has evolved considerably since then.

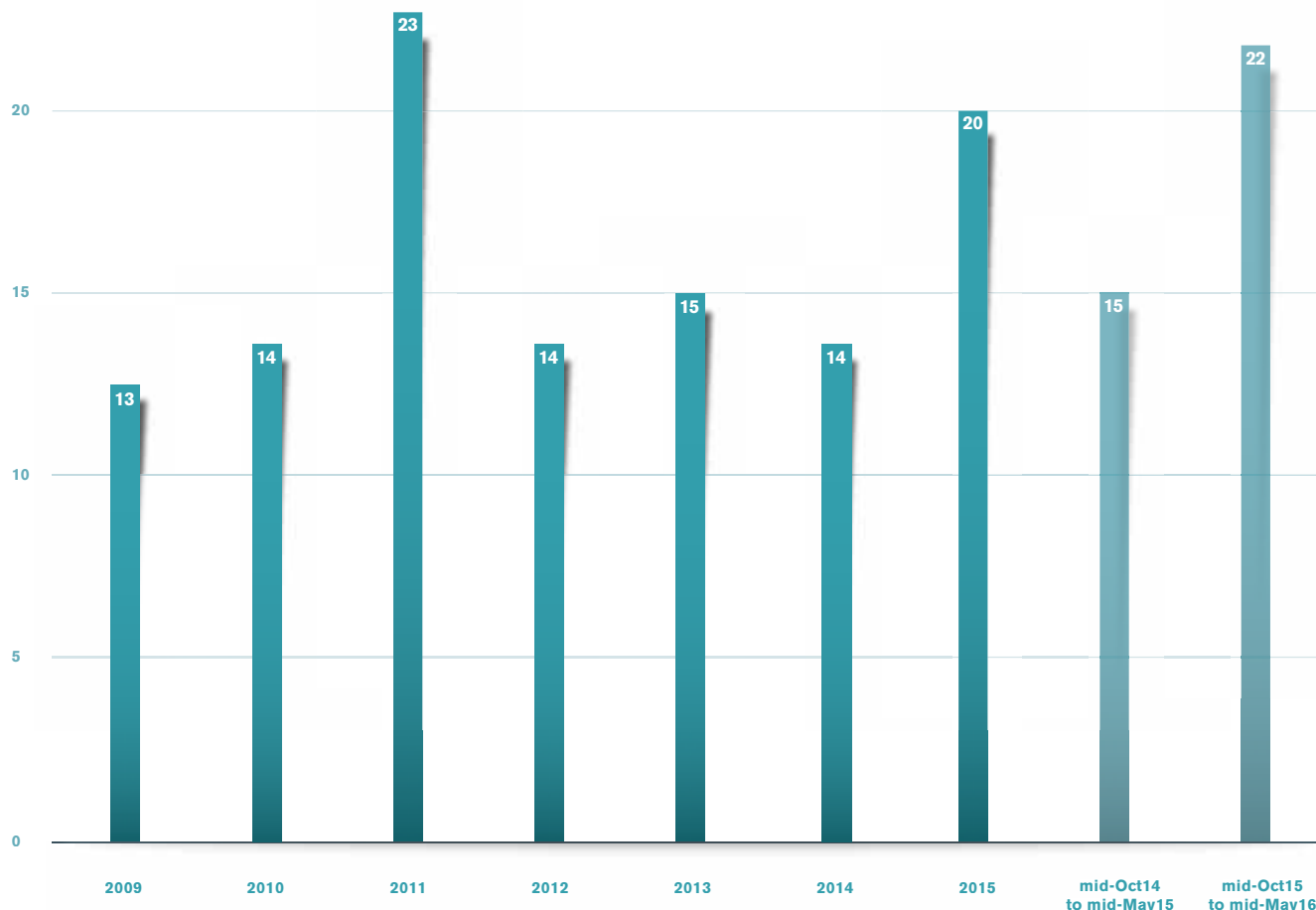
The latest monitoring report shows that between mid-October 2015 and mid-May 2016, WTO members applied 154 new trade-restrictive measures.<sup>1</sup> This corresponds to an average of 22 new measures per month and constitutes a significant increase compared with the previous interim report,<sup>2</sup> which recorded an average of 15 measures per month. Also, it is the highest monthly average registered since 2011, when the WTO recorded a peak in the monthly average of new trade-restrictive measures (see Chart 7.1).

Trade-restrictive measures include the establishment of import or export

tariffs or increases in these tariffs, the introduction of import bans or quantitative restrictions, the establishment of more complex customs procedures, local content measures and the temporary or permanent introduction of import or export taxes.

During the same period, WTO members introduced 132 measures aimed at facilitating trade, an average of 19 measures per month. While the latest monthly average of trade facilitating measures reflects an increase compared with the previous interim report, it is also lower than the recorded monthly average

**Chart 7.1:**  
Trade-restrictive measures, excluding trade remedies  
(average per month)



Note: Values are rounded. Source: WTO Secretariat.

<sup>1</sup> For more information see WTO document WT/TPR/OV/W/10, 4 July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Report to the TPRB from the Director-General on Trade-Related Developments, Mid-October 2014 to mid-May 2015, WTO document WT/TPR/OV/W/9, 3 July 2015.

of trade-restrictive measures (see Chart 7.2). Examples of trade-facilitating measures include the elimination or reduction of import or export tariffs, the simplification of customs procedures, the temporary or permanent elimination of import or export taxes and the elimination of quantitative restrictions on both

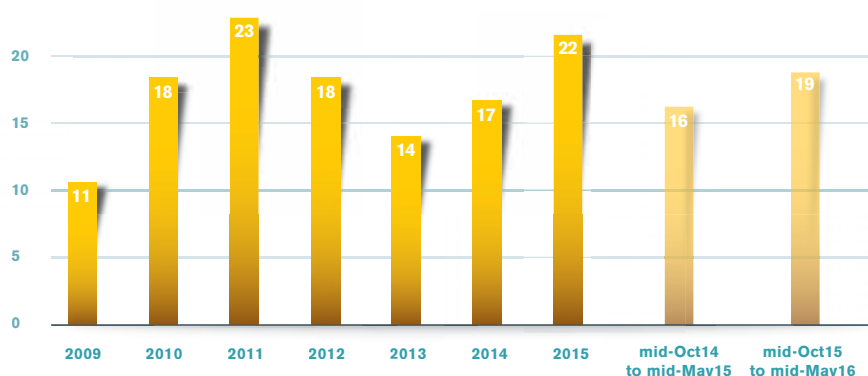
imports or exports.

The information on trade measures highlighted in the monitoring reports is submitted by WTO members and observers or gathered from other official and public sources. In the latest report, information was submitted by

70 members (counting the European Union and its member states separately), representing 43 per cent of the WTO membership and covering approximately 90 per cent of total world imports. Two observers also replied to the request for information.

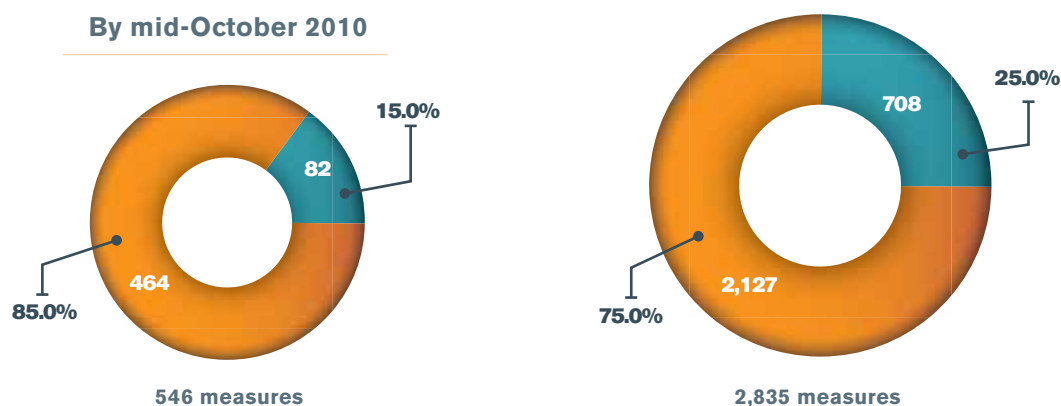
The slow pace of removal of previous restrictions means that the overall stock of trade-restrictive measures is continuing to increase. During the latest review period, the overall stockpile of restrictive measures, including trade remedies, introduced by WTO members grew by 11 per cent. Of the 2,835 trade-restrictive measures recorded for WTO members since 2008, only 708, or 25 per cent, had been removed by mid-May 2016. The rate by which WTO members have been eliminating trade restrictions remains too low to make a dent in the stockpile. The total number of restrictive measures still in place today stands at 2,127 (see Chart 7.3).

**Chart 7.2:**  
Trade-facilitating measures, excluding trade remedies  
(average per month)



Note: Values are rounded. Source: WTO Secretariat.

**Chart 7.3:**  
Stockpile of trade-restrictive measures initiated since October 2008



● Effectively eliminated measures      ● Stockpile of restrictive measures

Note: The stockpile of trade-restrictive measures also includes trade remedy actions.  
Source: WTO Secretariat.

### Other trade measures notified by WTO members

Other trade measures notified by WTO members mostly concern regulations and standards, which are dealt with under the WTO's Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures Agreement and the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement (see Table 7.1). Under these agreements, WTO members are obliged to notify in advance any intention to introduce new SPS/TBT measures or to modify existing measures and to

notify immediately when emergency measures are imposed.

By complying with the SPS/TBT notification obligations, WTO members are able to keep other members fully informed about new or changed regulations that may significantly affect trade. Therefore, an increased number of notifications does not automatically imply greater use of protectionist measures, but rather enhanced transparency regarding these measures.

The SPS/TBT notifications received by the WTO may underestimate the actual number of implemented measures as there is no legal obligation to notify all measures. Indeed, members have no obligation to notify measures which are mostly identical to international standards, guidelines or recommendations. However, members are recommended to do so. Furthermore, WTO members have not notified all SPS/TBT measures that they are supposed to report to the WTO.

**Table 7.1:**  
SPS/TBT measures notified by WTO members

Type of measure	Measures notified as of 31 December 2015	
	Notifications	Economies
SPS (regular and emergency notifications)	14,807	120
TBT	20,459	128

Source: SPS Information Management System, TBT Information Management System and the Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal (I-TIP), based on notifications from WTO members.

### Trade remedies

In addition to the measures indicated above, WTO members are required to inform the WTO about trade remedies – anti-dumping measures, countervailing measures and safeguards (see Table 7.2). These are measures applied by importing

countries in certain circumstances and under WTO rules to imports of a particular product where those imports are causing injury to domestic producers. Anti-dumping and countervailing measures are applied to dumped or subsidized imports respectively from a particular country or countries. These measures have to

be implemented in accordance with the WTO's Anti-dumping Agreement and the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures. Safeguard measures are applied, under the Agreement on Safeguards, on a most-favoured nation (i.e. non-discriminatory) basis, subject to specifically defined exceptions.

**Table 7.2:**  
Trade remedies notified by WTO members<sup>3</sup>

Type of measure	Final duty in force on 31 December 2015	
	Measures	Economies
Anti-dumping	1494	30
Countervailing duties	111	8
Safeguards	155	35

Source: : Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal (I-TIP), based on notifications from WTO members.

<sup>3</sup>Detailed statistics by members and by products can be found in I-TIP database (<http://i-tip.wto.org/goods>).