WTO’s Integrated Database: Why does it matter for the MSMEs?

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Contents

1. Where are we coming from?
2. Where are we today?
3. What else could be done?
Where are we coming from?
1997 IDB Decision required the WTO Secretariat to:

1. **Standardize** national submissions (MFN tariffs & import data)
2. **Validate** the data
3. **Integrate** the import data with the tariffs at the national tariff level

“Cleaning” the data is a lengthy and difficult process
Why is standardization important?

From:

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To:

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Standardize

WTO Secretariat
Typical data transmission flow

Member’s A GVA Mission → National contact point

Secretariat

Geneva

Prone to delays

Member A

Data (March)

Data (September)

Customs (tariffs)

Statistics office (imports)

http://

Reminder

Data

Request

Request

Request
Example of problems with the national submissions

For more details, see JOB/MA/137 & Add.1
IDB Data dissemination

- WTO online tools & publications
- United Nations
- World Bank
- Other authorized users (More than 20)
- Members’ national systems
- Some private companies harvest the information

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IDB data
Typical problems with national submissions are very successful in some areas despite all the limitations and problems.

78% of all tariff data used by international organizations originate in the WTO-IDB.
WTO online tools and publications

• **World tariff profiles**
  Country pages: [https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/tariff_profiles_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/tariff_profiles_e.htm)

• **Data maps**
  Visualize WTP indicator:
  [https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/statis_bis_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/statis_bis_e.htm)

• **Tariff Download Facility** [http://tdf.wto.org](http://tdf.wto.org)
  Data at subheading level (6-digit), multi-country, multi-year

• **WTO data portal, http://data.wto.org**
  ITS, FATS, Tariff, trade, NTMs

• **Tariff Analysis Online**
  Reports, data at the most detailed level ([https://tao.wto.org](https://tao.wto.org))

For Members’ feedback on these tools see G/MA/W/144
Where are we today?
IT has drastically changed

- Increased data needs
- New advanced IT systems (e.g. TFA Single windows)
- Databases interconnect without human intervention
- Real time information
- Different pieces of data are connected to generate new knowledge
A revised IDB Decision was approved in **May 2019** (G/MA/367)

- Consolidated the mandatory requirements (spread across several different documents)
- Clarified the link to other Decisions (PTA-TM, RTA-TM)
- Updated the language and improved the examples
- Reaffirmed Members’ control over their data
- Improved dissemination policy (Annex 4) -> more data is publicly available
- Allowed the submission of additional elements / new ways to submit the data
IDB: mandatory information *(Para. 1)*

- **Applied MFN tariffs** at the national customs tariff nomenclature
- **Import statistics** at the tariff line level by partner
- **Non-reciprocal preferential** tariffs and import statistics by partner (e.g. GSP, LDC schemes)

No change in the mandatory elements
IDB: Additional voluntary elements *(Para. 2)*

- Reciprocal preferences (tariffs & Import), e.g. customs union, FTAs
- Applied internal taxes and other duties and charges, when available at the tariff line level
- *Ad valorem* equivalents
- Imports under TRQs

Some Members already submitted these data, but it was not included due to lack of mandate
Voluntary bilateral agreement for automatic data transmission (Para. 8)

- Adapt to Member’s needs
- Guarantee Member’s control
What else could be done?
Examples of MSMEs problems in getting information

Are there trade costs that I have not considered?
(I don’t want to lose money!)

Where do I find the information?
(I am lost in the Internet...)

Is it a reliable source?
(Can I really trust this information?)

Which website is the correct one?
(Why do they have different information?)

Is the information still valid?
(I really don’t like surprises!)
Examples of MSMEs problems in getting information

Members’ National website
• I can’t find it!
• I can’t access it!
• The system changed!
• I can’t understand that language ...

International Organizations
• Who are they?
• It´s not complete...
• Is it still in force?
• It seems to be quite old...

Online company
• Is it official information?
• Can I trust it?
• Why is it different from the others?
• I need to pay...

What if all of them could have the same data in real time?

See G/MA/IDB/W/13
Possible areas for improvement

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Provide the additional information (Para 2)?

IDB data

APIs, Improved dissemination

WTO online tools & publications

United Nations

World Bank

Other authorized users

Automatic & more frequent submissions (Para 8)?

Members’ national systems

Anybody can connect for free, from anywhere
To summarize:

1. **Proven:** The WTO-IDB is already at the center of the collection and dissemination of **official** tariff information (WTO’s transparency function)

2. **Effective dissemination:** Once submitted to the WTO and processed, a large number of international organizations, governments and private companies also have **free access** to these data

3. **How to build on top of the IDB Decision?**
   - By submitting the additional voluntary elements *(IDB, Para. 2)*
   - By subscribing an agreement to automatically submit the **tariffs** and eventually other information (real time data?) *(IDB, Para. 8)*
   - The WTO Secretariat could further improve:
     - The data dissemination through, e.g. APIs, bulk downloads, etc.
     - The user-friendliness of its online tools and databases *(See G/MA/W/144)*
Thank you!

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