



STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

MEASURING THE LINK TO GOODS TRADE

Technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures set rules for how products enter foreign markets. Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs) arise when these measures are utilized to make market entry unnecessarily burdensome or discriminate against certain market entrants.

From 2016 to 2025, Technical Barriers to Trade potentially concerned:

94.1%
of U.S. exports
by value

84.8%
of HS-4 product
categories

96.9%
of HS-2 product
categories

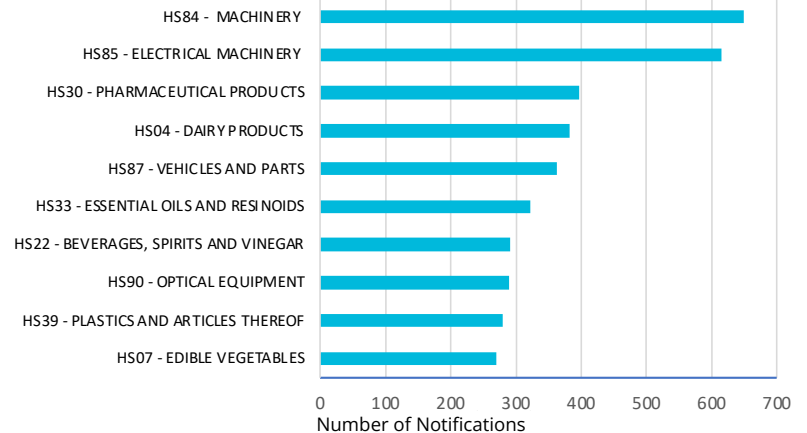
Rules and procedures that are not based on international standards can create challenges for U.S. exporters, especially when they are unnecessarily trade-restrictive. Stakeholders can register to receive e-Ping database alerts on emerging TBTs (<https://www.epingalert.org>).

World Trade Organization (WTO) members are required to notify the WTO technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures when a measure:

- may significantly affect international trade; and
- is not in accordance with the technical content of relevant international standards or a relevant international standard does not exist.

ITA analyzed notifications for the period 2016 to 2025. These notifications signal additions to the total stock of regulations and are a proxy for the evolution of the overall global regulatory environment. Some of these notifications represent measures that could become TBTs.

Top 10 Product Categories Account for 40 percent of Notifications



Some WTO Members Notify More Often: Top 10 Members by Number of Notifications

1. Uganda	1759	6. United States	1197
2. Kenya	1500	7. China	1005
3. Tanzania	1425	8. Brazil	948
4. Rwanda	1284	9. Republic of Korea	715
5. European Union	1235	10. Burundi	692

WHAT ITA SEEKS TO ACHIEVE

ITA seeks to ensure transparency, broad stakeholder participation, and fairness when trading partners develop standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessment procedures. By engaging with regional bodies and bilateral partners, ITA helps ensure that new regulations do not become unnecessary barriers to trade.

WTO trading partners are obligated to publish new regulations at an early appropriate stage, giving stakeholders ample time to provide comments in advance of adoption. U.S. trade agreements can reinforce these obligations.



Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the difference between standards and technical regulations?

Compliance with technical regulations is required by law to put a product on the market, while compliance with standards may not be. Governments can make standards into technical regulations by incorporating them into domestic law. This infographic focuses on both, as they are linked in the WTO e-Ping database to the types of goods they affect.

Why look at notifications to the Technical Barriers to Trade Committee?

Notifications signal potential barriers that could significantly affect exporters. WTO members are obligated to notify the WTO of regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could have a substantial impact on trade and that differ from relevant international standards or create new standards where none exist. The research updates “Standards and Regulations: Measuring the Link to Goods Trade” (2016), using the most recent data. It tests the robustness of results across years and countries.

Do notifications represent regulations that are in force?

Not necessarily; the WTO requires that technical regulations are notified at an early appropriate stage when they can still be modified, so there is often a lag between the notification of proposed technical regulations and when they enter into force. Some notified measures change or are withdrawn depending on input received from other WTO members. The time between initial notification and entry into force will depend on each country's regulatory procedures and when that country notified the measure to the WTO TBT Committee.

Do notifications serve as a good proxy for the overall global regulatory environment?

Notifications under the TBT agreement aim to promote trade by ensuring that technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures are developed in a transparent manner. TBT notifications embody countries' forward-looking regulatory priorities. As these measures enter into force, they can add to the existing stock of TBTs. Calculating the value of total U.S. goods exports sets an upper limit of affected trade when, for example, production must be adapted to comply with a country's technical regulations.

Why focus on the most frequently notifying countries?

U.S. exports to individual countries differ in value and commodity composition. By looking at individual countries or country blocs that account for most notifications, we identify frequency of notification and commodity coverage by country. By conducting and making trading partners aware of the results of our substantive examination of these notifications, we can continue to encourage robust reporting and greater global regulatory transparency.

