



Why is it important to enhance the transparency of non-tariff measures?

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NTM transparency and WTO objectives

What matters for firms

Uncertainty huge at extensive margin

Transparency and certainty on NTMs is as much a factor for firms as is “binding” of tariffs

Services regulation; compliance with certification requirements

Transparency really matters for small firms, and firms without access to private information about foreign markets

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Transparency in WTO

Three generations of transparency

“Right to know” since GATT 1947

Publication, enquiry points, notification
sunlight as disinfectant, but not enough, thus:

Monitoring and surveillance since the Tokyo Round

TPRM, “specific trade concerns”

Seek clarification; ask about what should have been notified

Process only includes Members, thus:

Reporting and engagement since 2002

TBT and SPS Information Management Systems (IMS)

new Integrated Trade Intelligence Portal (I-TIP)

World Trade Report ...

Data problems

Formal notifications may not be accurate, or complete

Real-time monitoring hampered by absent and late notifications

World Trade Report also uses:

- Results of surveillance process, and disputes data from other international organizations

- Business surveys

TPR process shows how to use “verified” third-party data



Surveillance problems

“Specific trade concerns” best in SPS, TBT

But few active participants; results not always reported

Agriculture Q&A process improving

Analogous process under-developed in other committees (e.g. ILP, ASCM)

Needs an “umbrella” database

The transparency trilemma

1. Surveillance system designed to monitor official obligations
Even the TPRM serves governments first
2. Analysts try to build picture of economic impact not implementation of commitments
- 3.