

# The value of the Committee on Agriculture: Mapping Q&As to trade flows

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# Background

- Part of a broader research on the value of WTO
  - Impact on trade and growth
  - Effectiveness of commitments in reducing uncertainty
- Essential at a moment when the effectiveness of the negotiating function and dispute settlement function of WTO are being questioned



# Objective

Build **a tool** that can help answering questions like:

- *What is the value of WTO Committee? How much trade do countries talk about at the WTO?*
- *Do low-income countries participate less than they should in the work of the Committee?*
- *What are the most important issues on which to focus negotiations?*

# What do we do?

*Assign to each question an economic value  
equal to the bilateral trade it relates to*

How?

- Use the AG-IMS database on Q&As (**text** format information)
- Match the text of the questions to the description of HS 4digit product classification to identify the **HS code** (we used text-based search analysis)
- Match the information about questioner-respondent-product-year with the relevant **bilateral trade flow**

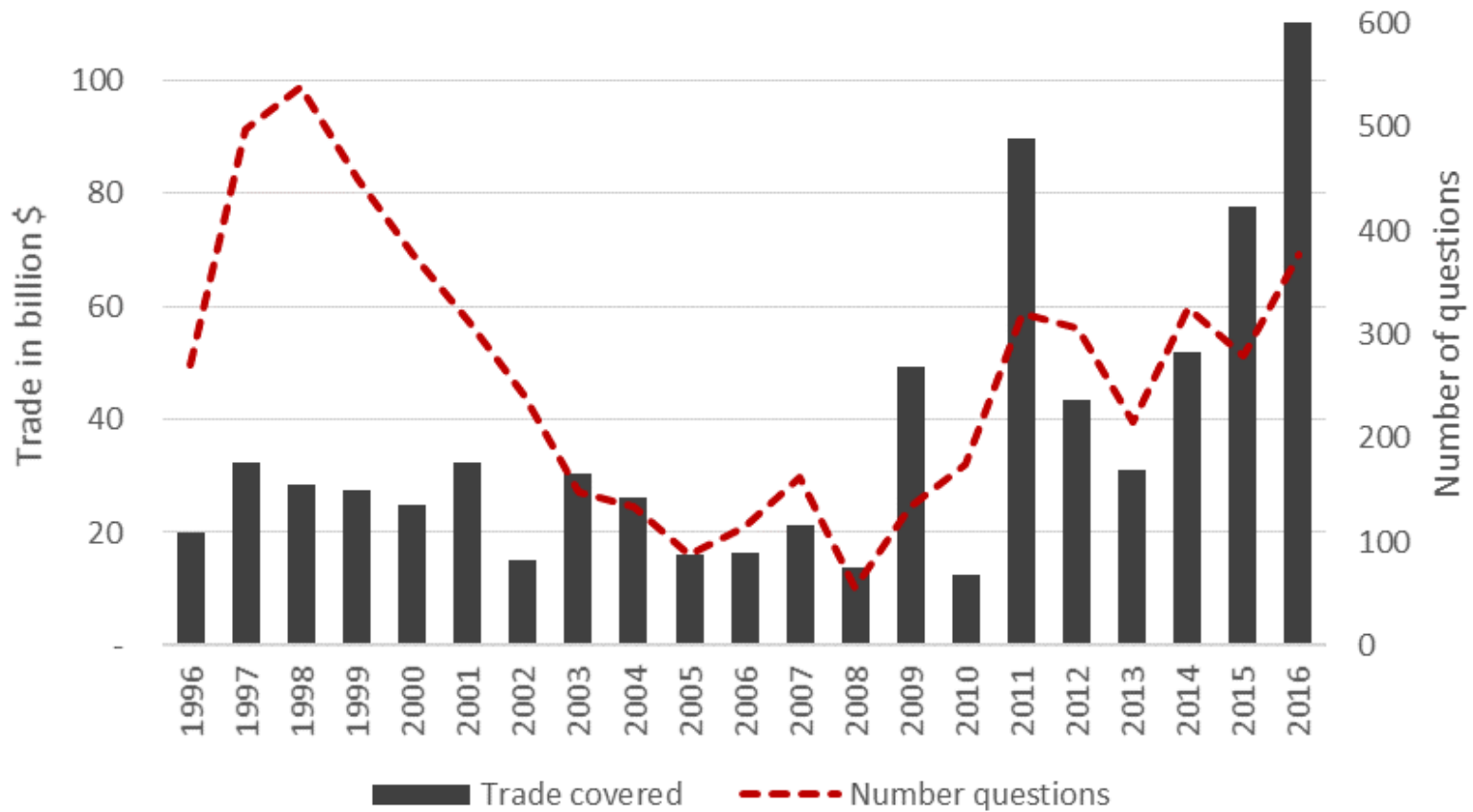
# What does this mean in numbers?

- Ag-IMS covers 5'526 questions over the period 1996-2016.
  - We could match only 3'295 questions!!
- We end up working with **over 35'000** questions splitting questions by:
  - countries that supported or co-sponsored each question
  - list of products mentioned
- This information is required to match each question with its trade flows

What do our statistics show?



# Questions cover increasingly more trade



# How much trade is discussed in the CoA?

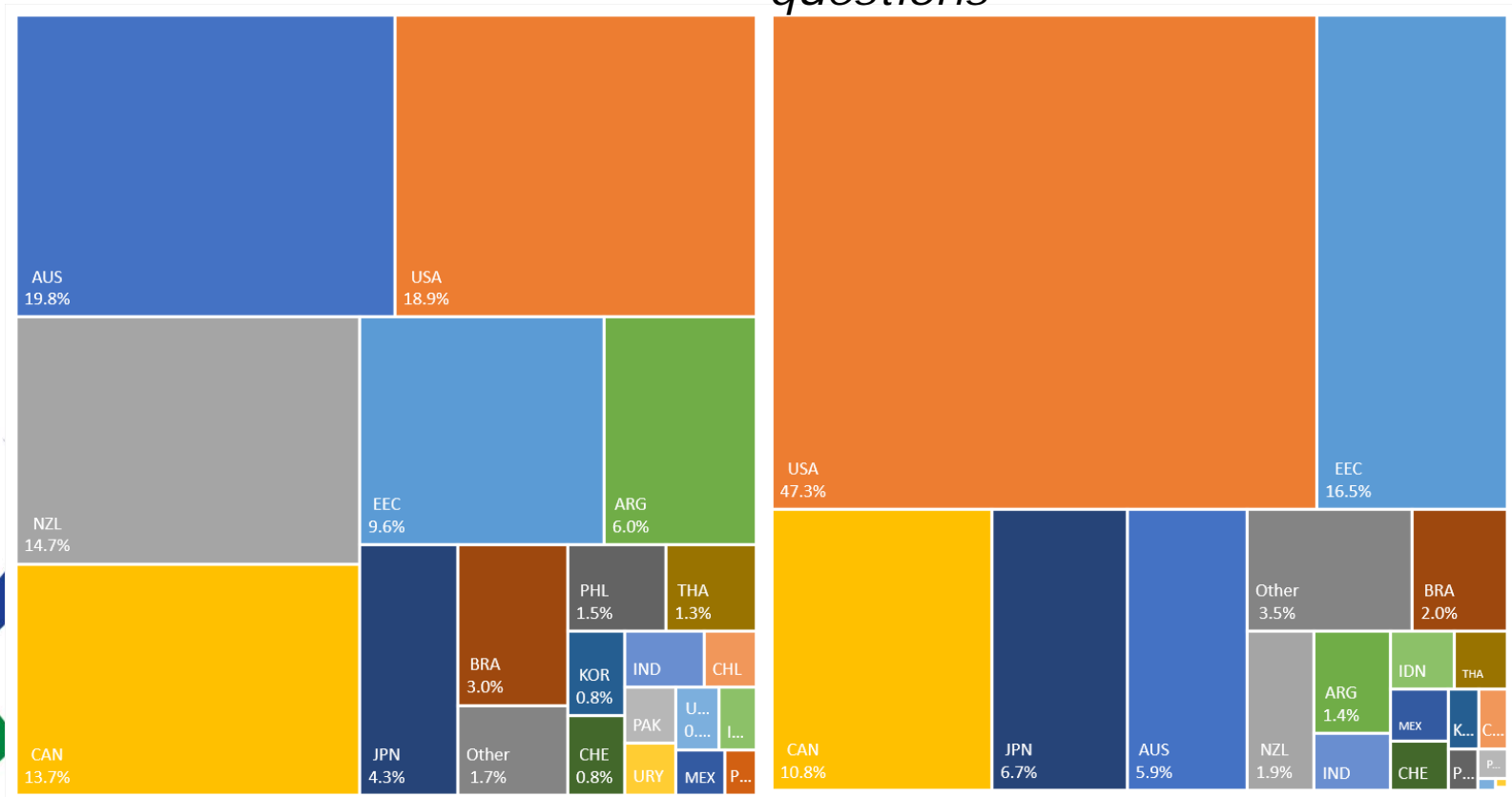
- Questions concern agricultural trade flows for a nominal value of \$778 billion over 1996-2016.
- Countries ask questions on products in which they have economic interest
  - Questioners account for 48% of the respondent trade in the main product concerned.
  - Questions may relate to up to 9% of the questioner's total trade in agriculture.



# The CoA value by Questioner

*Share of questions in CoA*

*Share of Q&A trade covered by questions*

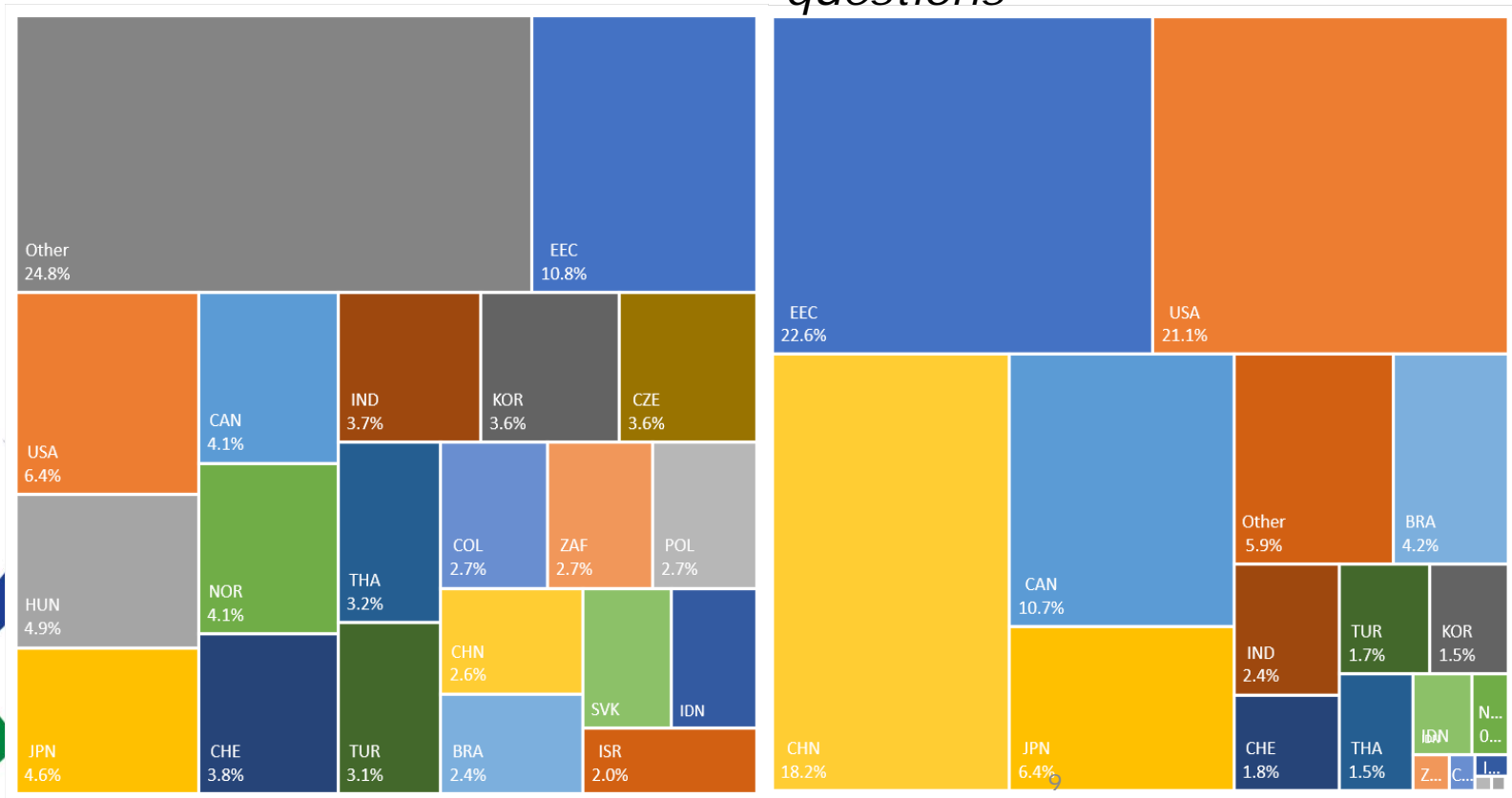


*Share of the number of questions (left panel) and of the trade covered by questions (right panel), by main questioner*

# The CoA value by Respondent

*Share of questions in CoA*

*Share of Q&A trade covered by questions*

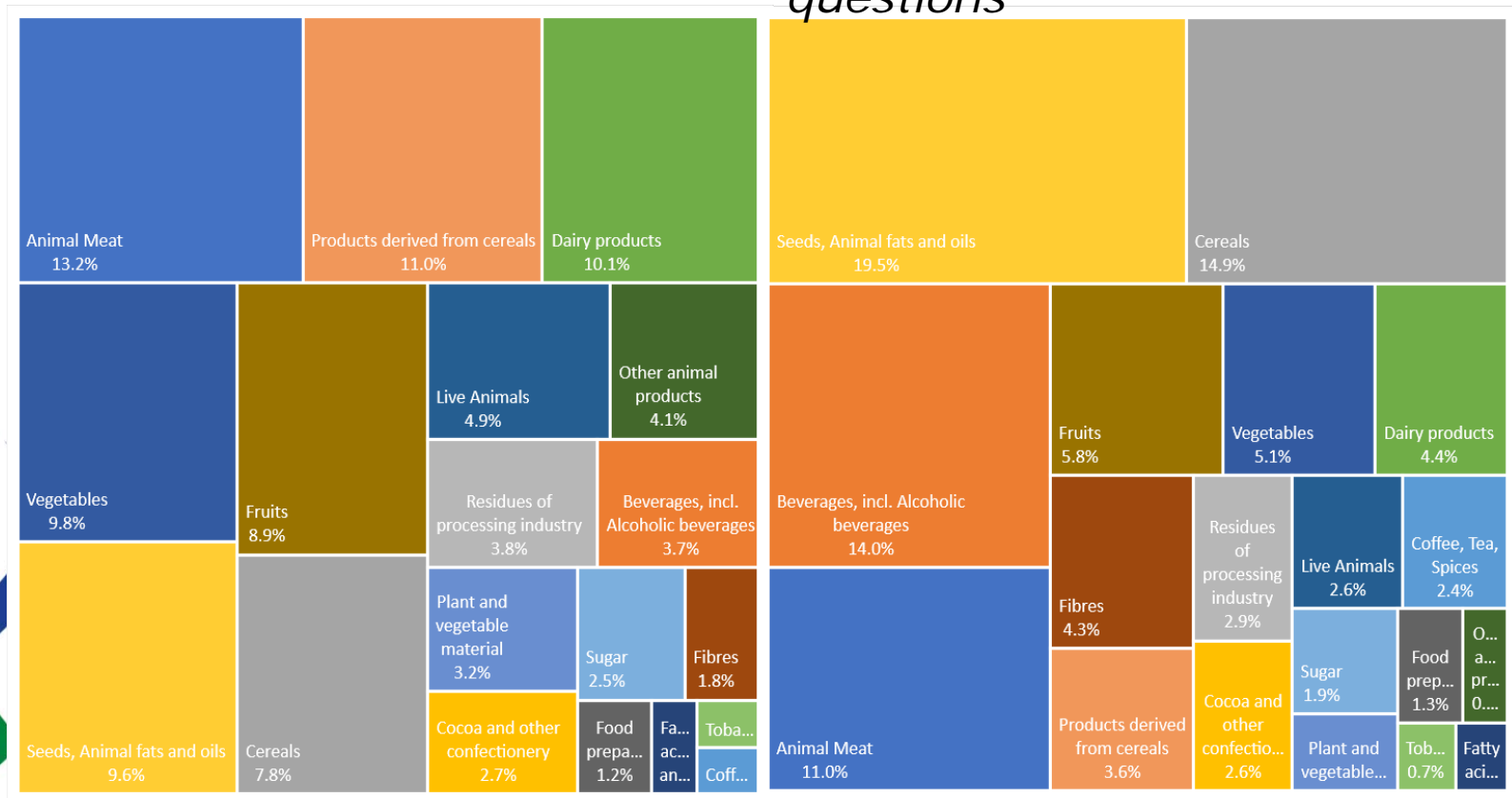


*Share of the number of questions (left panel) and of the trade covered by questions (right panel), by main respondent*

# The CoA value by Product category

*Share of questions in CoA*

*Share of Q&A trade covered by questions*



*Share of the number of questions (left panel) and of the trade covered by questions (right panel), by product category*

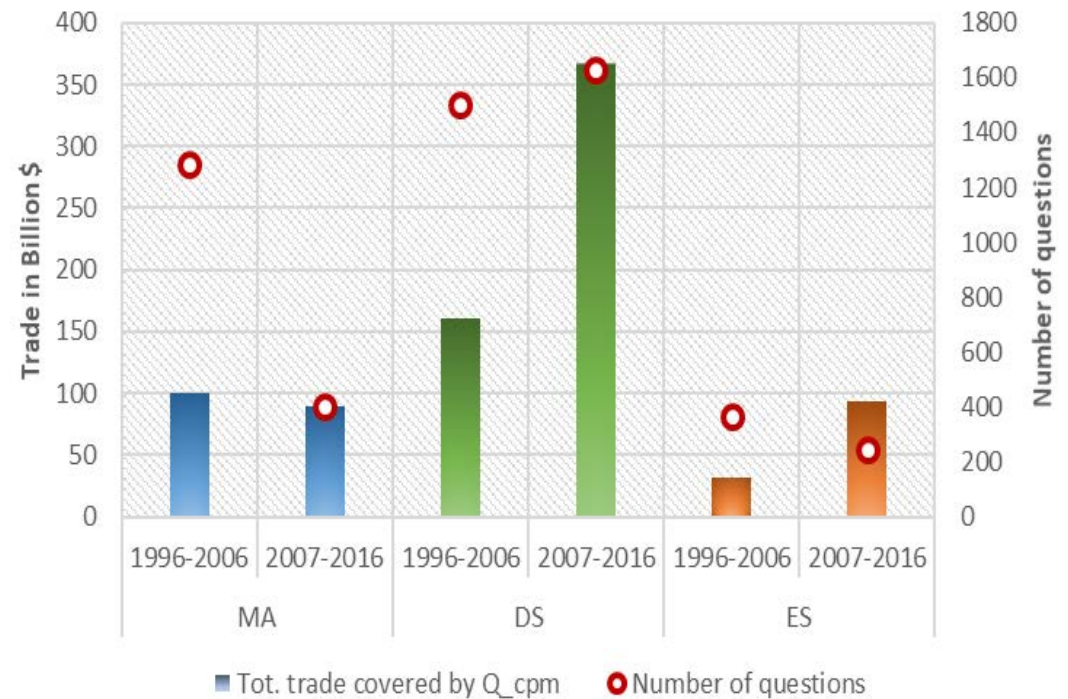
# What do our statistics show?

- Most **economically important** questions are raised on:
  - measures adopted by EU countries and the United States
  - on three product groups:
    - 1) seeds, animal fats and oil;
    - 2) cereals;
    - 3) beverages

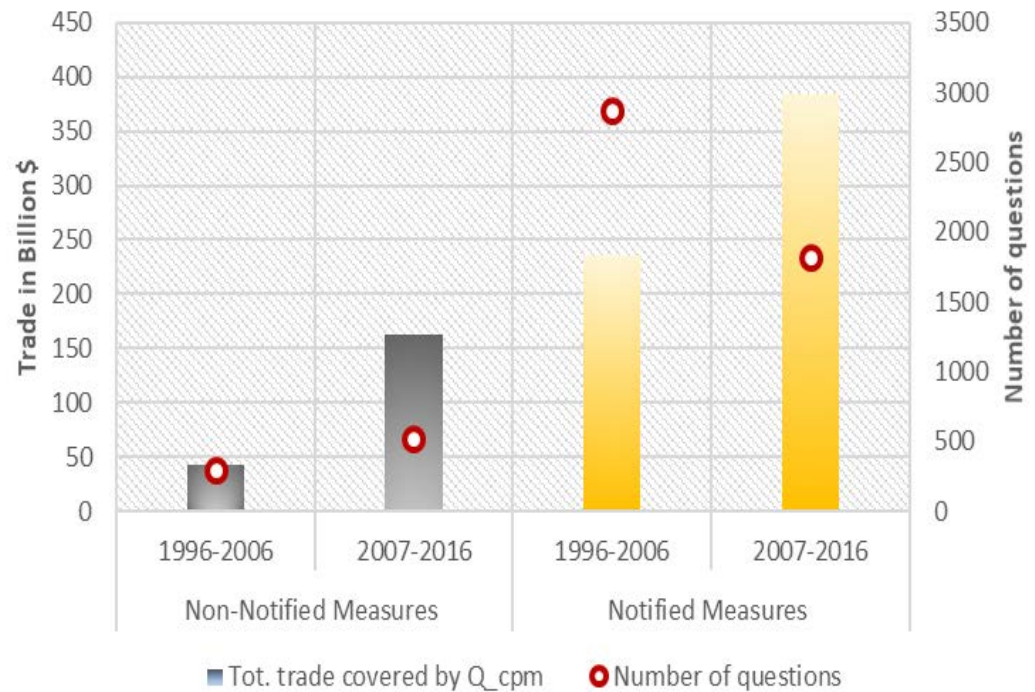
Does this all depend on the mere size of trade of these countries/sectors?

# From market access to domestic support

- DS questions cover increasingly more trade



# Growing importance of questions on non-notified measures



# Conclusions

- Q&As databases maintained by WTO offer a great potential to deepen our understanding of key issues
- The reliability of our analysis is limited by:
  - not all questions are matched to trade flows
  - potential matching errors
- More research needs to be done to understand what are the main driver of Q&A participation
- Researchers need better quality information on product categories relevant to a question:

Could HS code be systematically included in questions?