

# WTO MID-YEAR TRADE MONITORING REPORT

This WTO Trade Monitoring Report covers trade and trade-related developments during the period from 16 October 2022 to 15 May 2023. This mid-year preparatory contribution to the annual report by the Director-General is provided for in the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) mandate, which aims to assist the Trade Policy Review Body (TPRB) in undertaking an annual overview of developments in the international trading environment.



The WTO Secretariat strives to ensure that the Trade Monitoring Reports are factual and objective. Since 2009, the Reports have sought to provide nuance to developments in the area of international trade.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This **WTO Trade Monitoring Report** on trade-related developments arrives at a time when the global economy continues to be affected by multiple crises. The continuing war in Ukraine, events related to climate change, high food and energy prices, and inflation, as well as the lingering ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, are having serious implications for the global economic environment. The **pronounced weakening of merchandise trade**, which slumped during the fourth quarter of 2022 and appeared to have remained below trend in the first quarter of 2023, is of concern. World merchandise trade volume growth was expected to slow in 2022 and in early 2023, before picking up in 2024.

The pace of implementation of new **export restrictions** by WTO Members has increased since 2020, first in the context of the pandemic and subsequently with the war in Ukraine and the food security crisis. Although some of these have been rolled back, as of mid-May 2023, 63 export restrictions on food, feed and fertilizers were still in place, in addition to 21 COVID-19 related export restrictions on essential products.

During the review period, WTO Members introduced **182 new trade-facilitating and 110 trade-restrictive measures on goods, unrelated to the pandemic**.

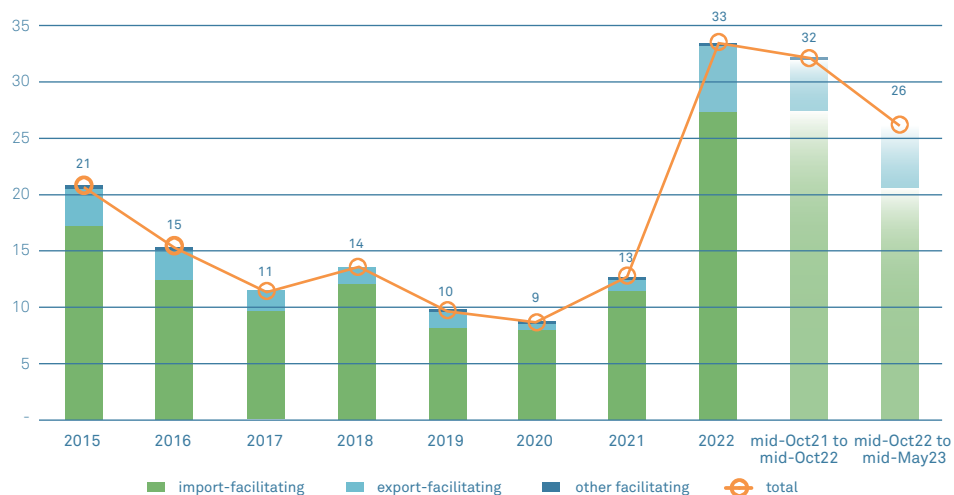
## Trade Monitoring Database

The **Trade Monitoring database** (TMDb) provides information on trade measures implemented by WTO Members and Observers since October 2008.



## Trade facilitating measures, average per month, 2015-mid-May 2023

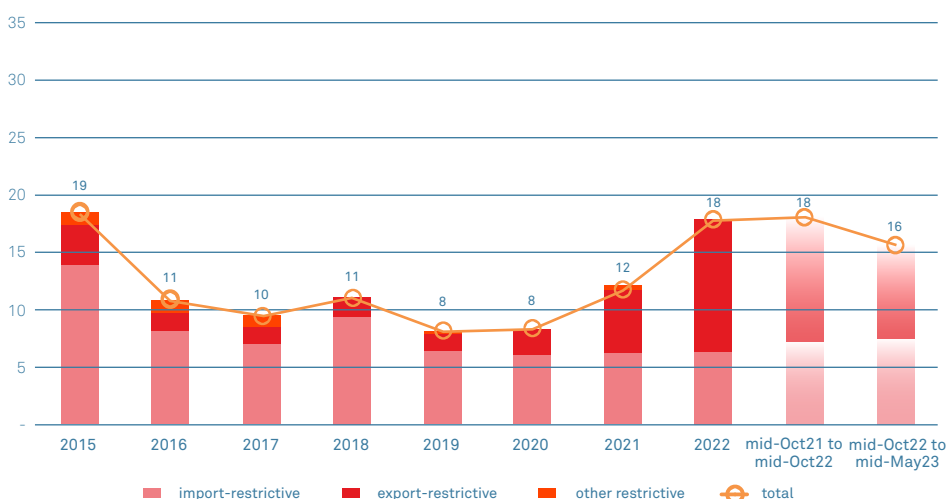
Source: WTO Secretariat.



During the review period, most trade-facilitating measures were import measures and most trade-restrictive measures were export measures.

## Trade restrictive measures, average per month, 2015-mid-May 2023

Source: WTO Secretariat.



For the third time since the beginning of the Trade Monitoring Exercise the number of new export restrictions has outpaced that of import restrictions.

The trade coverage of trade-facilitating measures introduced during the review period was estimated at USD 703.7 billion (down from USD 1,160.5 billion in the last report) and that of trade restrictive measures at USD 110.5 billion (down from USD 278.0 billion).

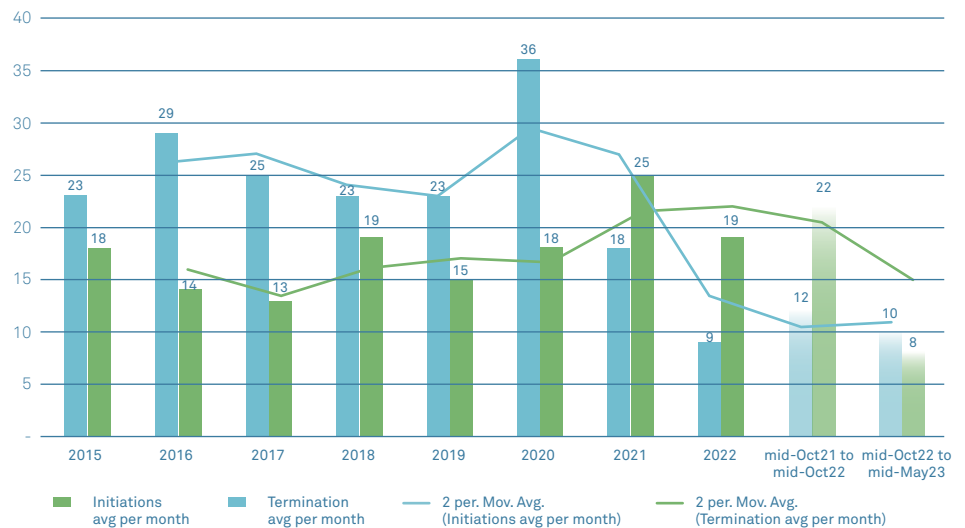
The **stockpile** of import restrictions in force remained important with no sign of any meaningful roll back of existing measures. By the end of 2022, 9.2% of global imports were affected by import restrictions implemented since 2009 and which are still in force.

In 2021 and 2022, initiations of **trade remedy** investigations by WTO Members declined sharply while terminations of trade remedy actions increased. During the review period, the average number of trade remedy initiations (10.3 per month) was the second lowest since 2012 and that of terminations (8.1) the lowest since 2012. Trade remedy actions remained an important trade policy tool for many WTO Members, accounting for 30.6% of all non-COVID-19 related trade measures on goods recorded in this Report. Anti-dumping continued to be the most frequent trade remedy action in terms of initiations and terminations.

## Trade remedy initiations and terminations, average per month, 2015-mid-May 2023

Note: Values are rounded.

Source: WTO Secretariat.



The significant decline in the number of initiations of trade remedies observed since 2021 may represent an important change in the landscape of trade measures. There may be several reasons for this recent decline. For example, in the case of both the pandemic and more recently the war in Ukraine, countries appear to have focused on making sure that their territories remained well stocked and accessible for a wide range of products. Such policies may have impacted the use of the trade remedies instrument.

Most of the 74 new **services** measures introduced during the review period were of a trade facilitating nature. Almost half of the measures were horizontal affecting different modes of supply across various sectors, one third related to telecommunications or financial services trade, and the rest related to business services, health, tourism and travel, and transport services.

WTO Members continued to fine-tune their **intellectual property** (IP) regimes and phased out many pandemic-related measures, while some formalized the utilization of online procedures created during lockdowns. Members continued their discussions on the possible extension of the TRIPS Decision adopted at MC12 on COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.

The review period saw the introduction of numerous new **economic support measures** by WTO Members, including environmental impact reduction programmes, renewable-energy production schemes or support for energy efficiency and decarbonization and for clean- and renewable-energy projects. Other measures included various support programmes for the agricultural sector.

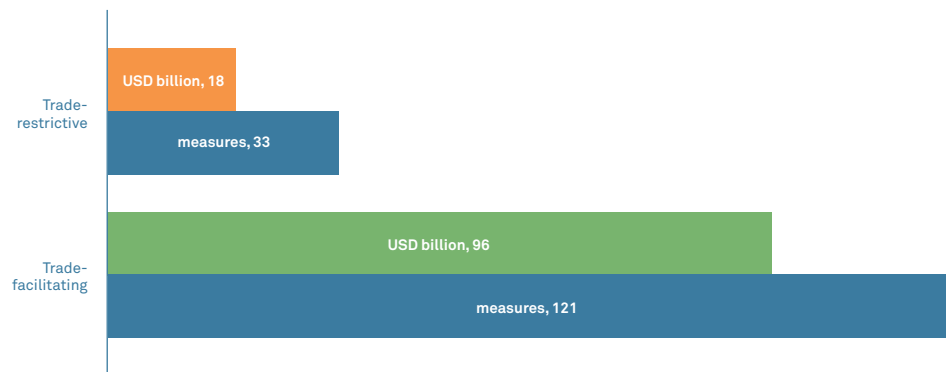
The implementation of new **COVID-19 trade-related measures** by WTO Members declined over the past 7 months, with 17 such measures recorded on goods. Most of these measures consisted of reductions of customs duties, terminations of existing measures or amendments of others. Most of the 454 trade and trade-related measures in the area of goods have been implemented by WTO Members and Observers since the beginning of the pandemic were of a trade facilitating nature (55.3%) while the rest might be considered trade-restrictive (44.7%). Members continued to phase out the pandemic-related measures, and in particular the restrictive ones. By mid-May 2023, 83.7% of the export restrictions had been rolled back, leaving 21 restrictions in place.

No new COVID-19-related services measures were reported by WTO Members, but many measures introduced in 2020 remain in place. Since the beginning of the pandemic, 156 COVID-19-related services measures were identified, with 22 reported as terminated by mid-May 2023. The number of new COVID-19-related support measures to mitigate the social and economic impacts of the pandemic fell sharply.

## COVID-19 trade and trade-related measures on goods in force, by mid-May 2023

(Number of measures and trade coverage in USD billion)

Source: WTO Secretariat.



The Report also covers several other important trade-related developments that took place in the areas of SPS, TBT and Agriculture and the discussions on global environment issues; fisheries subsidies; e commerce; Aid for Trade; government procurement; trade facilitation; trade finance; micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs); and women's economic empowerment.

The successful conclusion of the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) in June 2022 secured a series of unprecedented multilaterally agreed outcomes and demonstrated that multilateral cooperation on trade can deliver. Work is already under way to build on these outcomes at MC13 in early 2024 and a Senior Officials meeting will take place on 23-24 October 2023 to ensure that MC13 produces outcomes that help all economies to build a fairer, more just and more resilient economic future.

WTO Members must work collectively to ensure the success of the ministerial meeting and for reinvigorating the multilateral trading system and boosting the world economy.

## COVID-19 AND WORLD TRADE

The WTO dedicated portal on [COVID-19 and world trade](#) provides updated trade-related information on the impact the pandemic has had on exports and imports, including COVID-19 measures taken by WTO Members and Observers in the area of [goods](#), [services](#) and [intellectual property](#). It also provides information on COVID-19 related [support measures](#) communicated by WTO Members and Observers to the Secretariat. This information has been compiled by the WTO Secretariat and is an informal situation report and an attempt to provide transparency with respect to measures taken in the context of the pandemic. These lists of measures are not exhaustive and are updated regularly by the WTO Secretariat.