

Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda

Market access in times of geopolitical tensions

16.10.2025

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- 1. Trade and Sustainable Development**
 - 2. Trade and market access, focus on tariffs**
 - 3. Non-tariff measures**
 - 4. Voluntary sustainability standards**
- 

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- 

➤ Trade leads to economic development

➤ As tariffs went down, trade and the global economy thrived.

The extraordinary expansion of trade contributed to global economic growth and a strong reduction in extreme poverty



Source: UNCTAD Secretariat, based on UNCTADstat and World Bank WDI.

Note: Poverty headcount ratio at US\$ 2.15 a day at 2017 purchasing power parities in per cent of the population.

Why?

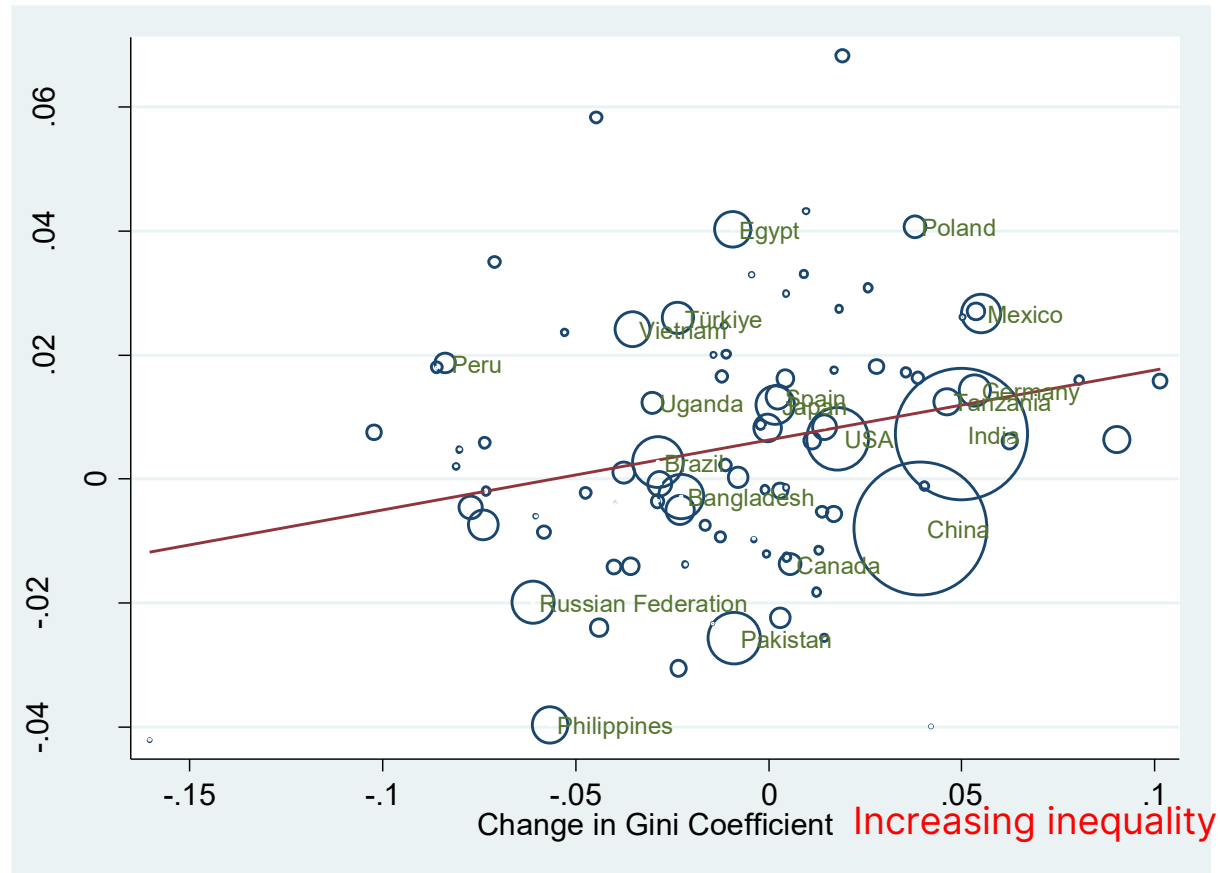
- Most impressive development cases in recent history strongly linked to trade
- Trade contributed to lift millions out of poverty
- Positive and statistically significant relationship between international trade and economic growth and employment
 - **Specialize in producing** goods they excel in, supporting efficient resource allocation and productivity improvement
 - Trade fosters **competition**, driving domestic industries to become more efficient, reduce costs, and improve product quality
- Does not work for all and needs complementary policies

➤ Trade and social dimension .. Mixed impact

Well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities

Why?

- Trade has had positive and negative impact on social dimension
- Contributed in some cases to increasing within country inequality
 - Wage differential between formal and informal sector, and skilled vs unskilled labour can increase
 - Large firms benefit relatively more from trade
- BUT can be positive:
 - Trade can create employment and improve labour conditions
 - Opportunity for female workers
 - ...



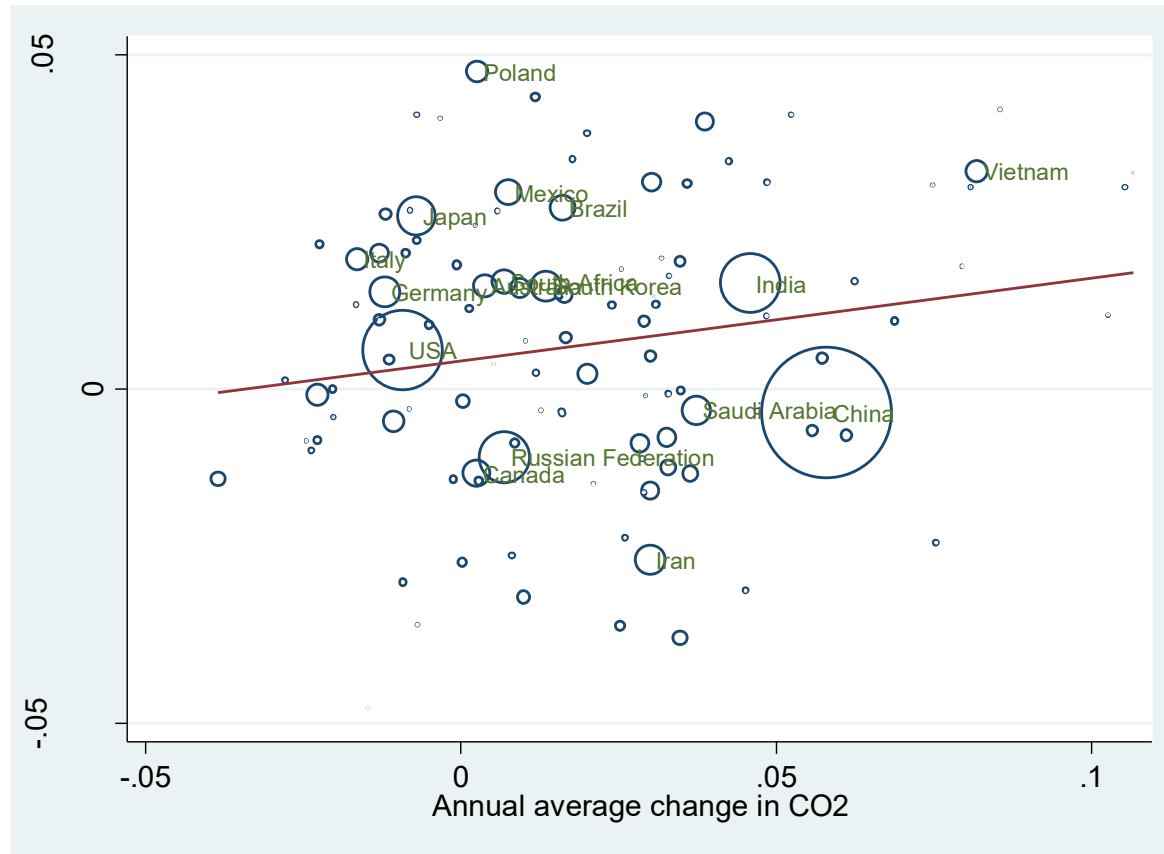
Source: UNCTAD based on UNCTADSTAT and World Bank WDI.

Note: changes are between 2000 and 2021, or most recent available year. Size of circles denotes population.

Higher Gini = higher inequality

➤ Trade has mixed impact on environment

Preservation and responsible use of natural resources and the protection of ecosystems



Why?

- Trade has had positive and negative impact on environment
- **Possible negative impact**
 - Increased economic activity
 - Movement of goods across borders which can result in environmental exploitation (e.g., overfishing)
 - Carbon leakage
- **BUT can be positive:**
 - Exchange of goods and services and technology that can support more sustainable production and consumption
 - More efficient resource allocation

No FREE trade

Instruments to regulate market access

Trade can negatively impact less competitive sectors, affect infant industries and national security, spread diseases, lead to environmental degradation, ...

Important instruments that regulate market access

1. Tariffs
2. Non-tariff measures
3. Voluntary Sustainability Standards

- 
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- 

Market access: Tariffs and recent developments

Oct 16th 2025

Alessandro Nicita
TAB/DITC

Some words on global trade

33 Trillion US\$ in 2024 (25T\$ goods - 8T\$ services)

Global economy is US\$ 110 Trillion, so about 30% of global output is traded and consumed abroad.

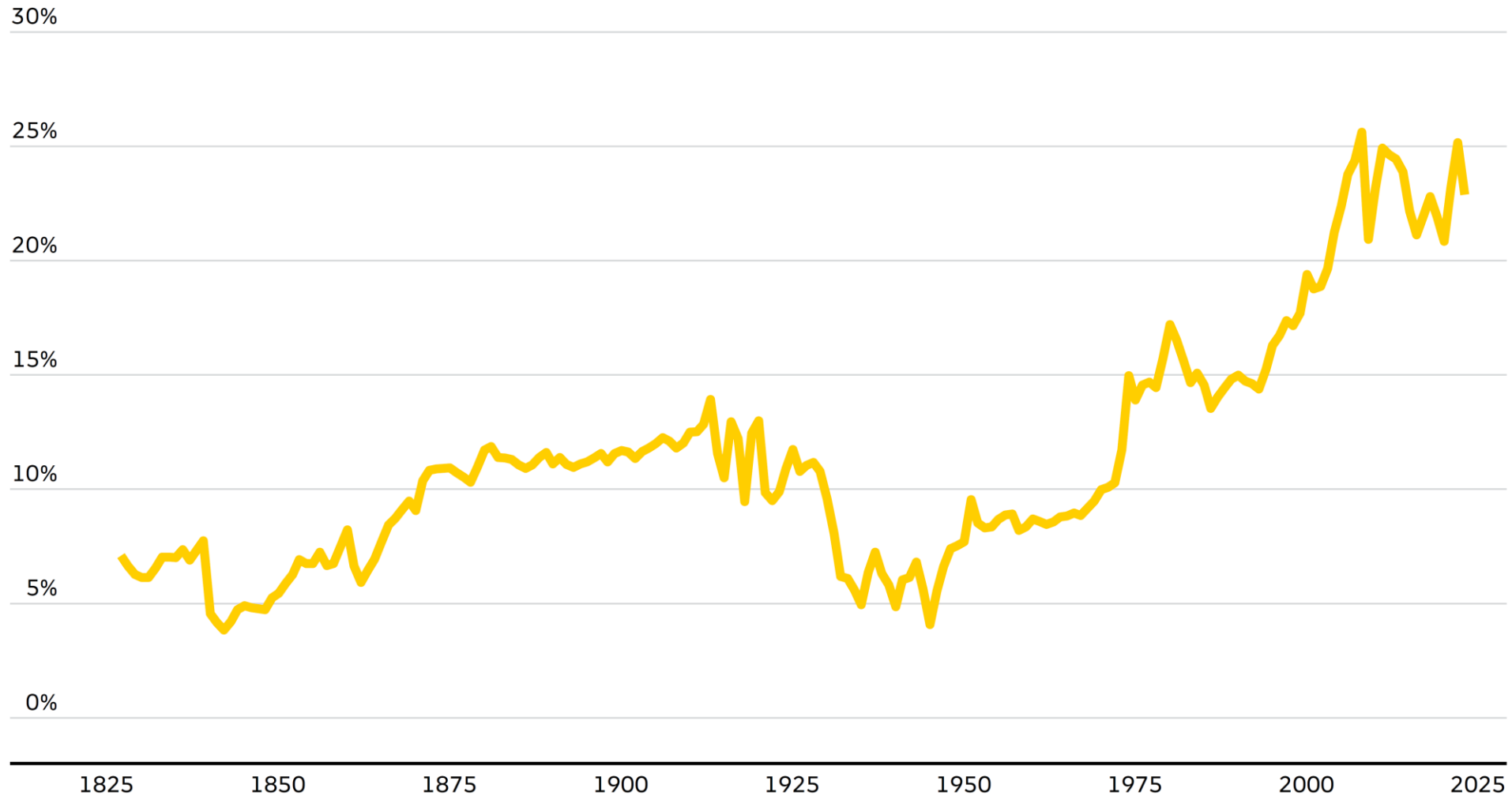
Trade greatly increased during the last few decades

US\$ 8T in 2000 with a global economy of US\$ 34T (25% of GDP)

Main reasons for the growth in trade:

- Emergence of international production networks (companies seek to max profits by leveraging cost differentials).
- Lower trade costs (efficient shipping logistics, lower tariff)
- Stable and predictable global trade systems and rules (enforced contracts, international and commercial law)

➤ Trade in goods over global GDP



➤ **Some words on tariffs**

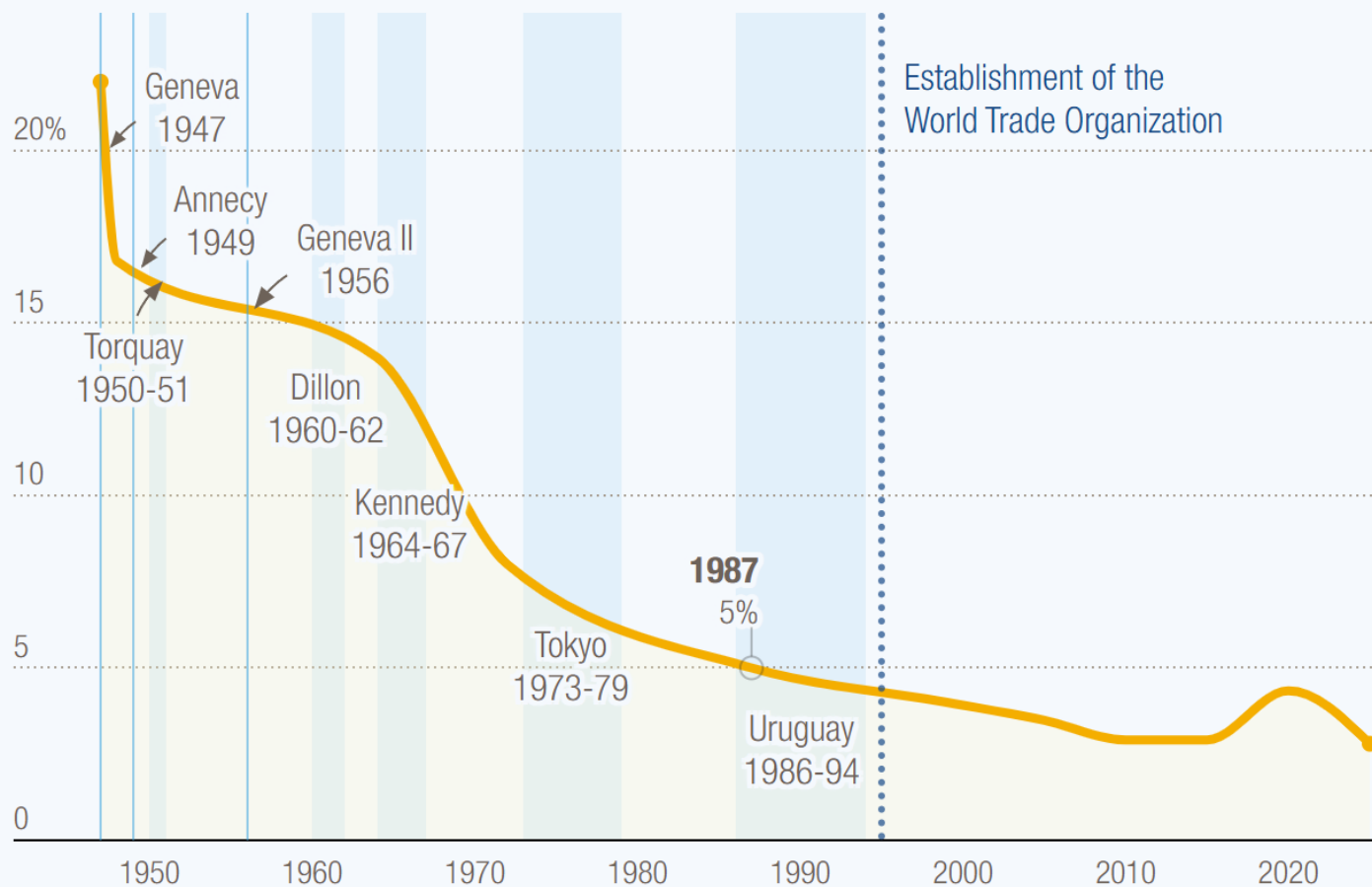
- Bound (WTO), MFN (WTO), Preferential (RTA)
- Effectively applied (lowest) vs actually paid (sometimes higher)
- Ad-Valorem (on prices), Specific (on volumes)

- Tariff-rates quotas (sometime seasonal)
- Anti-dumping tariffs, countervailing duties (Defense from unfair competition)
- Export tariffs (tax)

Who pays the tariffs: importers. Who bears the costs: it depends.

➤ MFN liberalization

Applied tariffs over eight multilateral negotiation rounds

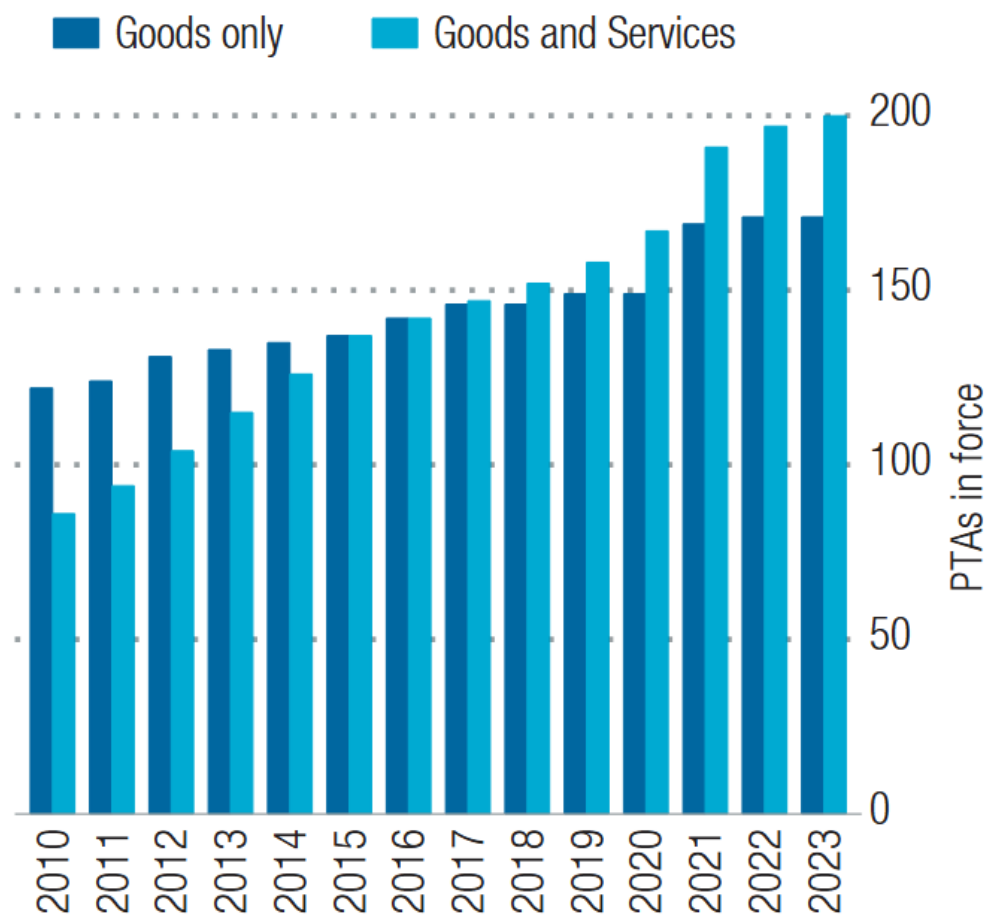


Source: UNCTAD Secretariat, based on UN Comtrade and UNCTAD TRAINS since 2005 across 153 developed and developing countries. Data for the United States, the European Union and Japan were taken from Bown and Irwin (2015) for the earlier period.

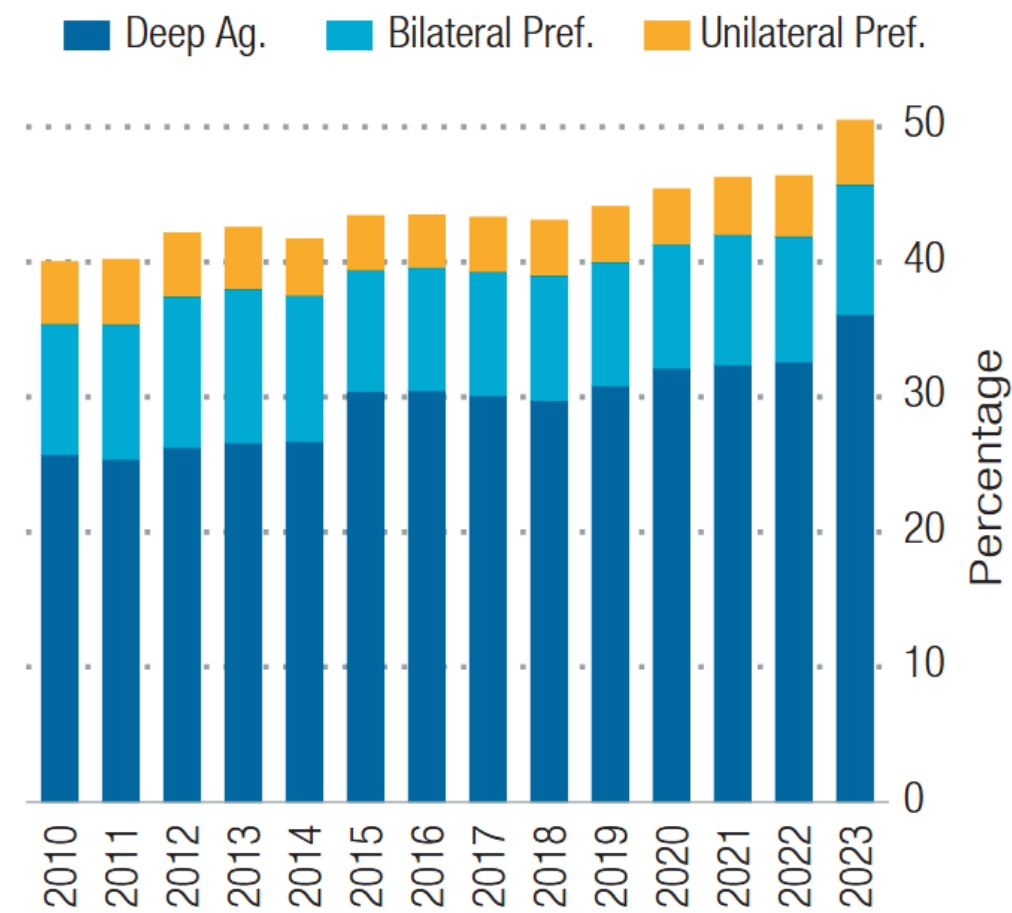
Note: Trade-weighted tariffs using merchandise imports in current US\$ grouped into 5-year periods.

➤ Preferential liberalization. PTAs

a) Trade agreements

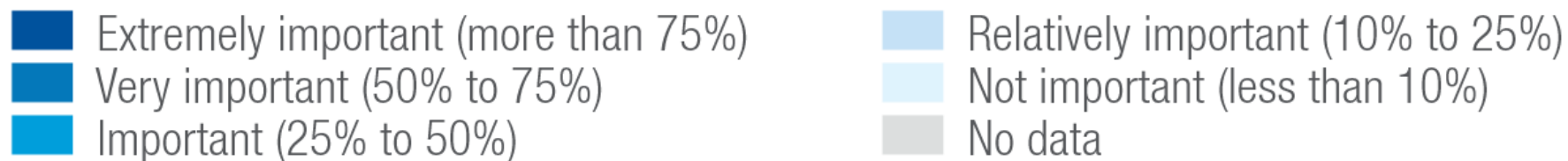
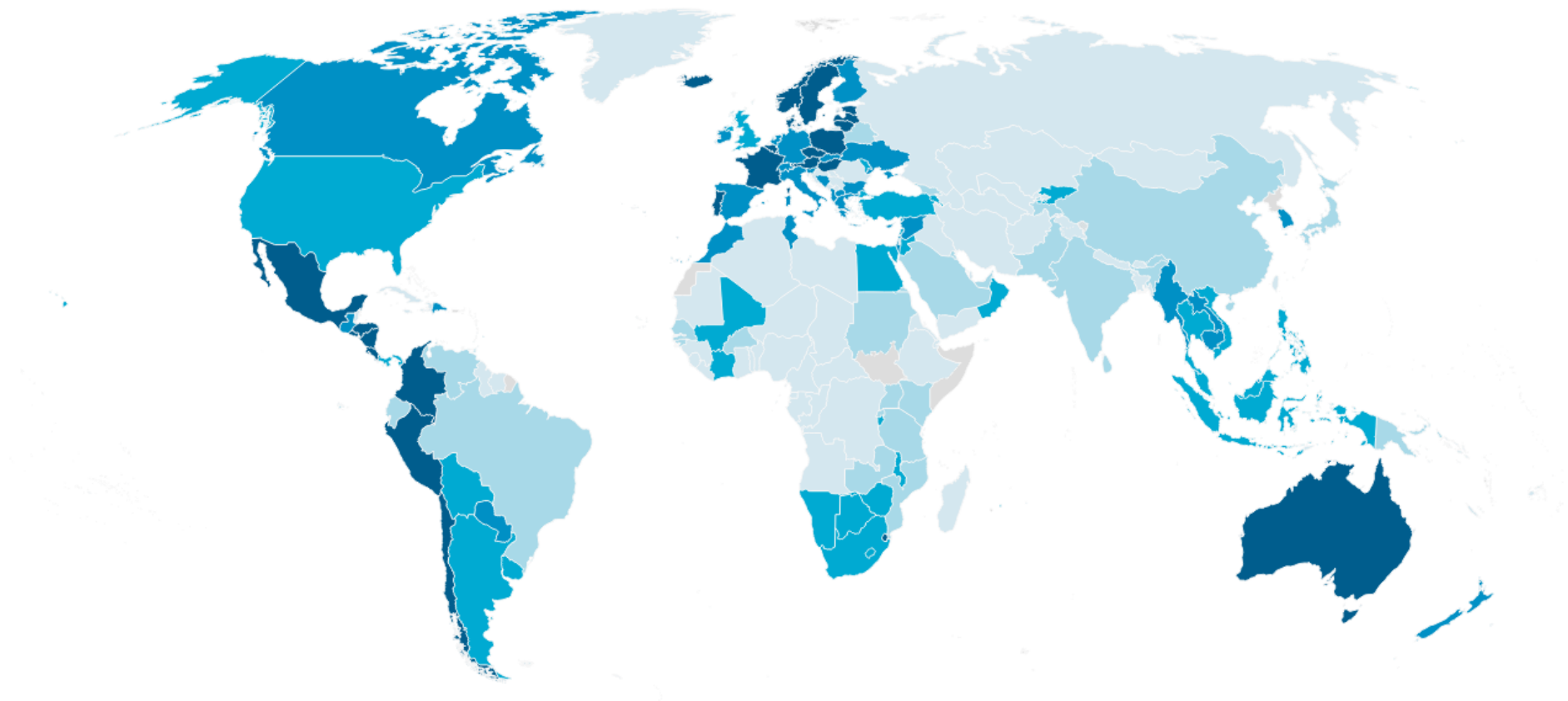


b) Trade under PTAs



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on WTO RTAIS data and COMTRADE data.

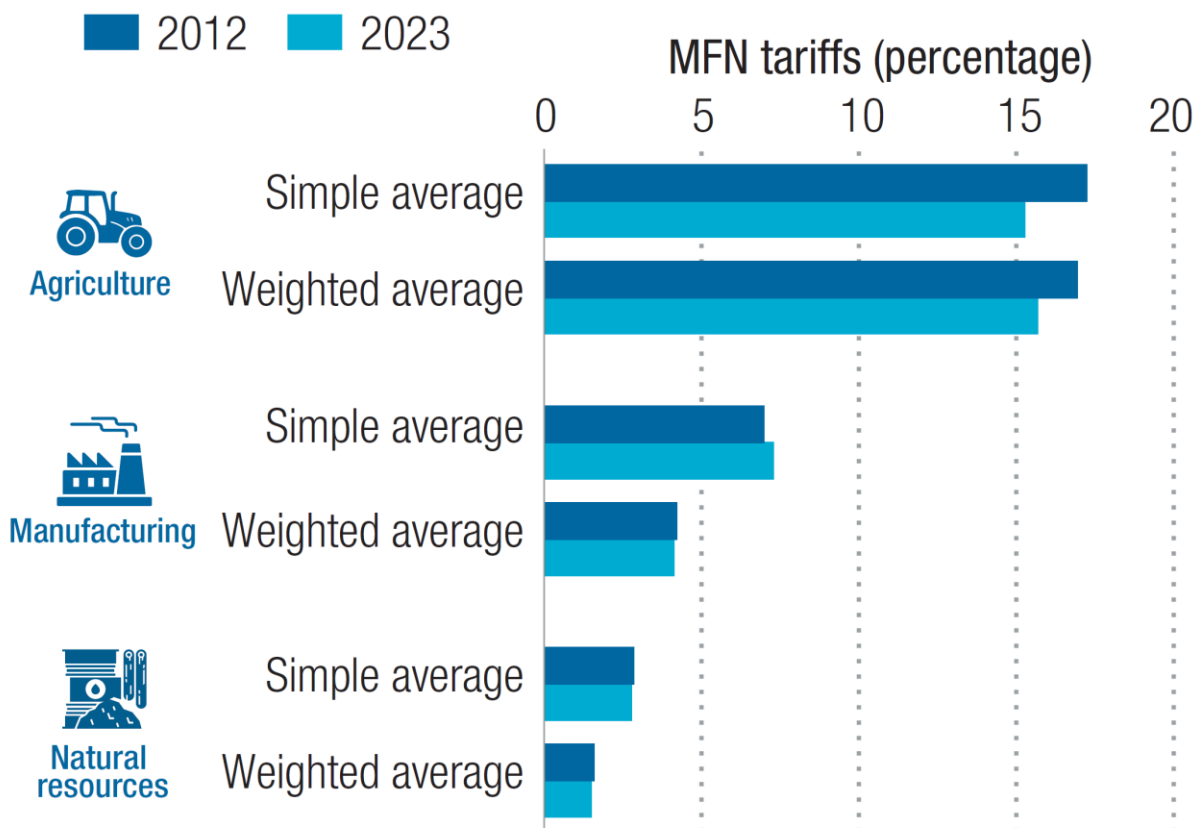
➤ Importance of Deep PTA



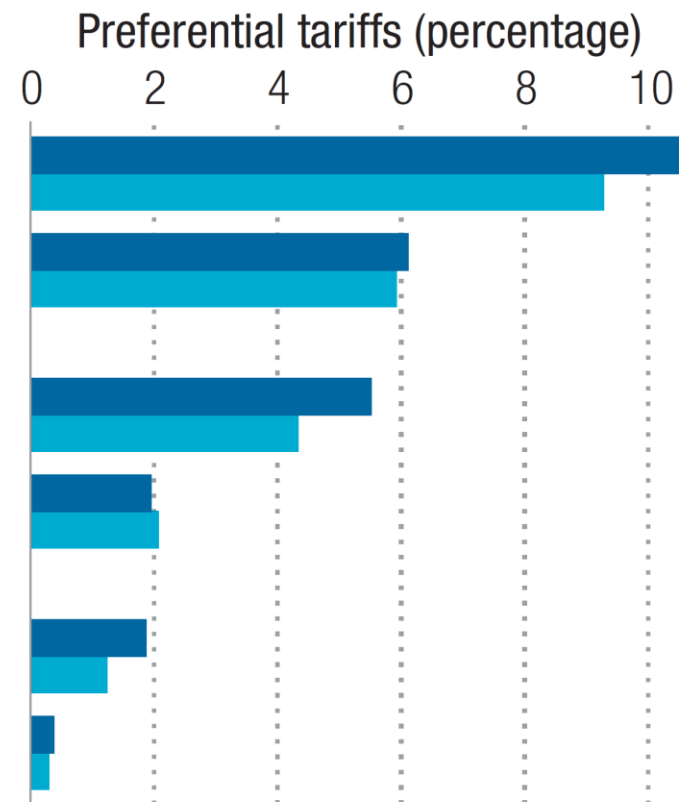
Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on WTO RTAIS and COMTRADE data.

Multilateral and preferential tariffs

a) Multilateral liberalization



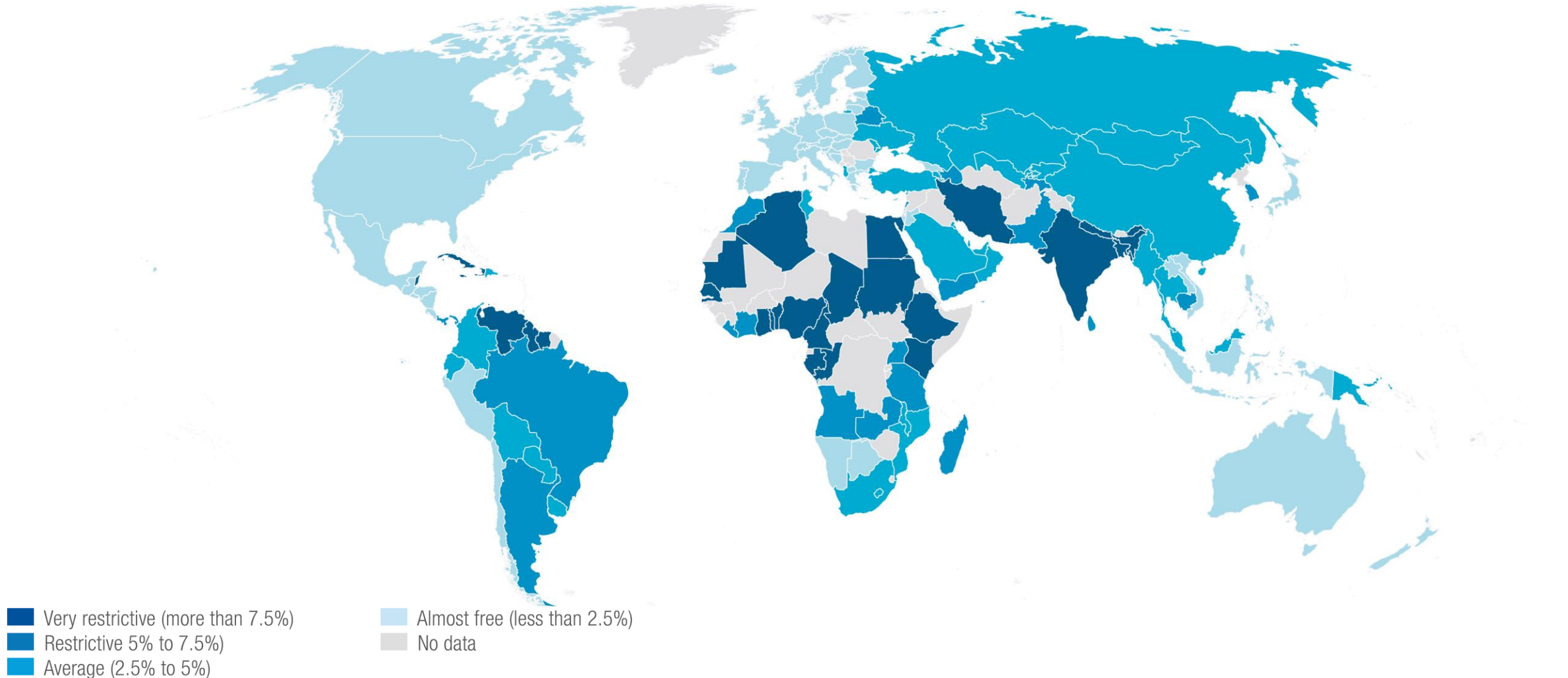
b) Preferential liberalization



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on COMTRADE data and UNCTAD TRAINS data.

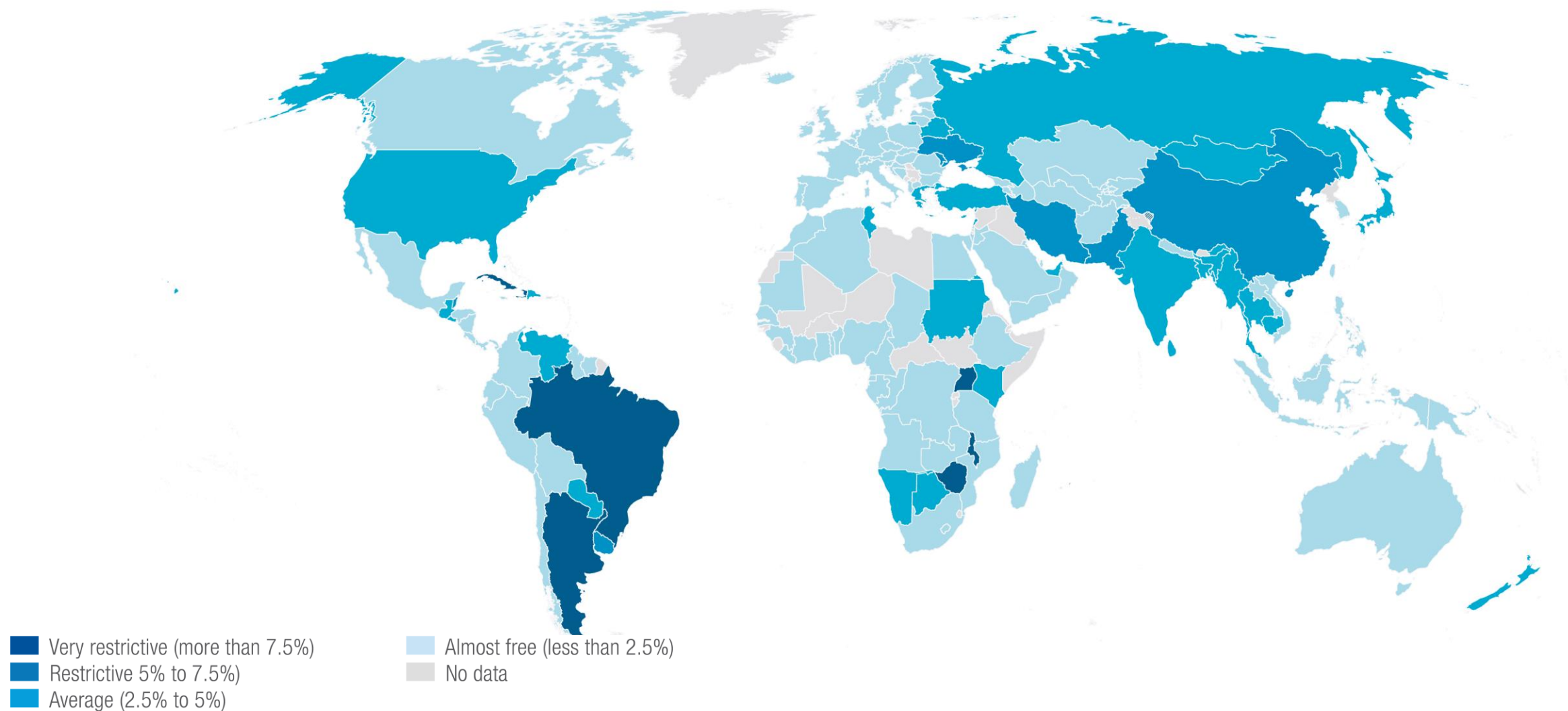
➤ Where tariffs are higher?

a. Import restrictiveness (2023)



➤ Who is facing higher tariffs?

b. Export restrictiveness (2023)

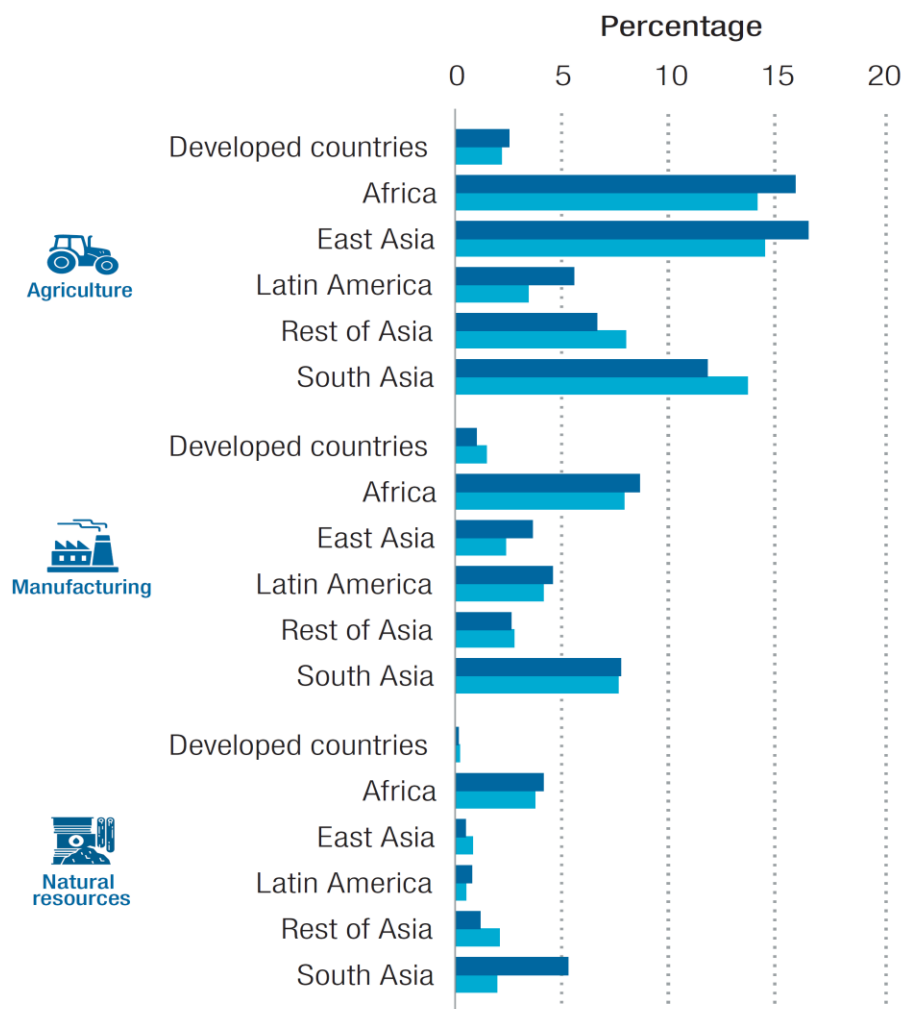


➤ Tariffs by sector (trade weighted average)

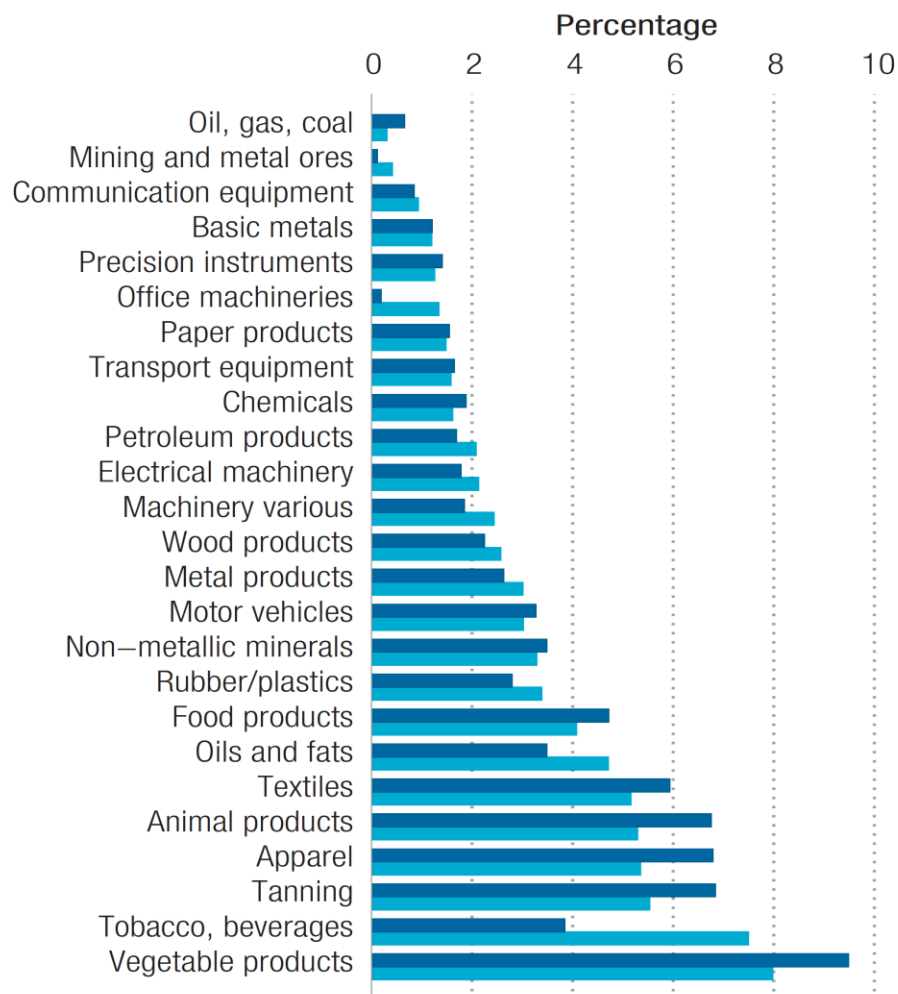
a) Average tariffs

2012

2023



b) Average tariffs, by sector





Current trends:

Three sources of instability / tensions

Policy uncertainty

US trade policy shifting, multilateral trade framework weakening

Trade policy objectives are changing in many countries

From economic (\$) to noneconomic objectives (social, labor, environment).

Global trade imbalances persisting and widening

tensions between deficit vs surplus country

➤ What drives market access negotiations: Trade policy objectives have re-balanced

- ▶ **PAST** : Economic/efficiency objectives: Cost reduction along GVC. Mutual concessions in opening markets. Access to cheap inputs / imports.
win-win - trade increases for most (comparative advantage)
- ▶ **PRESENT** : beyond economic motives, geopolitics, support national security or key sectors. Nationalism “Made in....”
 - market access for sale
 - trade as an instrument for non-economic objectives
 - trade imbalances and zero sum game (import=export)

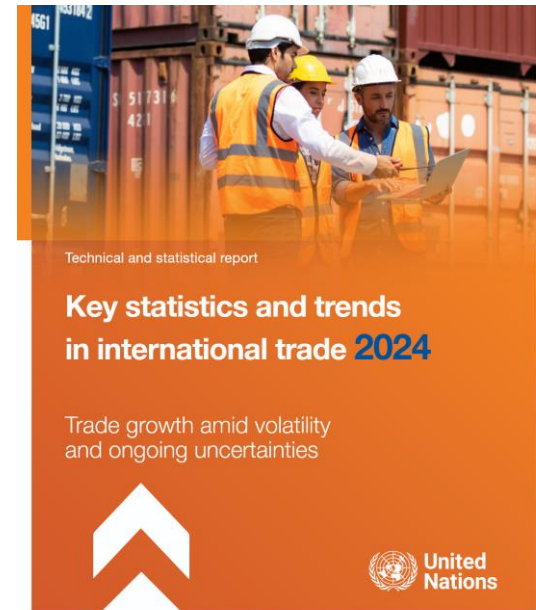
➤ How is international trade doing?

We do monitor trade

- Trade is growing, but patterns are changing
- Geopolitics matters
- Sectoral changes
- South-South is growing but volatile
- Services is growing a lot faster

For more info:

- Key statistics in international trade
- Global Trade Update



Facts and figures

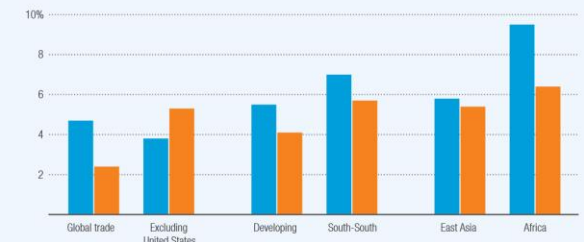
Global trade remains strong despite policy changes and uncertainty

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Global trade expanded by more than half a trillion US\$ in the first half of 2025 despite volatility and policy shifts, with growing momentum continuing into Q3.
- ▶ Growth in Q2 was driven primarily by developing economies, supported by South-South trade. Weak trade performance by the United States pulled down the global average.
- ▶ The manufacturing sector continues to drive global trade growth, led by electronics. Hybrid and electric vehicles are driving automotive trade growth.
- ▶ The negative impact of trade policy uncertainty has remained relatively contained, keeping the overall outlook for global trade in 2025 strongly positive.

➤ **Developing economies drove global trade in goods to new highs in Q2 amid softening United States imports**

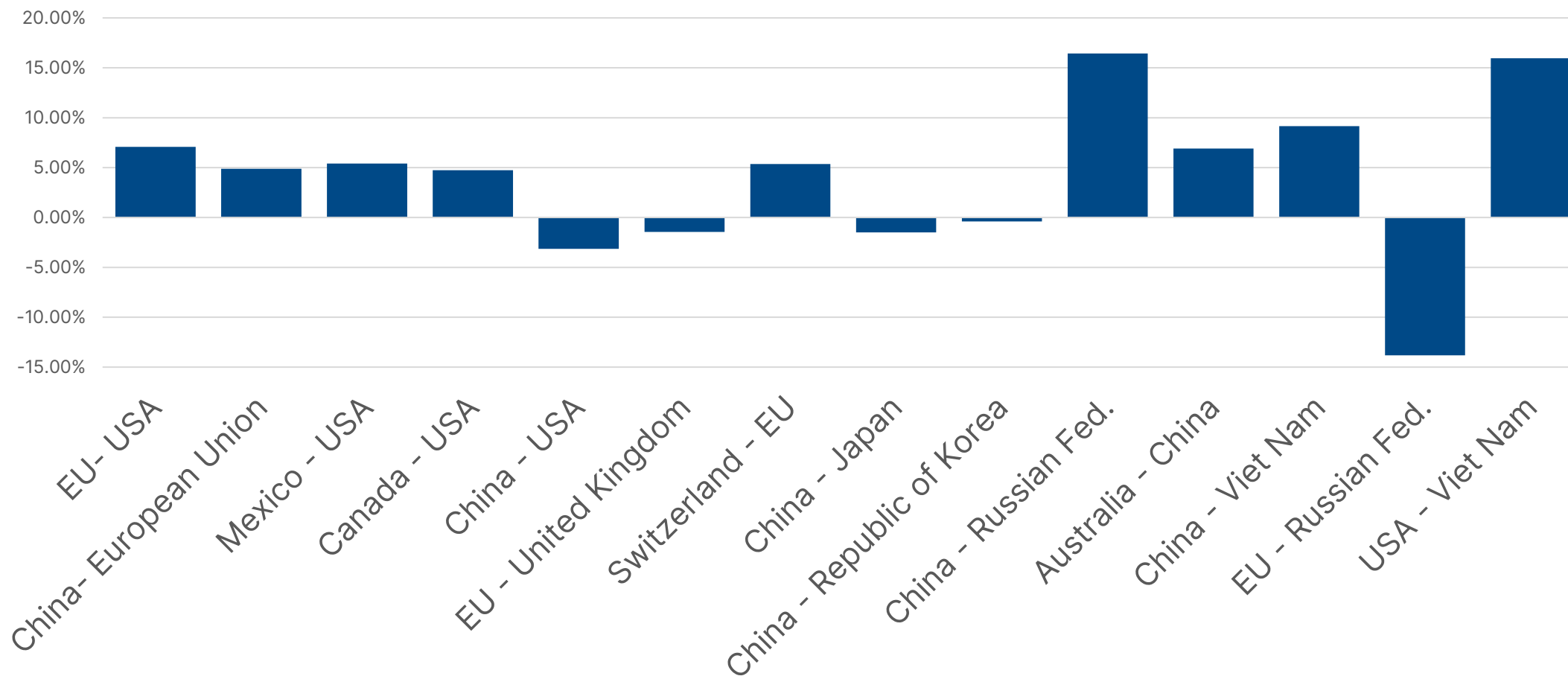
■ Trailing four quarters growth ■ Quarterly growth



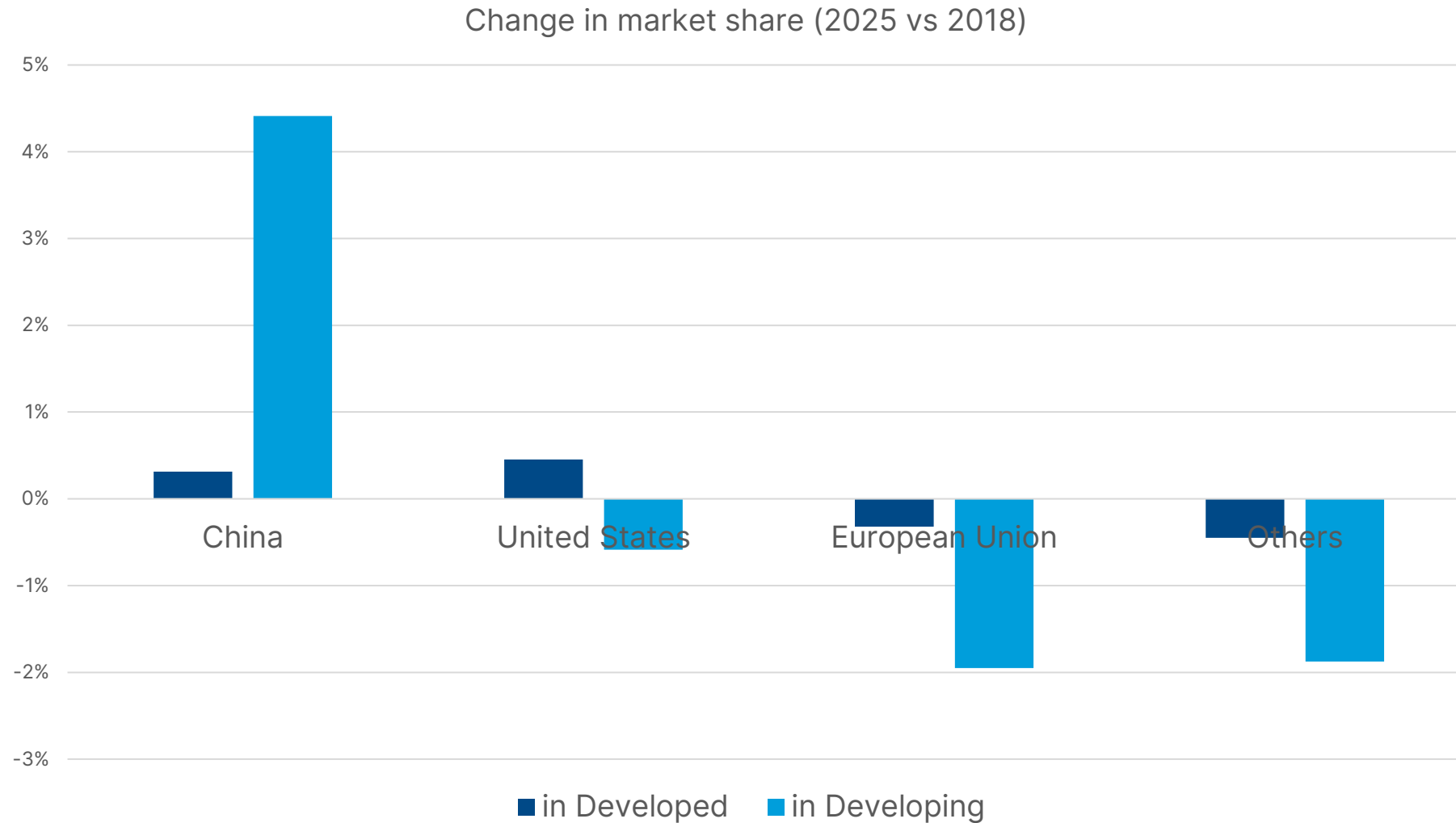
Source: UNCTAD calculations based on national statistics.

➤ Trade trends reflect geopolitical events

Bilateral trade growth per year between 2018-2023



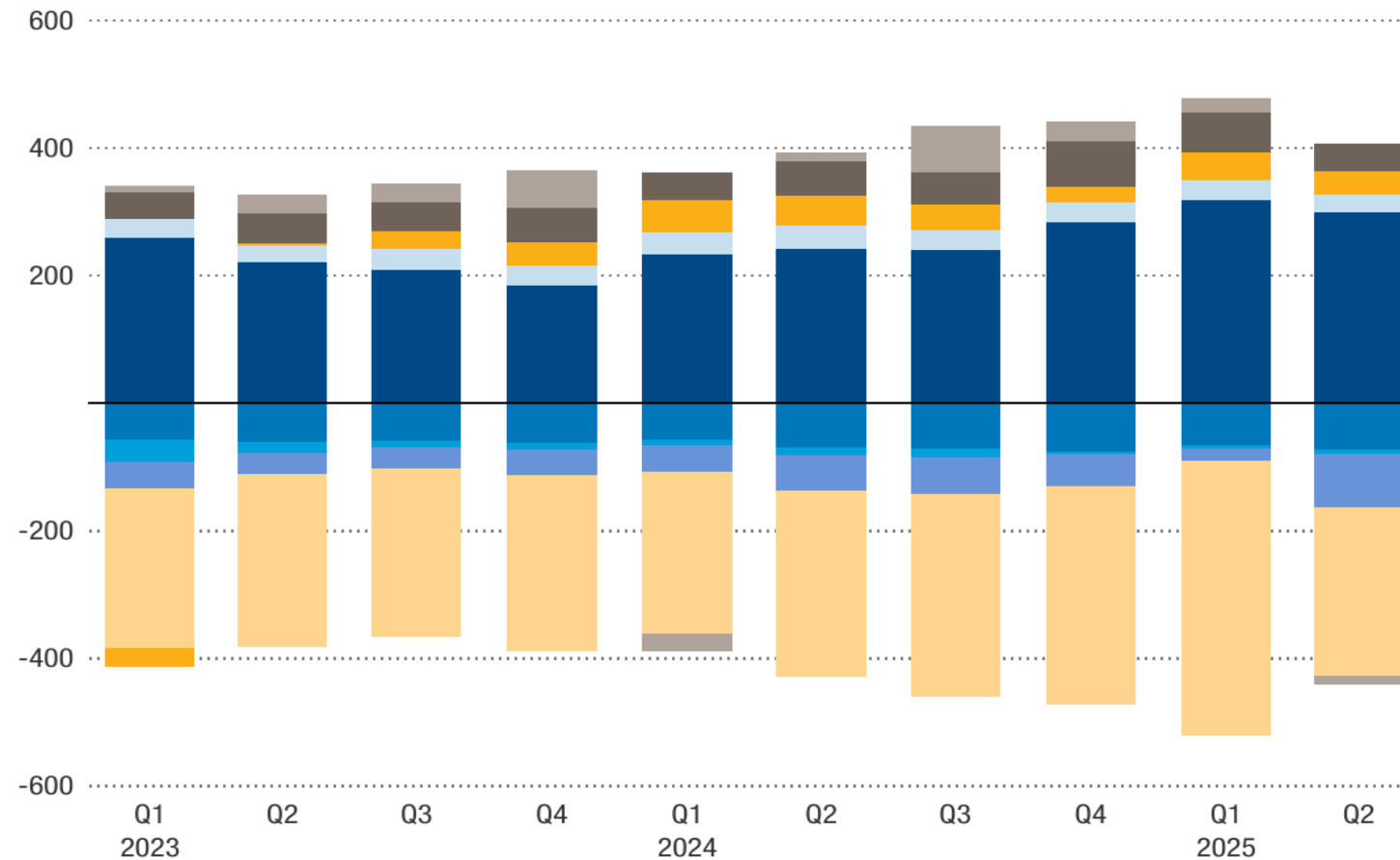
> But also global competitiveness



Trade imbalances

Growth in global trade imbalances reversed in Q2 2025
Trade balance in goods (US\$ billion)

China India Japan Russian Federation United Kingdom United States European Union Other developed countries Other developing countries



Source: UNCTAD estimates based on national statistics.

US open trade policy lasted 60+ years

Section
3

BUSINESS
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
FLORIDA REAL ESTATE &
BUSINESS PROPOSITIONS

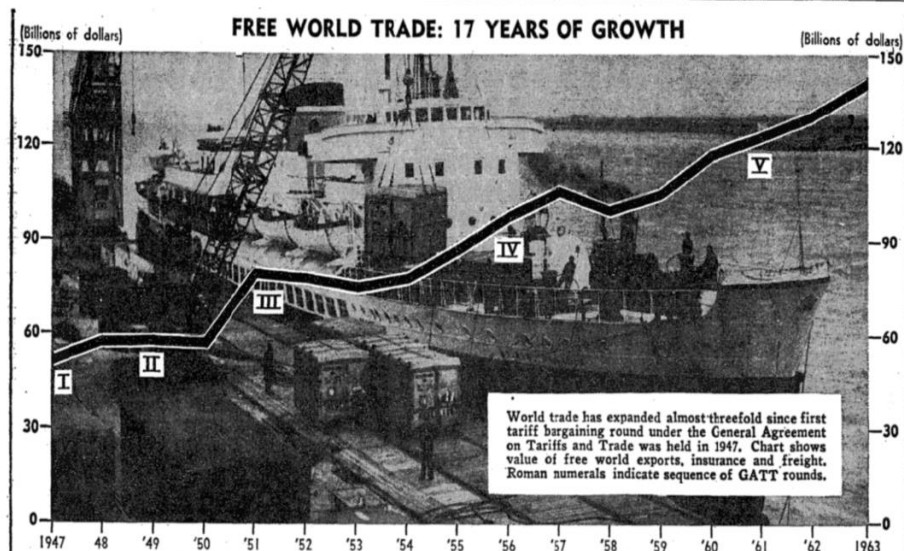
The New York Times.

FINANCIAL
OFFERINGS TO BUYERS
BUYERS' WANTS

Section
3

F © 1964, by The New York Times Company. SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1964. F

Kennedy Round Aims at a Giant Step to Freer Trade



TARIFF PARLEY OPENS MONDAY FOR 70 NATIONS

By RICHARD E. MOONEY
Special to The New York Times

GENEVA, May 2—The Kennedy round of tariff negotiations will begin formally Monday. But actually, they began long ago.

The beginning may have been when Europeans first started talking about uniting their continent, some years back. It may have been when unity began, with the creation of the European Common Market in 1958.

By late 1961, when the Kennedy Administration was shaping its plans for the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the negotiations were as good as under way.

Because the United States is the only country that legislates its tariff negotiators' authority in advance, the enactment of new United States authority virtually precludes a new negotiation. The legislation also has the effect of setting the limits on the deal that can be worked out.

In short, the world's mightiest industrial power calls the dance. Some countries welcome this. Others do not.

The broad objective of the Kennedy planners in drafting the most liberal negotiating authority that the country has ever known was to sponsor a giant step toward generally freer trade.

Their specific objective was to lay grounds for negotiating a substantial reduction in the common tariff around the Common Market countries—West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The aim was to assure that this new and stronger market would be open, not closed, to the products of the United States and the rest of the world.

Most other industrial countries—the world's substantial traders—supported this United States view from the start. The Common Market, particularly France and the bloc's Executive Commission in Brussels, has been less enthusiastic.

Even a Dutch official, whom there are no more dedicated free-traders, has observed that substantial reductions in the common tariff are difficult at this very time that the community is struggling hard to develop its unity internally.

Under Way a Year

FARM PRODUCTS POSE PROBLEMS

Issue Seen as Most Complex One Facing Negotiators at Geneva Parley

By EDWARD T. O'TOOLE
Special to The New York Times

BRUSSELS. Agreements at this stage of the Kennedy round of trade talks are relatively few and far between, but on one point everyone seems to concur: Agriculture promises to be the most complicated of the many problems the trade exhibits will face in Geneva.

Indeed, the economic, political and sociological issues involved in agriculture are so numerous and complex that many trade experts doubt—at least in private—that any progress in liberalizing farm trade can be made for at least a year. And some add, "if then."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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DJIA 42225.32 ▲ 235.36 0.56% NASDAQ 17601.05 ▲ 0.9% STOKX 600 536.92 ▼ 0.5% 10-YR. TREAS. 11/32, yield 4.196% OIL \$71.71 ▲ \$0.51 GOLD \$3,139.90 ▲ \$21.00 EURO \$1.0855 YEN 149.28

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ U.S. stock futures fell sharply after Trump's announcement of sweeping duties on goods from trading partners, with the S&P 500, Nasdaq-100 and Dow contracts sliding 3.4%, 4.3% and 2.2%, respectively. B1

◆ Tesla's global vehicle deliveries fell 13% in the first quarter from a year earlier, further evidence that a growing consumer backlash against the brand and Chief Executive Elon Musk is hurting the automaker's business. A1

◆ Mark Zuckerberg is lobbying Trump and White House officials to agree to a settlement that would prevent Meta from facing an antitrust trial later this month. A2

◆ TikTok drew suitors ahead of a deadline set by the Trump administration, with Amazon.com and mobile-tech company AppLovin declaring themselves. A2

◆ Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen is trying to line up investors to buy the brand from Unilever as the European consumer giant prepares to spin off its ice cream assets. B1

◆ Credit Agricole said it was cleared by the European Central Bank to raise its stake in BPM, as bigger rival UniCredit prepares to start its offer for the Italian lender this month. B3

Trump Slaps Broad Tariffs on Imports



President Trump upended decades of global trade practices with his announcement of the tariffs Wednesday at the White House.

President, heralding 'Liberation Day,' hits all partners with 10% levy, some with more

The U.S. will impose a 10%, across-the-board tariff on all imports, and even higher rates for nations the White House considers bad actors. President Trump said on Wednesday, making good on his campaign promises and upending decades of global trade practices.

By Gavin Bade,
Natalie Andrews
and Aaron L. Jaffe

The new plan, unveiled at a Rose Garden event, is a combination of two proposals debated by aides in recent days—universal tariffs or country-by-country rates.

The plan represents a fundamental rethinking of U.S. trade policy on a scale not seen since the post-World War II era, when the U.S. and other nations in 1947 signed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, a treaty aimed at lowering tariffs and trade barriers between nations.

Trump and his team have said U.S. trading partners have taken advantage of that system, despite the U.S.'s leading role in establishing it, and that their actions seek to ensure fair treatment for American companies and goods.

Speaking in front of GOP officials and people wearing hard hats in a nod to his working-class support, Trump said his executive order would launch a

With New Trade Regime, U.S. Aims To Topple the Age of Globalization

By JASON DOUGLAS
AND TOM FAIRLESS

President Trump's biggest tariff blitz yet sends a clear message to U.S. and foreign

that powered the world economy for decades. The new tariffs include a baseline duty of 10% on foreign imports and larger so-called reciprocal tariffs, with China facing total du-

your product right here in America." Trump's Made-in-America ambitions mean that a gusher of investment that in recent years showered low-cost man-

professor at the Free University of Brussels. "Now the U.S., the center, wants to pull away."

In the weeks since Trump took office, a flurry of an-



DISPARITIES between high-tariff U.S. chemical industry and lower-tariff European products, above, create conflict with Common Market members.



AGRICULTURAL productivity is rising in Europe, hindering imports with U.S. on potential markets. French are concerned about wheat, for example.



NON-TARIFF BARRIERS, such as voluntary export quotas imposed on cotton cloth industry in Japan, above, raise formidable world trade problem.



THE UNDERDEVELOPED countries have dual problem of industrialization and raw material exports. Nigerians processing lumber for export.

➤ **US trade policy shifts: 3 main issues**

▶ **Trade policy of US**

- More restrictive trade policy
- More uncertainty, trade deals, sector specific tariffs

▶ **Policy responses from other economies**

- Trade restrictions abroad call for restrictions at home
- Oversupply and dumping could spur additional policies

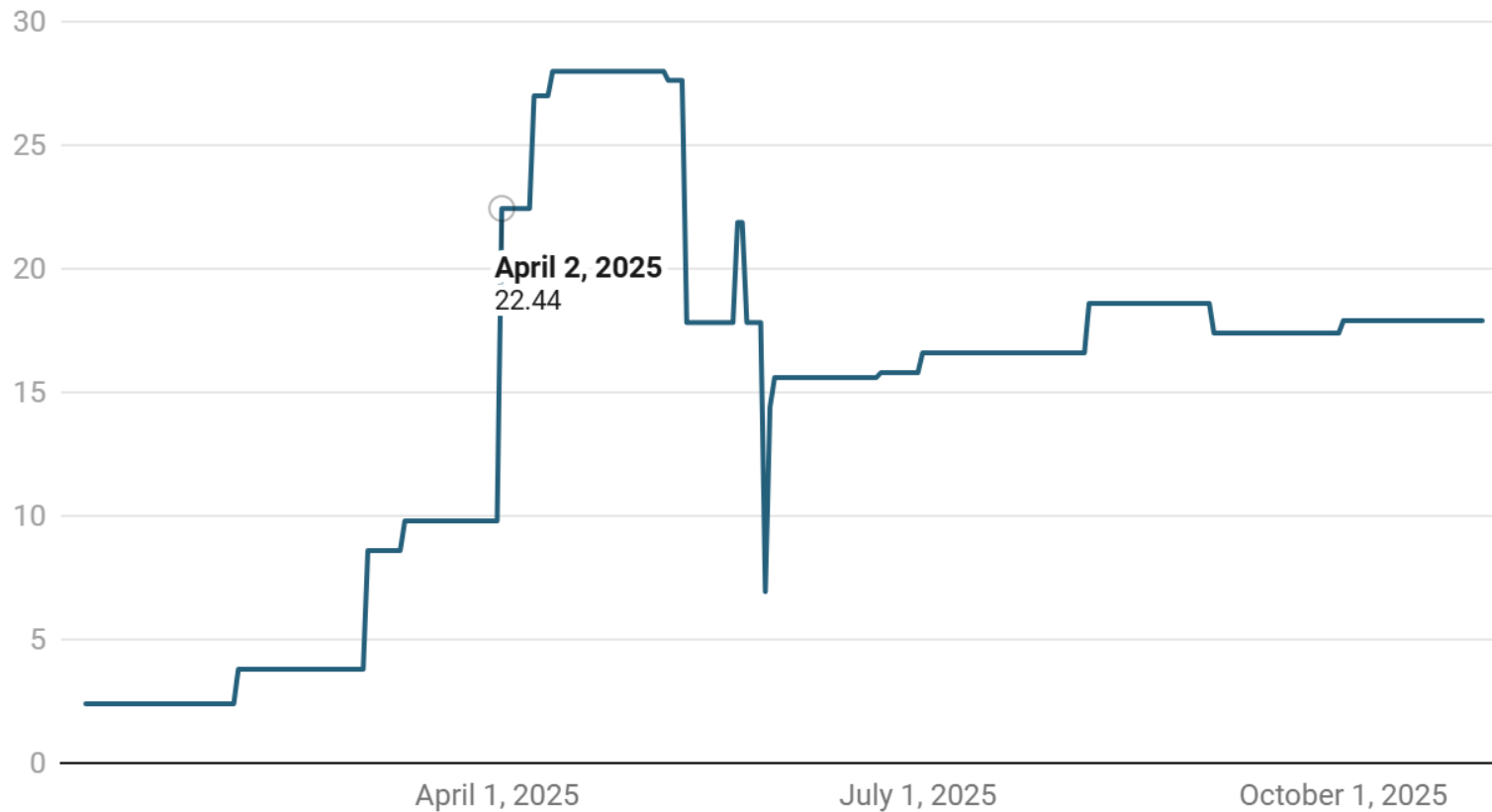
▶ **Additional strain to multilateral trading rules**

- Non-discriminatory principle in a discriminatory trade environment
- RTA renegotiation

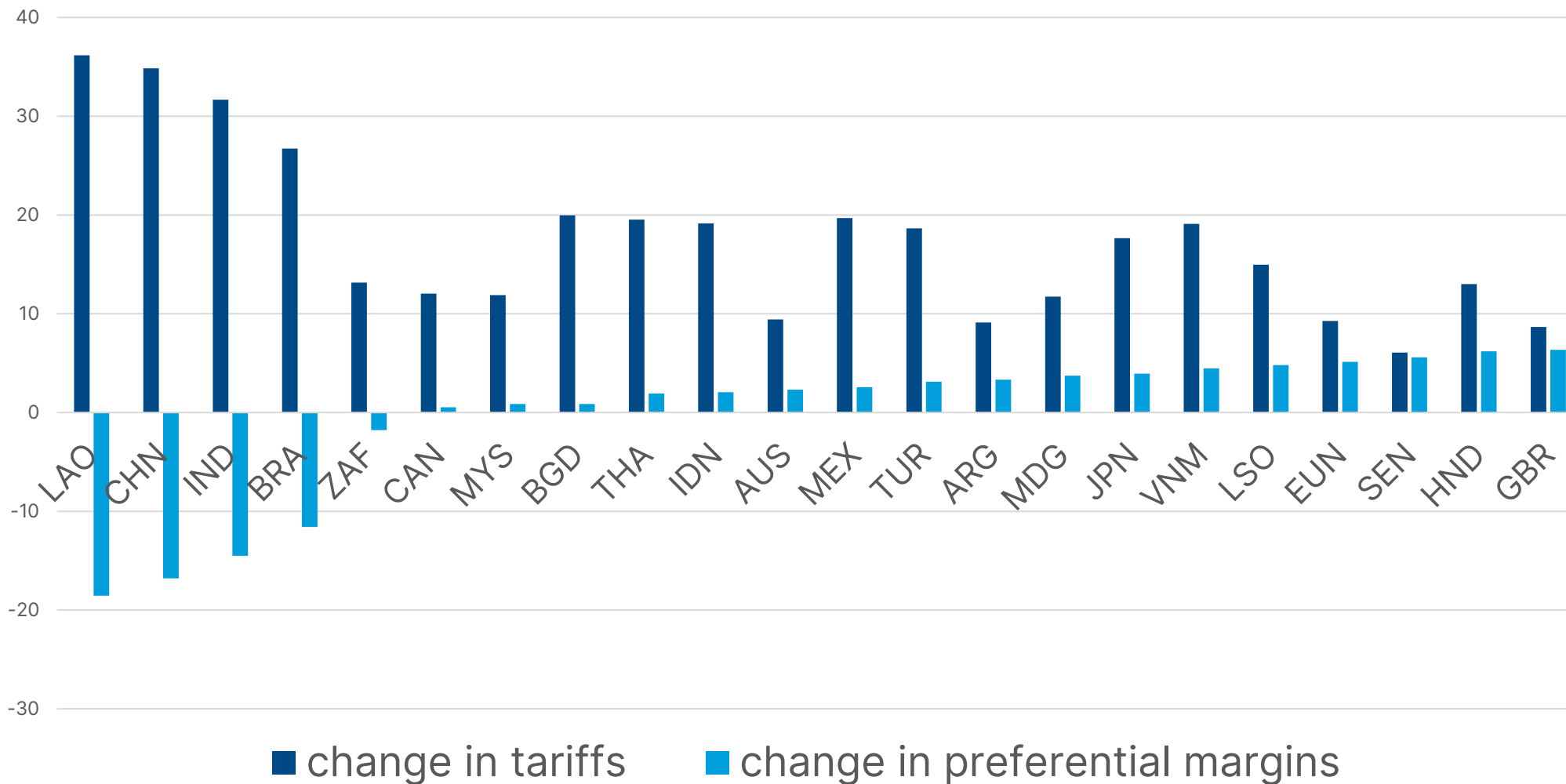
> Increase, and volatility

Figure 3. U.S Average Effective Tariff Rate Since January 1, 2025

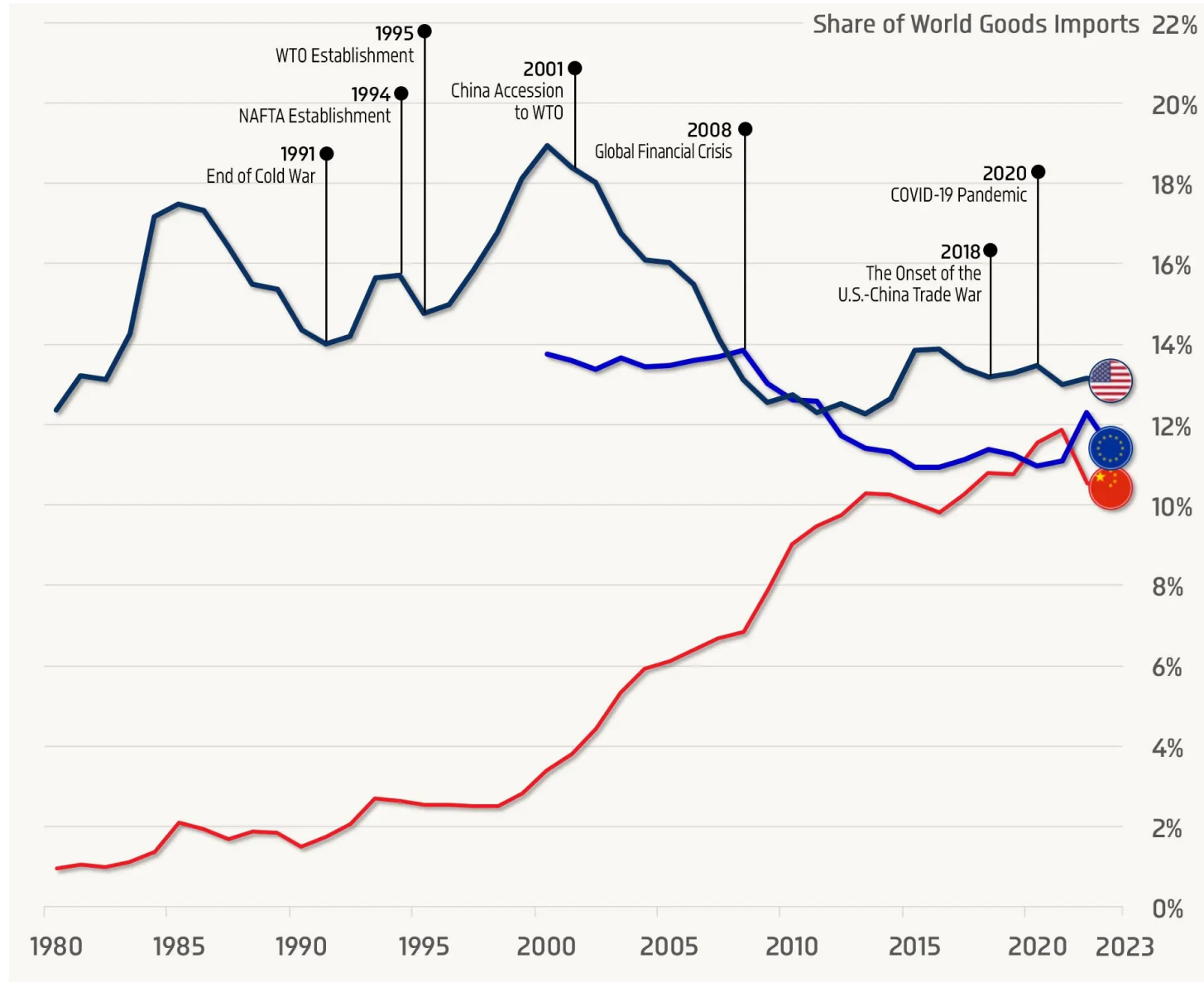
Policy as of September 26, Pre-Substitution
Percent of goods import



➤ Tariffs in the US. Changes in 2025 vs 2024



➤ US demand important, but less so

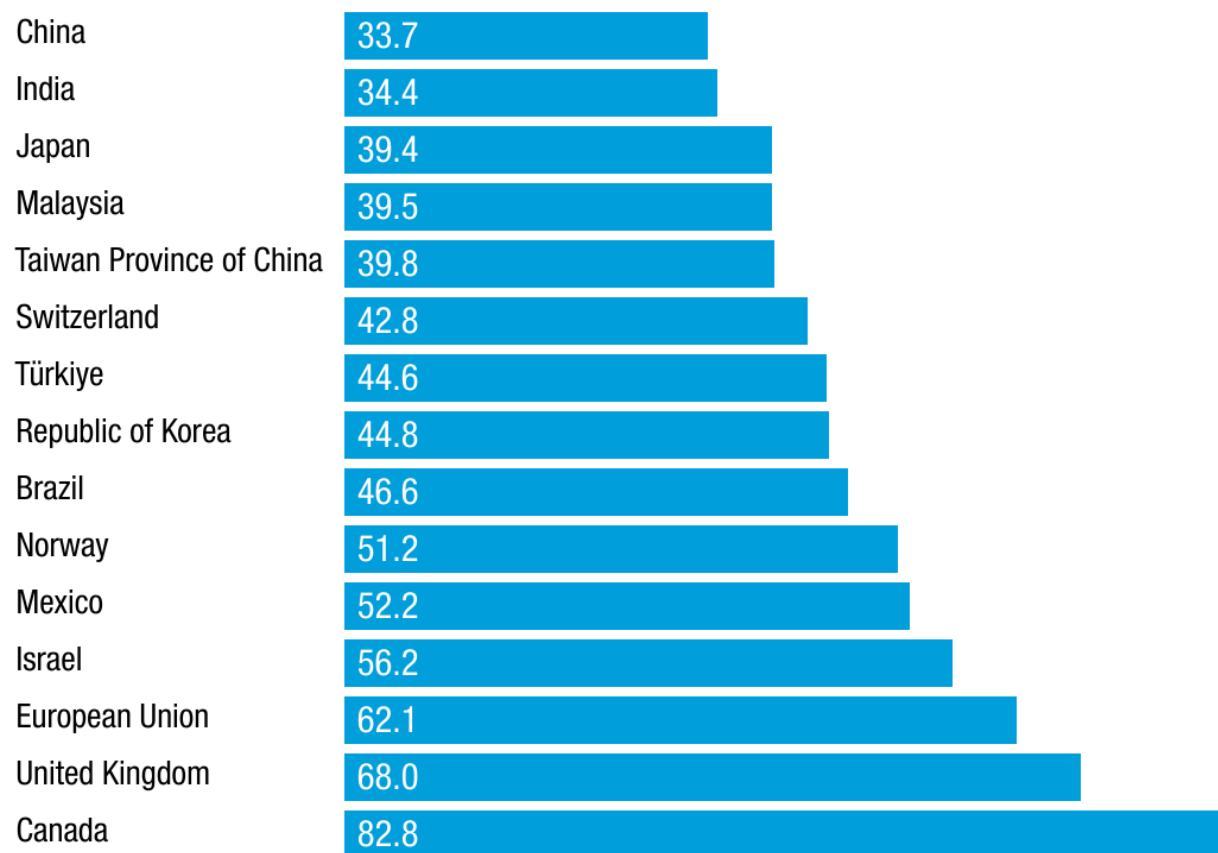


➤ Ripple effects thru production networks



Ripple effects: exposure to US policy shifts through global production networks (selected economies)

Manufacturing intra-industry trade index, 2024



Source: UNCTAD calculation based on COMTRADE data.

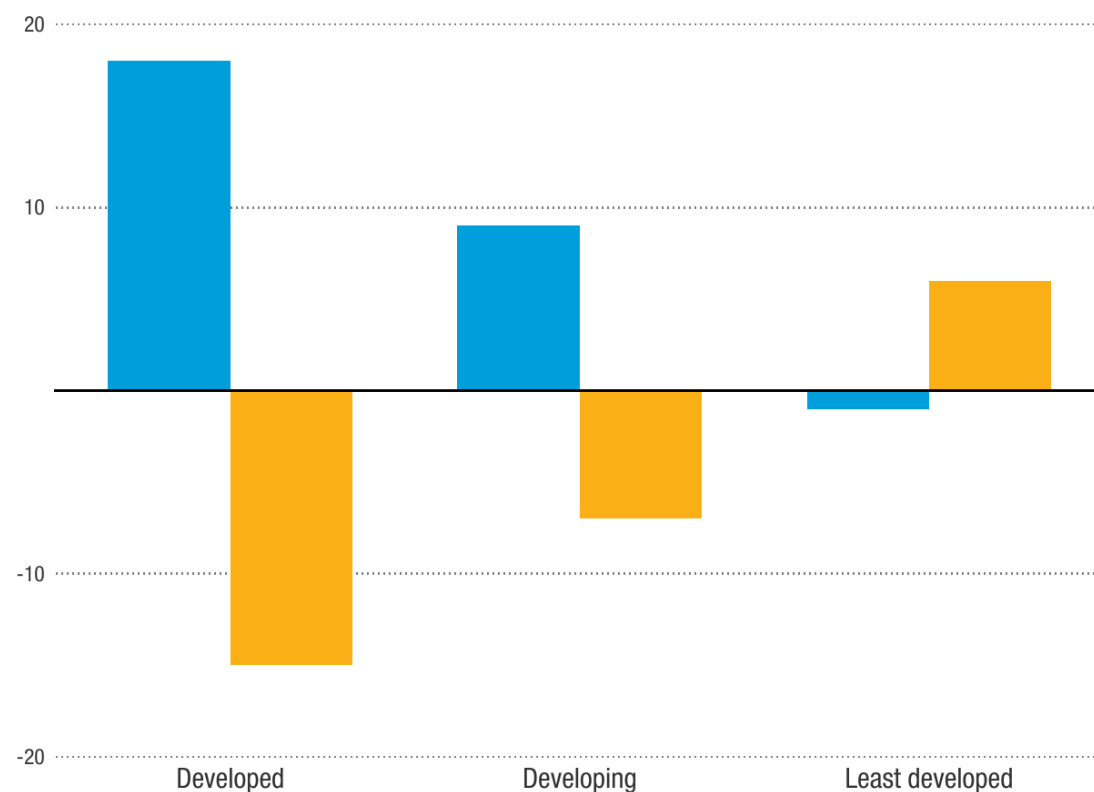
Note: Manufacturing integration is calculated using the trade-weighted average of the intra-industry trade index, based on the Grubel-Lloyd methods at the chapter level of the Harmonized System (HS) classification, including only manufacturing consumers and intermediate goods as defined at the HS 6-digit level.

➤ Short term response: building inventories

➤ Response to impending tariffs: building up inventories through front-loading

US imports growth from selected country groupings (YoY change)

■ 2025 Q1 ■ 2025 Q2

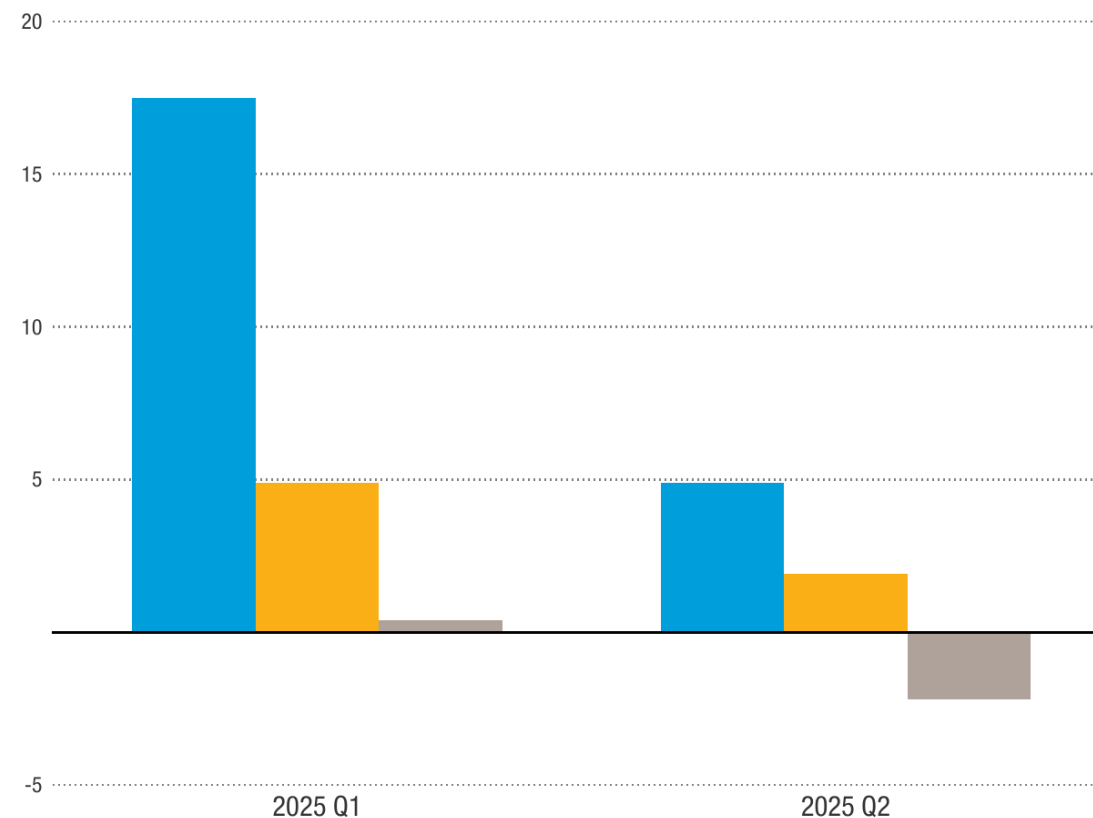


Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on the United States' national statistics.

➤ Response to impending tariffs: Not all trade takes off

US imports by air, from selected country grouping (YoY change)

■ Developed ■ Developing ■ Least developed



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on the United States' national statistics.

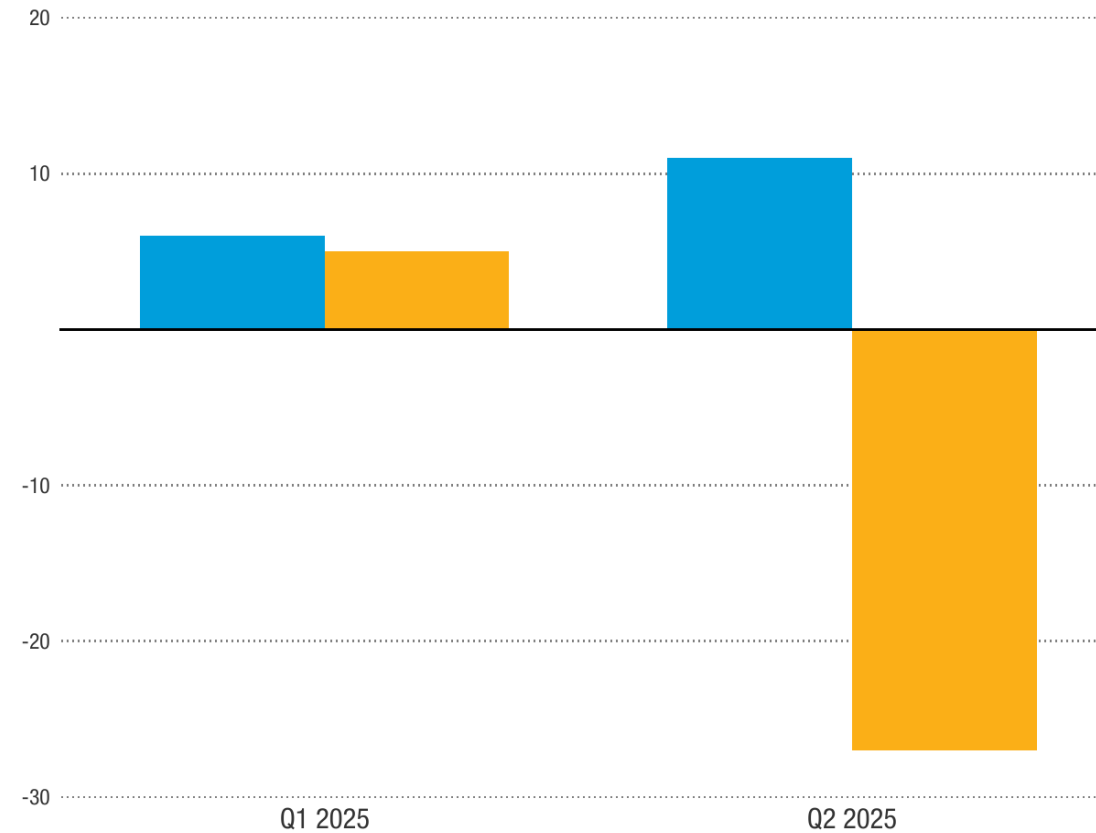
➤ Long term: finding alternative buyers



China's exports rose sharply in Q2 2025, except to the United States

Chinese export growth with the U.S. and the rest of the world (YoY change)

■ Rest of the world ■ United States



Source: UNCTAD secretariat, based on China's national statistics.

What drives international trade growth

Positive Drivers of Trade Growth Remain Important

- Economic gains for firms and strong consumer demand for affordable, high-quality goods

Adaptive Strategies

- Diversification, strategic competition, connector countries, re-shoring, trade offsets, and tariff engineering.

Trust and assurance

- RTAs, legal framework, RoO, standards, VSS, harmonizations, transparency.

Possible negative developments

Generalized global oversupply

- Spread of unilateral / defensive measures (still under WTO principles)

Multilateral trading system even weaker

- From rule-based to power-based system
- Proliferation of beggar-thy-neighbour policies
- Coercive policies (discriminatory)

Trade blocks, fragmentation

- Influence policies of other countries (don't trade with them)
- Rules of Origin much more stringent

➤ Looking ahead

Priorities and economic objectives are domestic/national

- Trade policy cooperation more difficult to achieve in non-economic areas

Very bad outcome: trade policy used as an economic weapon

- Economic fragmentation: Towards a bipolar or multipolar global economy
- Self fulfilling: less trade means less economic interdependence and therefore less incentives to avoid further tensions and wars.
- Less opportunities: Managed trade is power based and therefore less development opportunities for poorer countries

Better outcome: domestic priorities and non-economic costs internalized

- Consumers/producers/traders will split the bill (**how?**)
- Trade remains efficient, and feasible. Global economy remains interdependent

- 
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- 

1. What are Non-Tariff Measures?

➤ What are Non-Tariff Measures: examples



Exporting agri products

- ➔ Coffee beans: Residues of ochratoxin A should be lower than 5.0 (µg/kg)
- ➔ Virgin coconut oil: Label need to have a “best before date”
- ➔ Voluntary sustainability standards → not NTMs



Importing cars

- ➔ Motor vehicles: Emission levels of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides should be lower than 0.024 (g/km) and 0.009 (g/km).
- ➔ Electric vehicles: Battery should pass a safety test.

Non-technical NTMs: examples

Contingent Trade-protective Measures

Measures implemented to counteract particular adverse effects of imports in the market of the importing country contingent upon the fulfilment of certain procedural and substantive requirements.

- Country A imposes an anti-dumping duty on imports of biodiesel products from country B, to offset an injurious dumping by country B found to exist via an investigation.
- Country A imposes a countervailing duty on imports of semiconductors from country B, to offset the subsidies granted by country B on the production of semiconductors found to exist via an investigation

Anti-dumping

Non-automatic Licensing, Quotas, Prohibitions & Quantity-control

Control measures generally aimed at restraining the quantity of goods that be imported.

- Only hotels and restaurants are allowed to import alcoholic drinks
- A quota of 100 tons of tuna fish can be imported any time of the year

Quotas

Price-control Measures

Measures implemented to control or affect the prices of imported goods.

- A minimum import price is established for fabric and apparel
- Imports of fresh blueberries may enter free of duty between 1 January to 31 May, while in other months seasonal duties apply

Price control

➤ Non-Tariff Measures

Policy measures, other than ordinary customs tariffs, that can potentially have an economic effect on international trade in goods, changing quantities traded, or prices or both

(UNCTAD Group of Eminent Persons on NTBs)

A photograph of a port at sunset or sunrise. A large dark ship is docked on the left, and a tall green crane is on the right. The sky is orange and yellow from the low sun. In the foreground, there are railway tracks and some dry grass.

Neutral concept

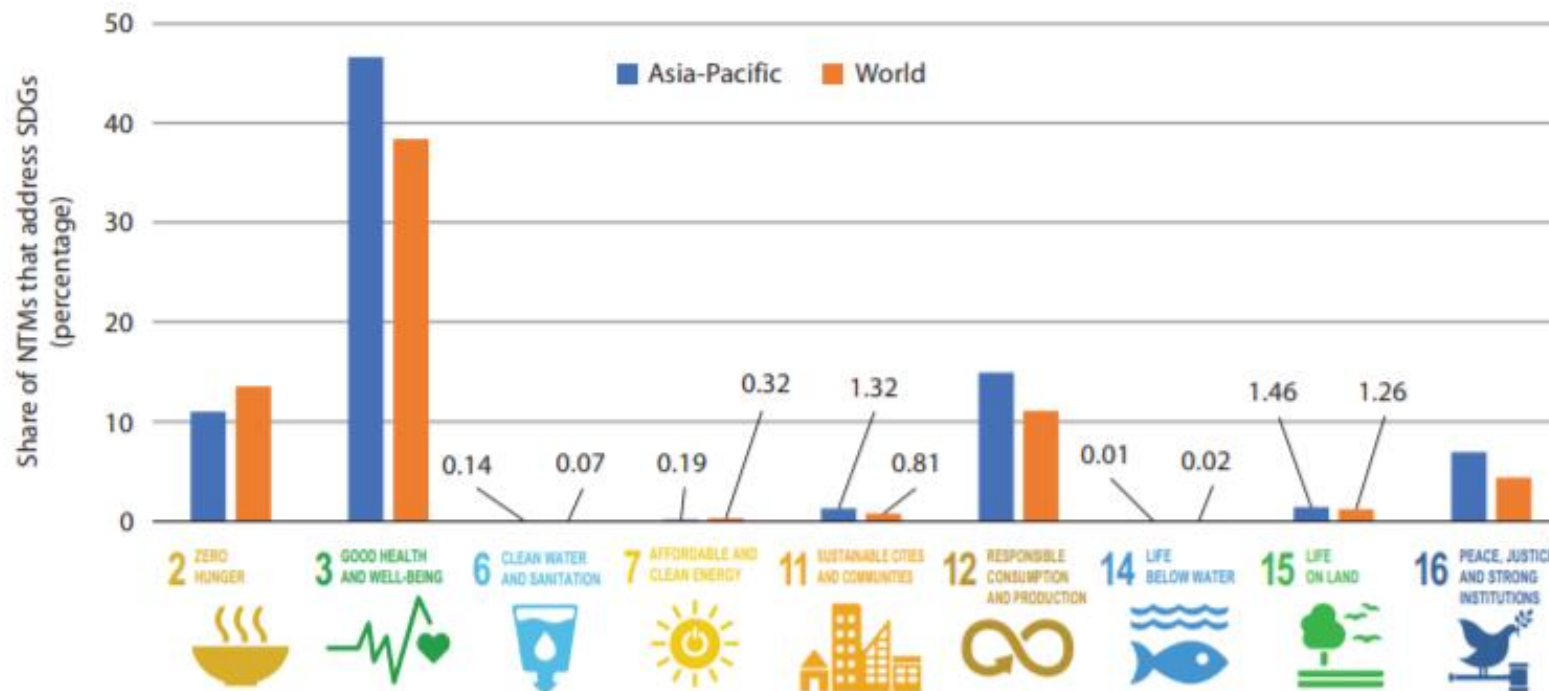
Export and Import

Often domestic measures

To which extent NTMs in each economy/region directly address specific SDGs?

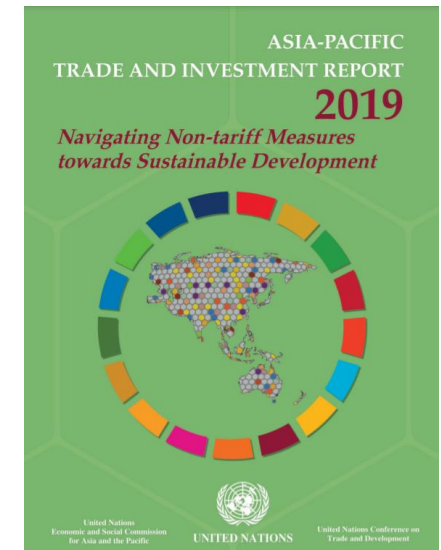
Figure 1.4

Distribution of NTMs that directly address SDGs, by Goal



Source: ESCAP calculations based on UNCTAD TRAINS database and methodology developed by ESCAP and UNCTAD (Kravchenko and others, 2019).

- Environmental and social pillar:
 - Health warning label on alcohol -> **(SDG Target 3.5)** Strengthen the prevention and treatment of ... harmful use of alcohol
 - Ban on cigarette-shaped toys in order to implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control **(SDG Target 3.a.)**



2. The impact of NTMs

➤ NTMs are not Non-Tariff *Barriers*



Eliminating NTMs is not always an option

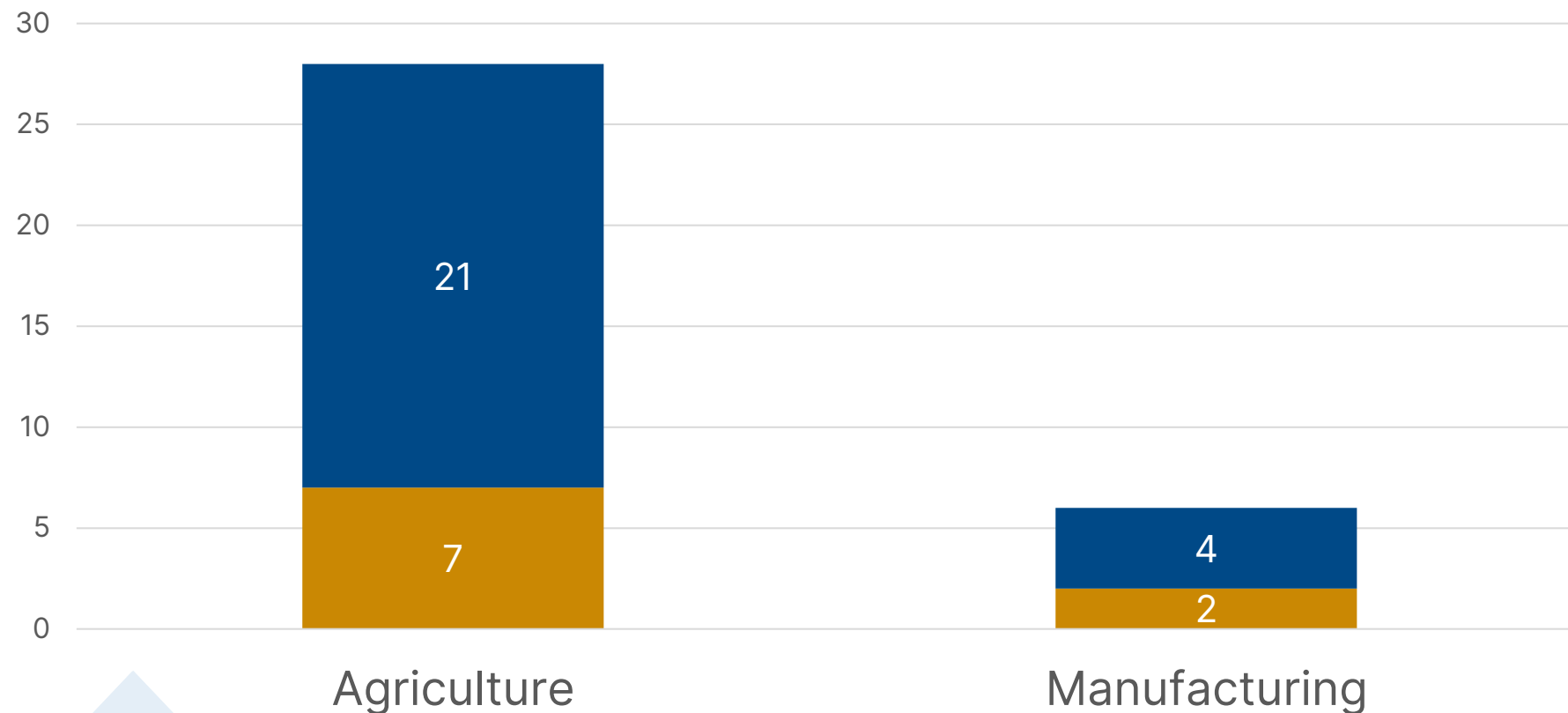
Often designed to achieve **legitimate public policy objectives** -

- ▶ Health
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Product quality
- ▶ Public moral
- ▶ ...

Incurring **costs**, particularly -

- ▶ Information cost
- ▶ Compliance cost
- Lack of transparency
- High complexity
- Lack of cooperation

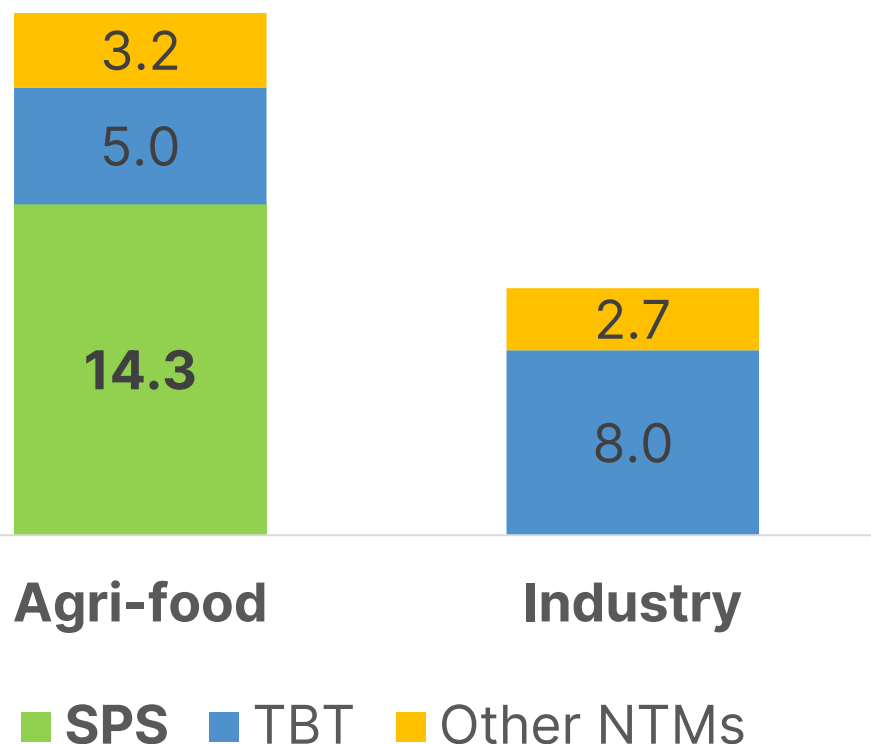
> NTMs are more costly than tariffs



(Percentage)

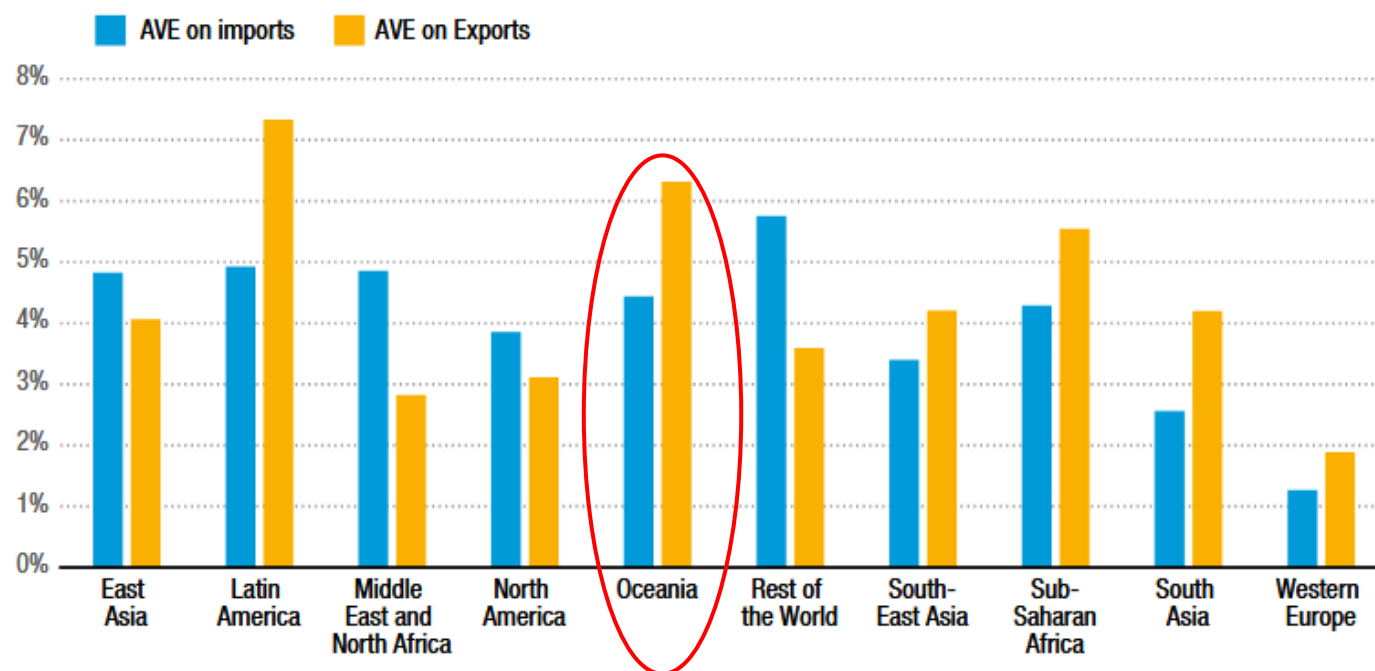
➤ What is the impact of NTMs?

Price impact (in %)



- On aggregate, SPS measures and TBT are the costliest of all non-tariff measures.
- However, elimination is not an option due to critical public benefits of health or environmental protection.
- Still, venues exist that reduce costs while maintaining regulatory benefits.

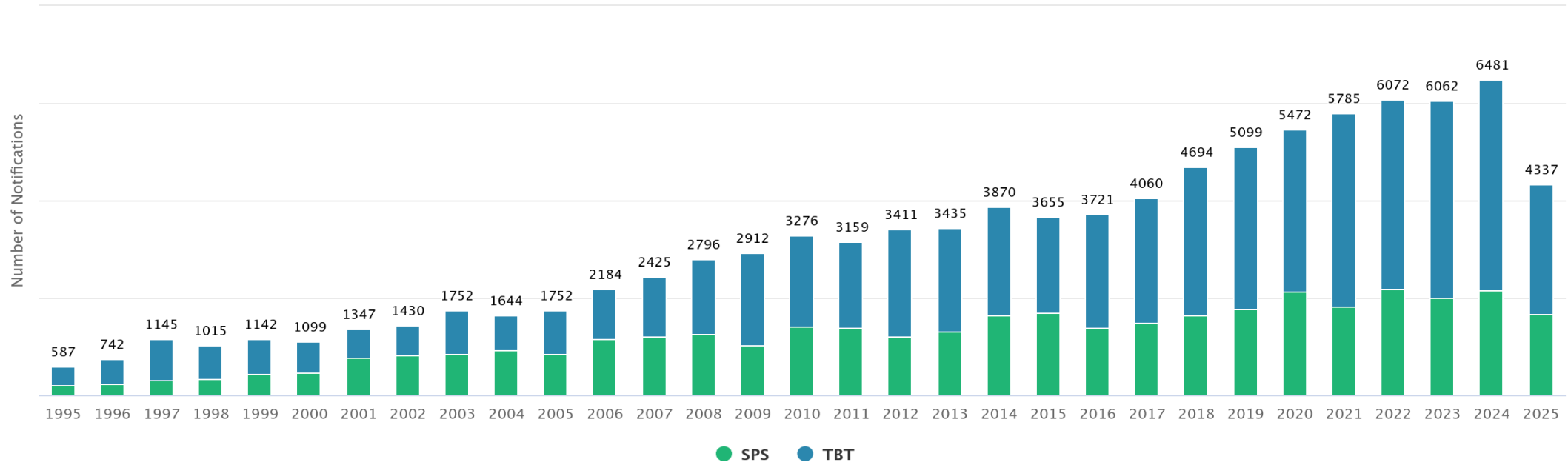
➤ NTMs can be costly



Source: UNCTAD, 2025. Available at: <https://unctad.org/publication/non-tariff-measures-border-gtap-level-analysis>

- Ad valorem equivalent (AVE) vary considerably at the bilateral level
- AVEs are higher when bilateral trade consists of mostly agricultural products

➤ The number of NTMs is on the rise

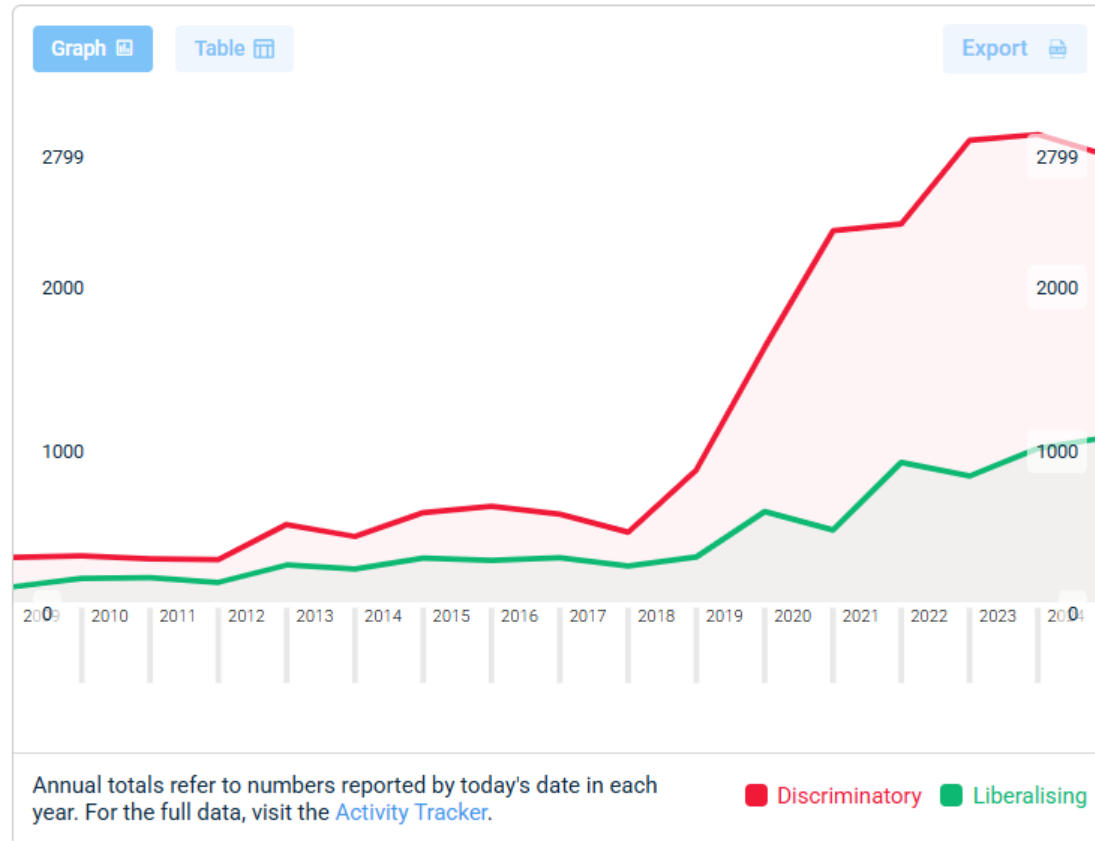


Source: WTO, 2025.

There has been a steady increase in the number of notified SPS and TBTs to the WTO.

➤ The number of NTMs is on the rise II

New policies per year



There has been a steady increase in the number of notified SPS and TBTs to the WTO.

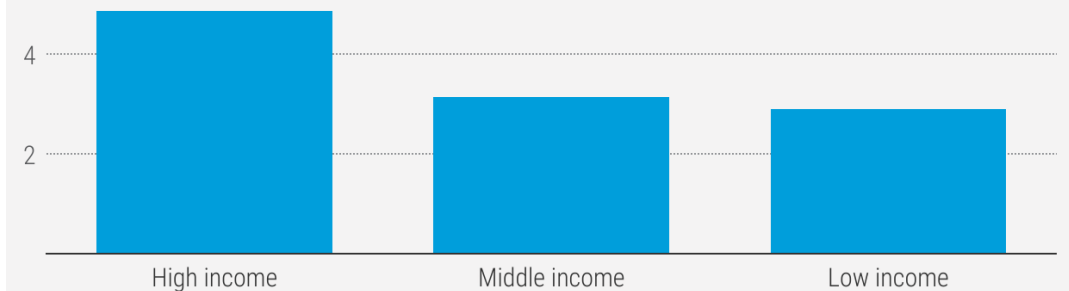
Fixed-cost element of many SPS and TBT measures, disproportionately affects...

- ...**LDCs**: UNCTAD 2017, “G20 Policies and Export Performance of Least Developed Countries”
- ...**Women**: UNCTAD 2022, “Neutral policies, uneven impacts: Non-tariff measures through a gender lens”
- ...**MSMEs**: UNCTAD 2017, “On the heterogeneous effects of non-tariff measures: Panel evidence from Peruvian firms”



Measures in high-income countries are the most costly

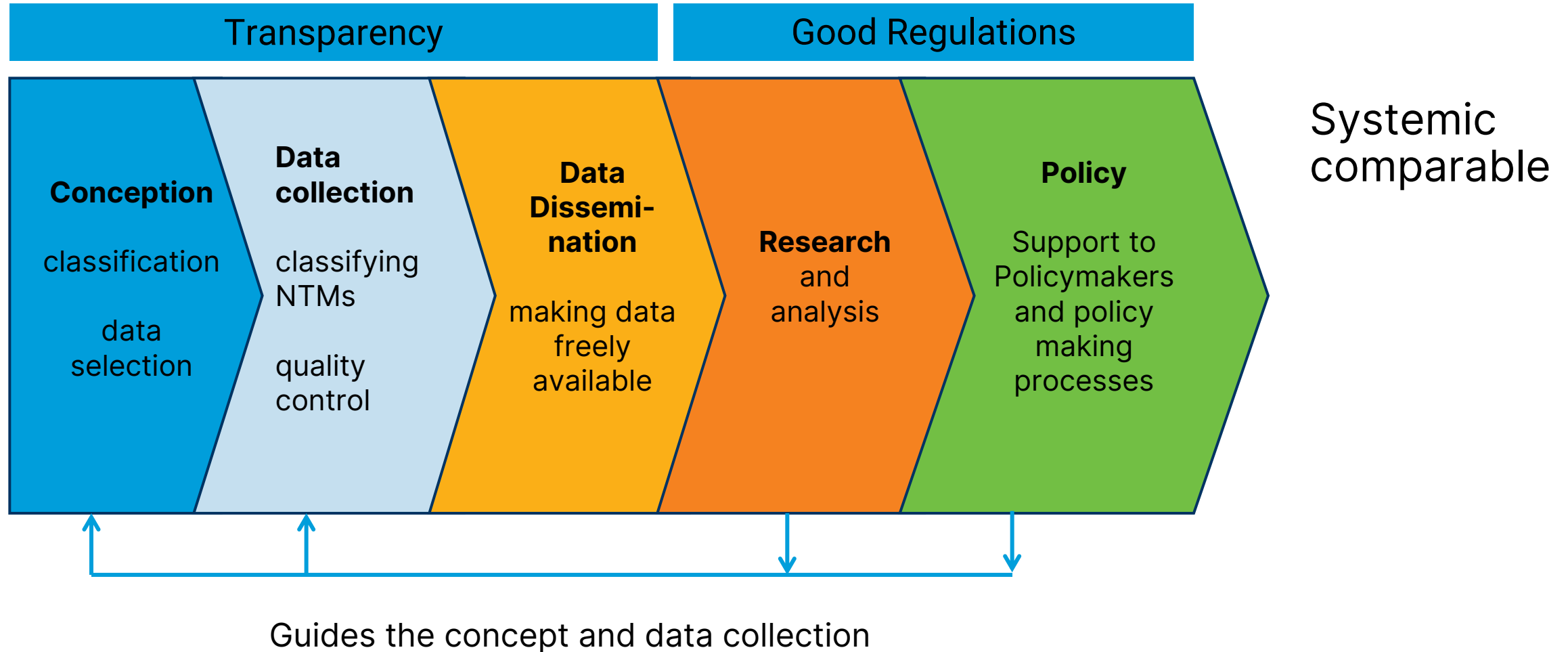
Estimated ad-valorem equivalents of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (simple average across all products)



Source: UNCTAD illustration based on UNCTAD and World Bank (2018). The Unseen Impact of Non-Tariff Measures: Insights from a New Database (Geneva).

3. UNCTAD's programme on NTMs

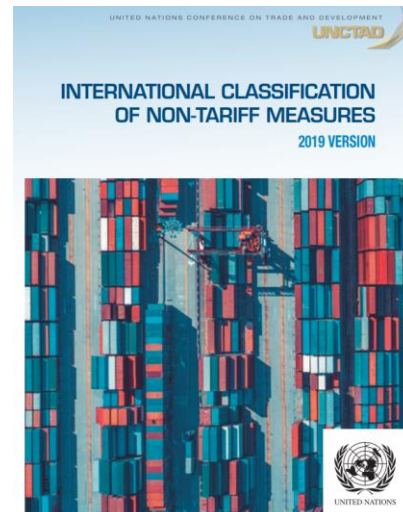
UNCTAD Non-Tariff Measures programme



➤ International classification of NTMs

A common language

- ▶ Established by a Multi Agency Support Team (MAST)
- ▶ Initiated by UNCTAD
- ▶ Including FAO, ITC, OECD, UNIDO, World Bank, WTO
- ▶ Regularly updated



Imports	Technical measures	A	Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
		B	Technical barriers to trade
		C	Pre-shipment inspection and other formalities
	Non-technical measures	D	Contingent trade-protective measures
		E	Non-automatic import licensing, quotas, prohibitions, quantity-control measures and other restrictions not including sanitary and phytosanitary measures or measures relating to technical barriers to trade
		F	Price-control measures, including additional taxes and charges
		G	Finance measures
		H	Measures affecting competition
		I	Trade-related investment measures
		J	Distribution restrictions
		K	Restrictions on post-sales services
		L	Subsidies and other forms of support
		M	Government procurement restrictions
		N	Intellectual property
O	Rules of origin		
	Exports	P	Export-related measures

➤ International classification of NTMs

Tree structure example

Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)

B1 Import authorisation / licensing related to TBT measures

...

B2 Tolerance limits for residues and restricted use of substances

...

B8 Conformity assessment related to TBT

B81 Product registration / approval requirements

B82 Testing requirements

...

B85 Traceability requirements

B851 Origin of materials and parts

B852 Processing history

B853 Distribution and location of products after delivery

B859 Traceability requirements not elsewhere specified

B89 Conformity assessment related to TBT not elsewhere specified

B9 TBT measures not elsewhere specified

About 500
measures in the
classification

➤ Official NTM data collection

• From here...

...to here

The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka EXTRAORDINARY

අංක 1376/9 – 2005 ජනවාරි 19 වැනි බදාදා – 2005.01.19
No. 1376/9 – WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2005

(Published by Authority)

PART I : SECTION (I) — GENERAL Government Notifications

L.D. – B. 11/80 II

FOOD ACT, No. 26 OF 1980

REGULATIONS made by the Minister of Health in consultation with the Food Advisory Committee under No. 26 of 1980.

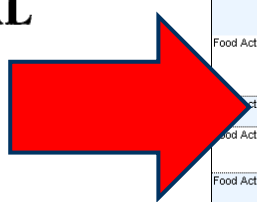
NIMAL SIR
Minister of Health
Uva Wellas

Colombo.
17th January, 2005.

Regulations

01. These Regulations may be cited as “ Food (Labelling and Advertising) Regulations 2005.”
02. No person shall sell, offer for sale, expose or keep for sale, transport or advertise for sale, any food container unless such package or container is labelled in accordance with these regulations.

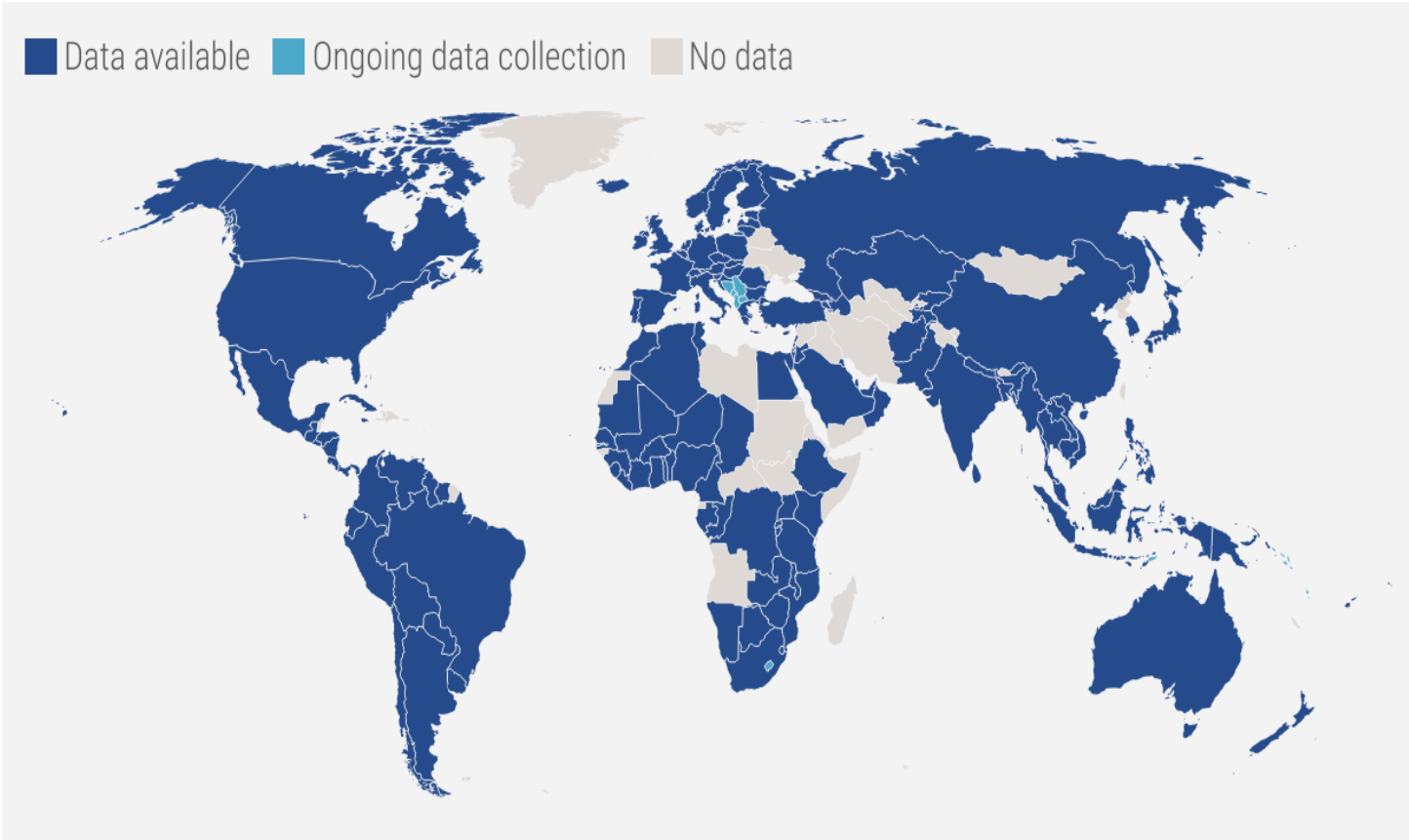
Provided however that, these regulations shall not apply to any package of food if the food is of the national brand requested by the purchaser and is weighed, counted or measured in the presence of the purchaser.



Document Title	Regulation Title, Short	NTM Code	Implementation Date	Measure Repeated	Measure Description	Affected Products Description	Affected Countries
Food Act	Food (Control of import, labelling, and sale of genetically modified foods) Regulation 2006	B14	01/01/2007		Needs to get approval of the Chief Food Authority in order to import	Food products	All countries
Food Act	Food (Control of import, labelling, and sale of genetically modified foods) Regulation 2006	B31	01/01/2007		Labelling Requirements	Food products	All countries
Food Act	Food (Irradiation) Regulations 2005	A31	01/05/2006		Labelling Requirements	Food products that had been treated with irradiation	All countries
Food Act	Food (Irradiation) Regulations 2005	A83	01/05/2006		Certification by the competent authorities of the country of origin that the food has been inspected	Food products that had been treated with irradiation	All countries
Food Act	Food (Irradiation) Regulations 2005	A89	01/05/2006		Documentation that the Food Irradiation Facility concerned is approved, licensed, authorised by the competent national authority of food irradiation	Food products that had been treated with irradiation	All countries
Food Act	Food (Irradiation) Regulations 2005	P62	01/05/2006		Certification by the competent authorities of the country of origin that the food has been inspected	Food products that had been treated with irradiation	All countries
Food Act	Food (Melamine in Milk and Milk Products) Regulations 2010	A22	01/01/2011		Specifying permitted ppm levels of melamine in milk and milk products	Milk and Milk Products	All countries
Food Act	Food (Melamine in Milk and Milk Products) Regulations 2010	A83	01/01/2011		A health certificate required from the National Food Safety Authority of the country of origin that the products conform to the levels of melamine specified	Milk and Milk Products	All countries
Food Act	Food (Packaging materials and articles) Regulation 2010	A32	01/06/2011		Marking requirements - need to print the words "FOR FOOD USE" or any other relevant words or symbols as indicated in the regulation	Food packaging material	All countries
Food Act	Food (Packaging materials and articles) Regulation 2010	A83	01/06/2011		Certification by the manufacturer that the material meets required quality standards	Food packaging material	All countries
Food Act	Food (Packaging materials and articles) Regulation 2010	A22	01/06/2011		Restricted use of certain substances in food packaging material	Food packaging material	All countries
Food Act	Food (Preservatives) Regulations	A19	01/01/1991		Prohibited to import, manufacture, sell or distribute food preservatives other than those specified in the regulation & food which has in or upon it any preservative that is permitted by the regulation	Food preservatives	All countries

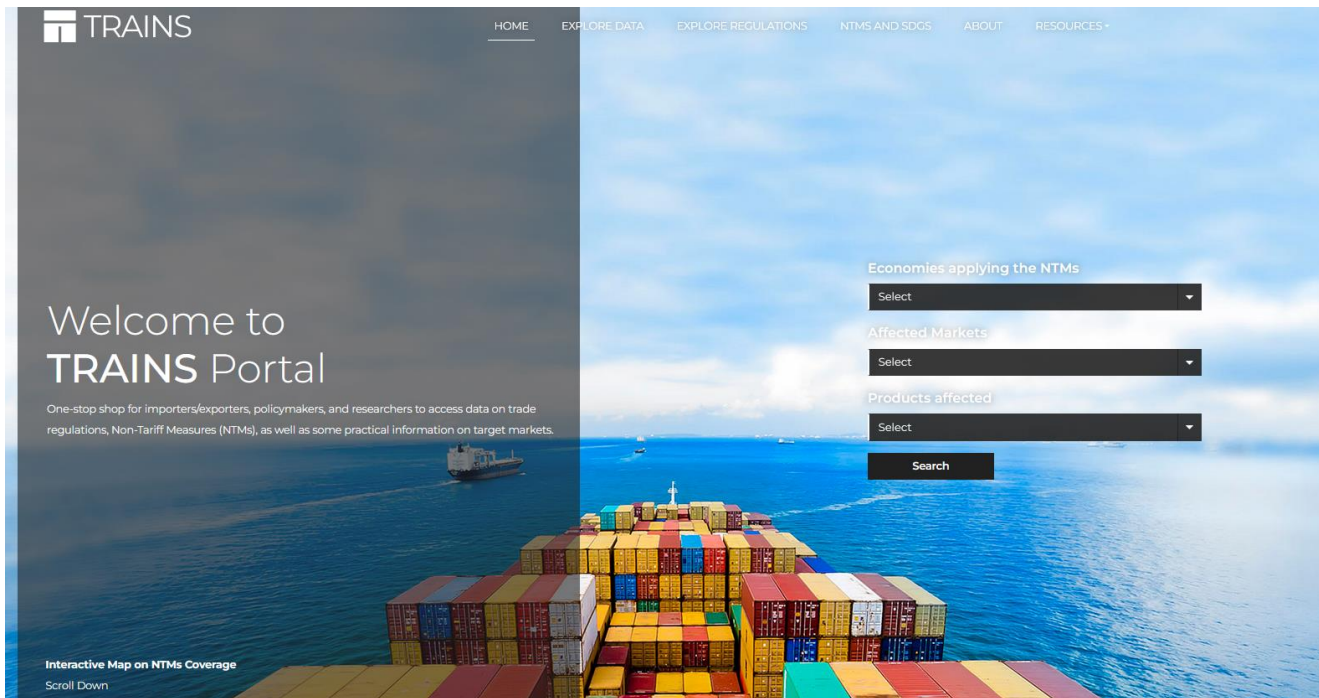
➤ Data dissemination

■ Data available ■ Ongoing data collection ■ No data



- ▶ **Comprehensive data available at:**
- ▶ trainsonline.unctad.org
→ for policy makers
- ▶ globaltradehelpdesk.org
→ for traders
- ▶ wits.worldbank.org
→ for researchers

TRAINS online



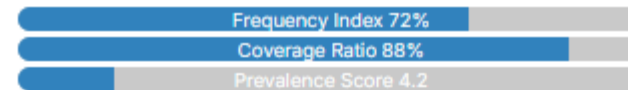
Source: UNCTAD, 2025. <https://unctad.org/publication/non-tariff-measures-border-gtap-level-analysis>

▶ NTM data easily accessible by:

- Product
- Country
- Trade partner

▶ Detailed information also showing different indicators⁽¹⁾ by:

- Sector
- Measure



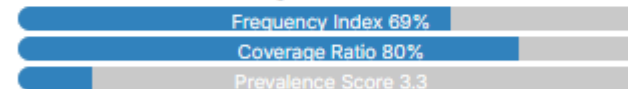
BY SECTOR

BY MEASURE

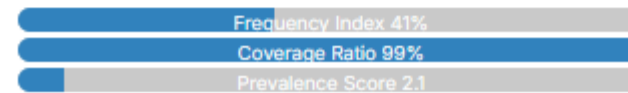
Agriculture



Manufacturing



Natural Resources

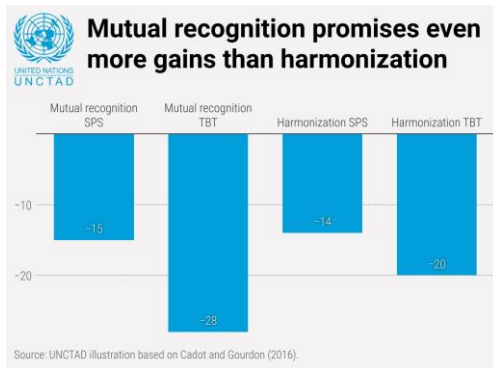


(1) **Frequency index** captures the share of traded product lines subject to at least one NTM. **Coverage ratio** is the share of trade value subject to NTMs. **Prevalence score** shows the average number of distinct NTMs applied to regulated products.

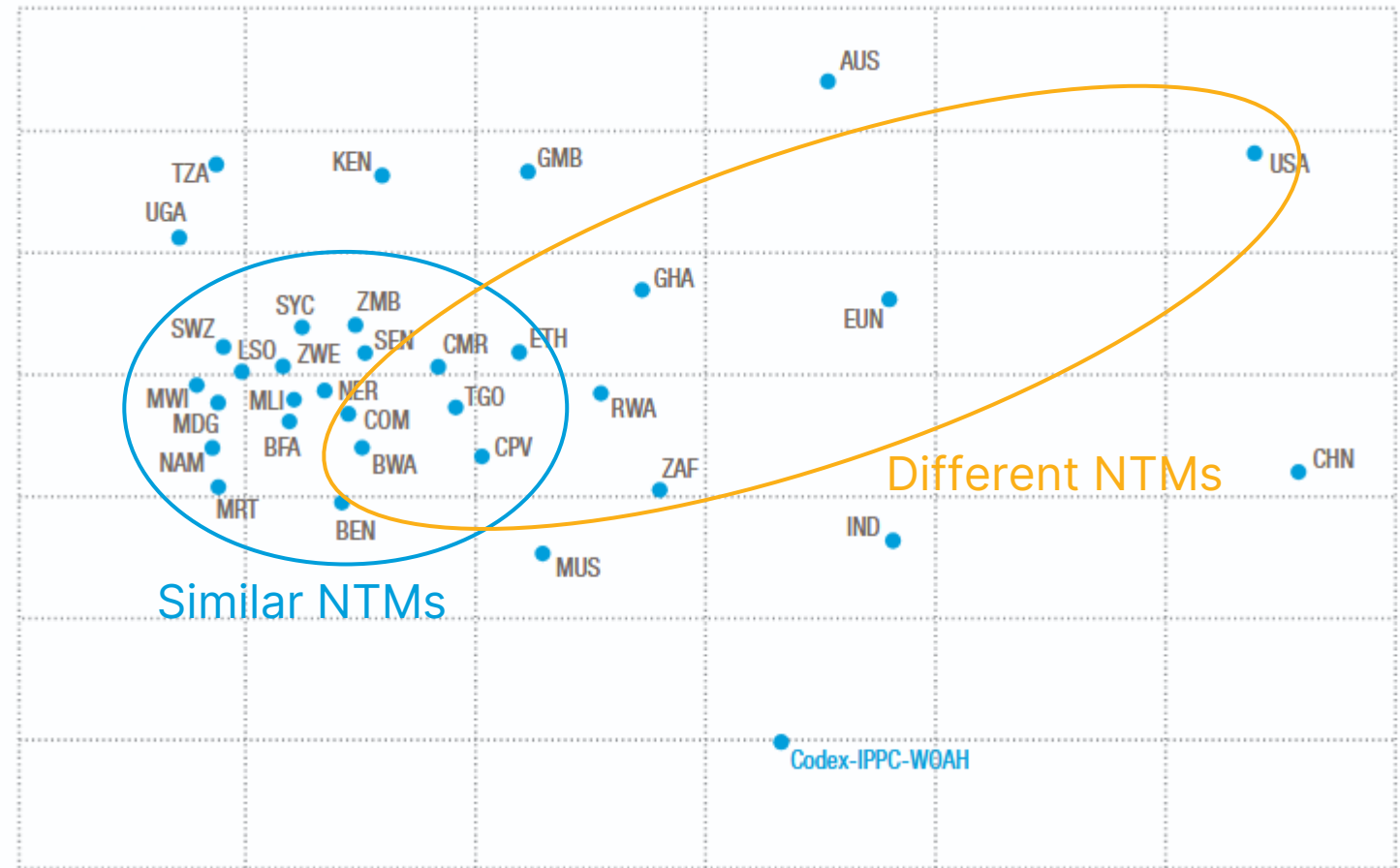
Transparency and regulatory cooperation reduces costs

Transparency can reduce impact of technical NTMs by **~25%** (OECD, 2021).

Regulatory cooperation can reduce costs by **14 – 28%**



Regulatory distance in agri-food: an African example



Source: UNCTAD, 2024. Available at: <https://unctad.org/publication/making-sense-non-tariff-measures-users-guide-accessing-and-analysing-data>

➤ **Key takeaways**

- ▶ **NTMs are essential but costly**
 - They safeguard health, safety, and the environment, but compliance can be burdensome.
- ▶ **Transparency and cooperation reduce costs**
 - Clear information, data sharing, and regulatory convergence lower trade barriers without undermining policy goals.

- 
- 1. Trade and Sustainable Development**
 - 2. Trade and market access, focus on tariffs**
 - 3. Non-tariff measures**
 - 4. Voluntary sustainability standards**

Market access in times of geopolitical tensions

Session 2 – Trade Policy Instruments for Sustainable Development: Voluntary Sustainability Standards

16.10.2025

Santiago Fernandez De Cordoba
Trade Analysis Branch, UNCTAD

- 
- 1. Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)**
 - 2. VSS and Trade Policy**
 - 3. United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS)**
 - 4. Conclusions**
- 

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)

➤ Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)

“Standards specifying requirements that producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers or service providers may be asked to meet, relating to a wide range of sustainability metrics, including respect for basic human rights, worker health and safety, the environmental impacts of production, community relations, land use planning and others.” (UNFSS 2013)



Seal-of-approval



Market access



Effective marketing tool



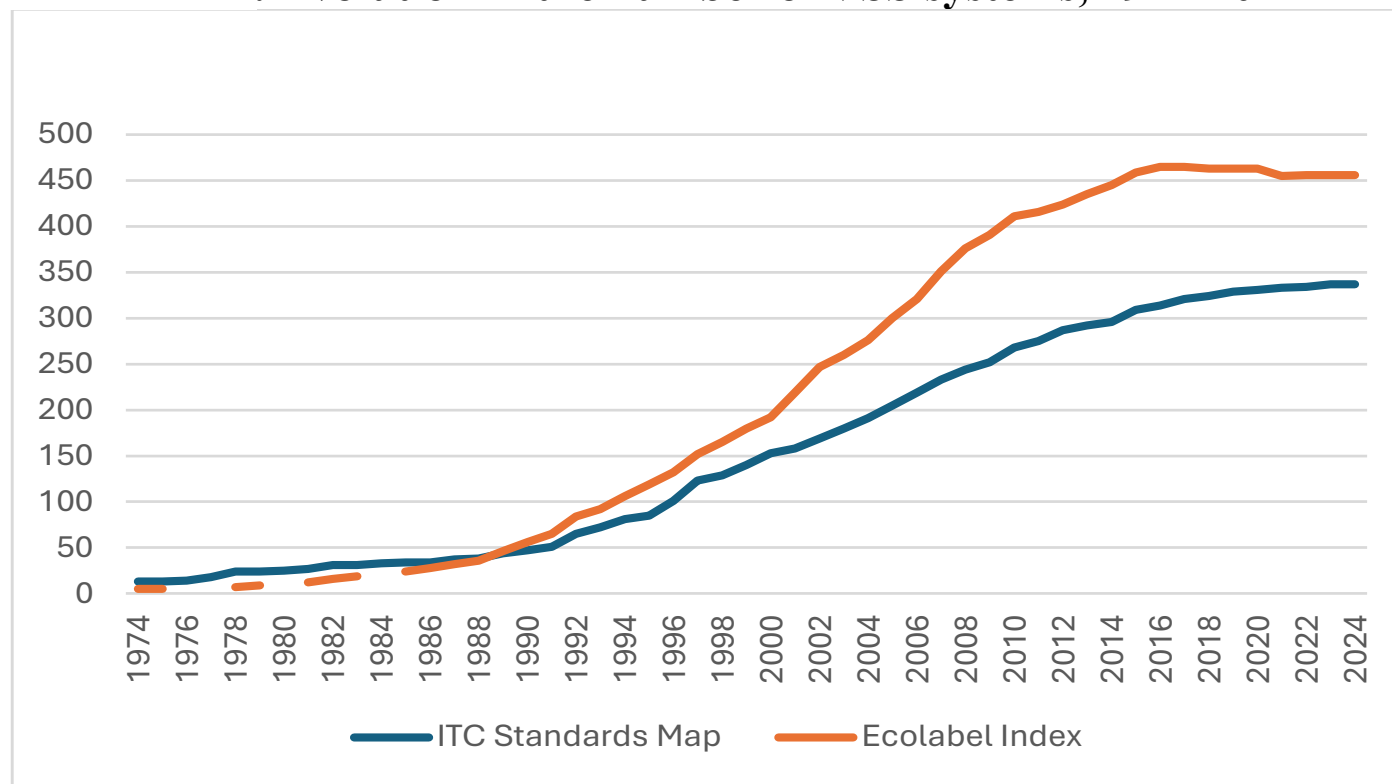
Price Premium



**66 % of consumers
are willing to pay a
premium for
sustainable products**
(Nielsen survey)

➤ A Market Reality

: Evolution in the number of VSS systems, 1974-2024



Source: ITC Standards Map (2024) and Ecolabel Index (2024).

Why?



**GROWING CONSUMER
AWARENESS OF SOCIAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**



**FIRMS' MOTIVATIONS, SUCH AS
BRAND PROTECTION, PRICE
PREMIUM AND MARKET ACCESS**



**REACTION TO THE EMERGENCE OF
OTHER VSS**



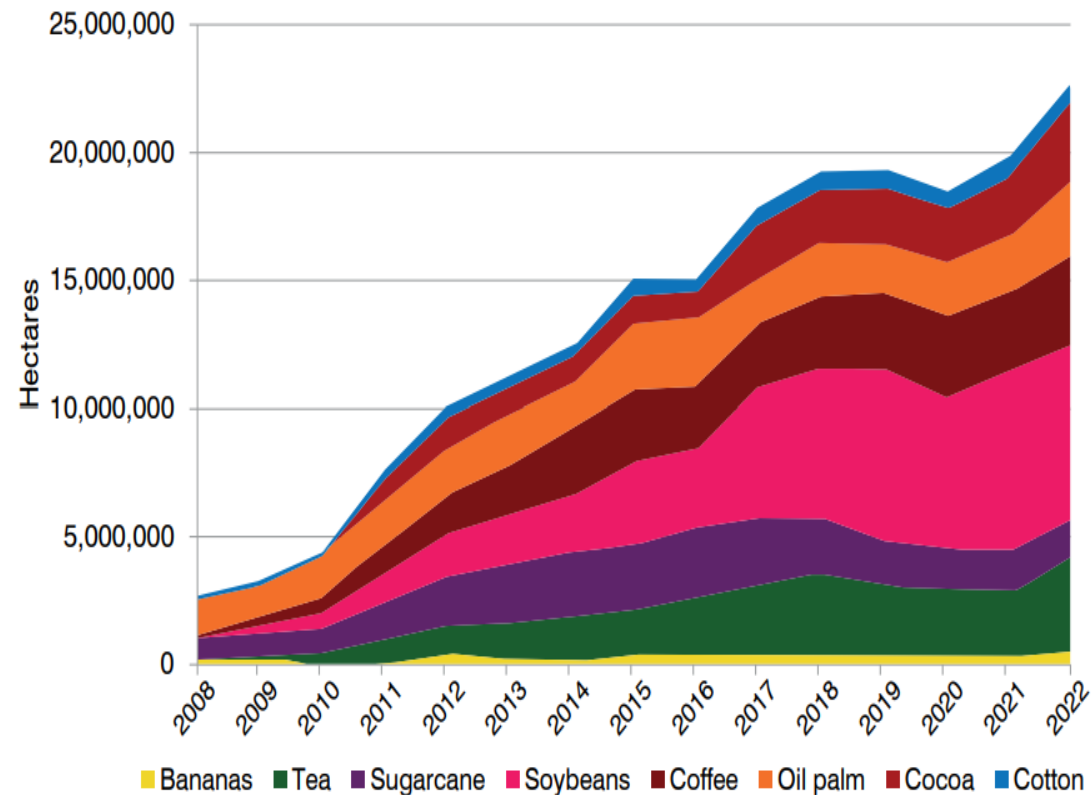
**REACTION TO FAILURES OF
MULTILATERAL REGULATORY
EFFORTS**



**GOVERNMENTS' ENGAGEMENT
WITH VSS**

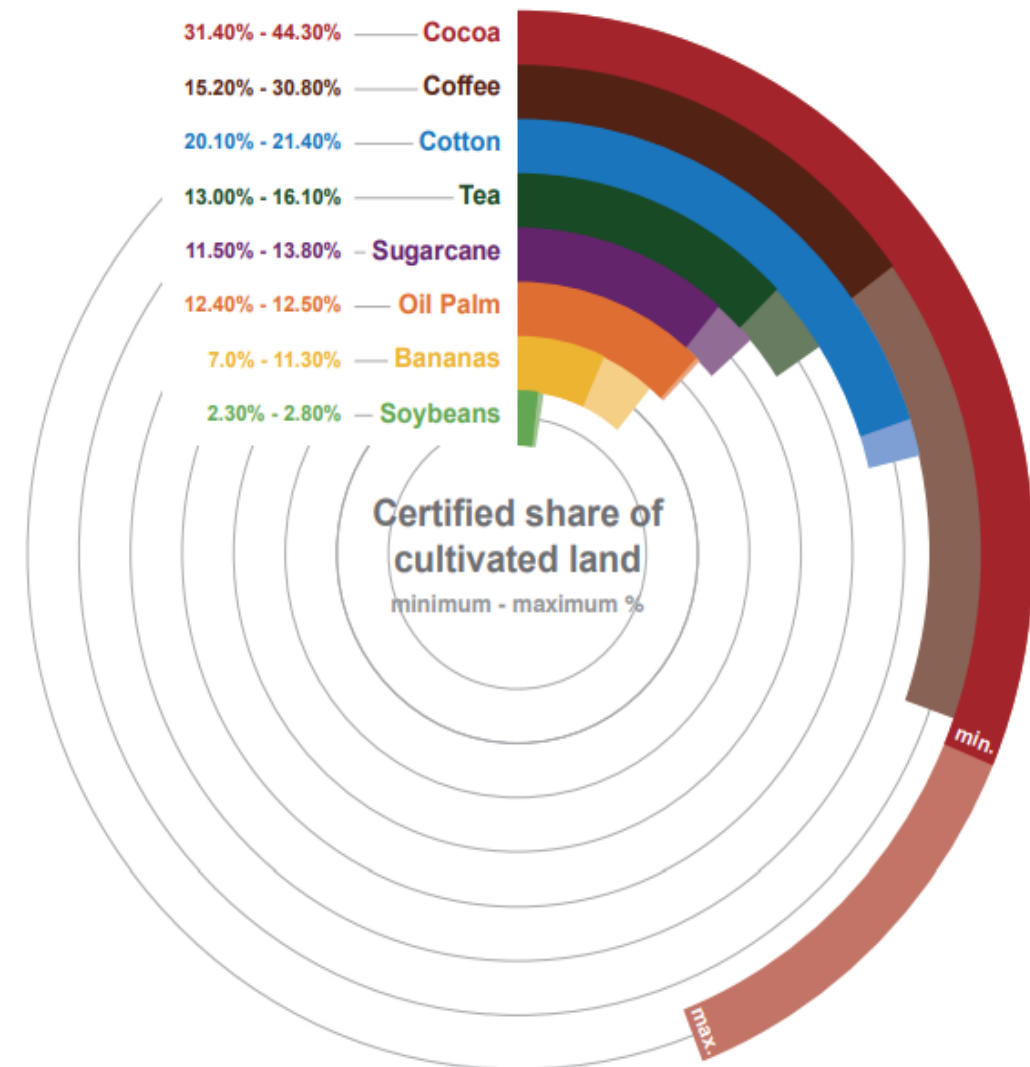
➤ Certified agricultural production has grown

Figure 4: Evolution of minimum area certified by agricultural commodity, 2008–22



Note: The data in this table were not adjusted for multiple certifications, so the minimum possible is reported. The total VSS-compliant area corresponds to the standard with the largest compliant area operating within a given sector by country.

Sources: FiBL-ITC-IISD/SSI survey, 2024; 4C Services, 2014–16, 2018–24; Better Cotton, 2014, 2015, 2017–24; Bonsucro, 2014–2016, 2018–2024; Cotton made in Africa, 2014–16, 2018–24; Fairtrade International, 2017–24; GLOBALG.A.P., 2015, 2016, 2018–24; FiBL survey, 2008–24; ProTerra Foundation, 2014–16, 2018–24; Rainforest Alliance, 2014–16, 2018–24; Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, 2019–24; Round Table on Responsible Soy, 2014–16, 2018–24; Textile Exchange 2013–24.



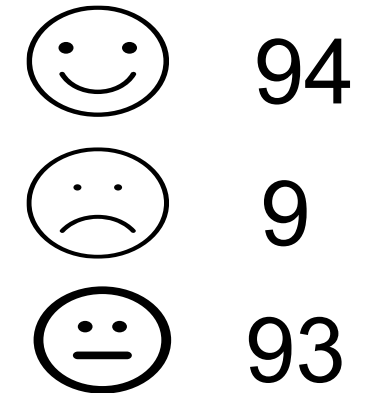
Source: FiBL-ITC-IISD State of Sustainability Initiatives (SSI) survey, 2024.

➤ VSS' sustainability impacts

Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Climate change • Deforestation
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monetary impacts: farm productivity, income and poverty reduction • Non-monetary impacts: health, child schooling, and gender
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade volumes and value and demand • Transaction costs



Environment

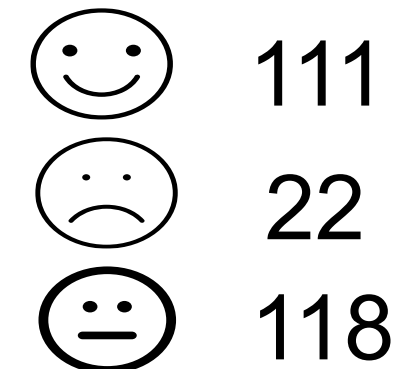


What does the evidence research tell us on sustainability impacts?

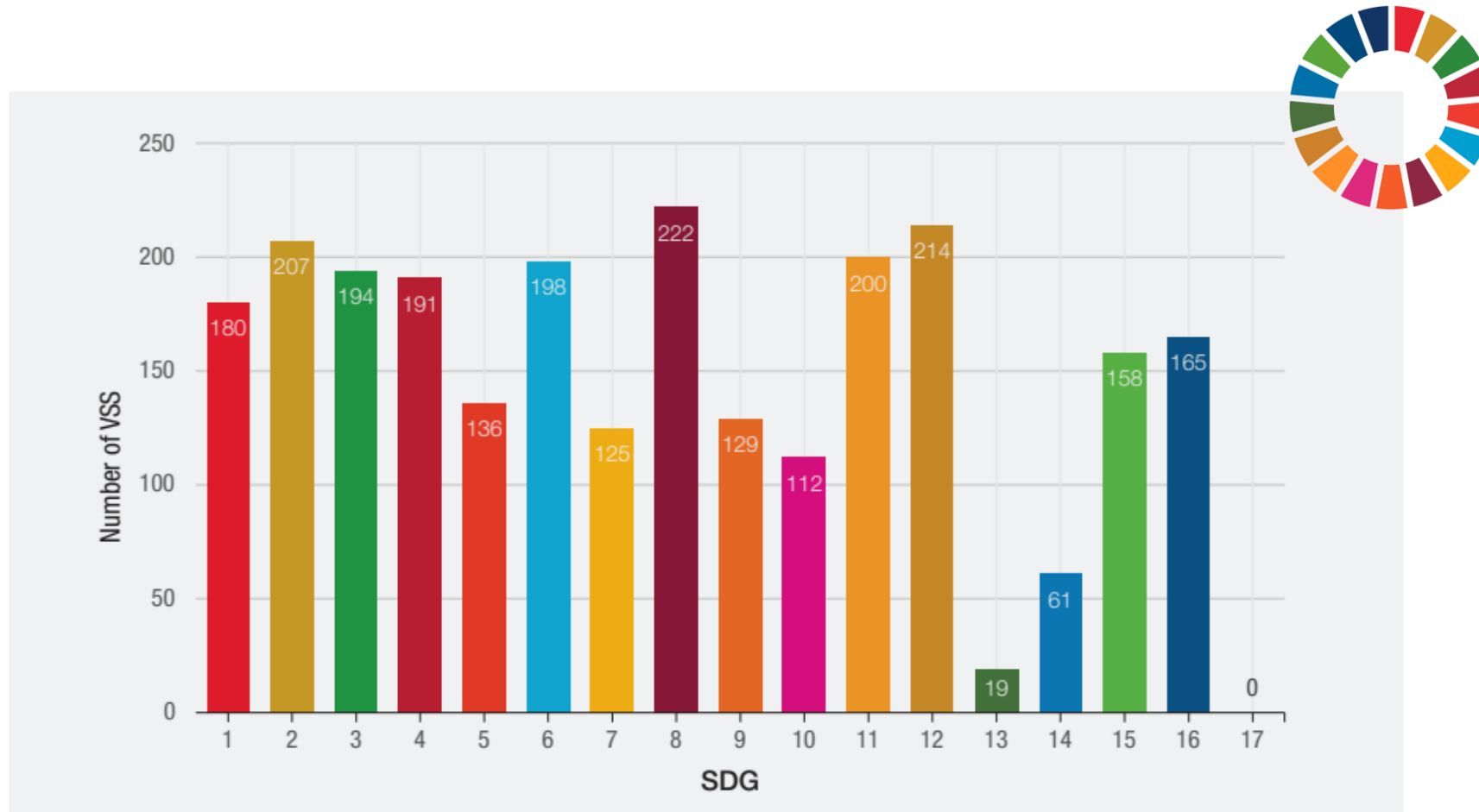
- Evidence on VSS impacts of VSS is mixed
- Highly context specific.
- Trade-offs between sustainability dimensions can occur



Socioeconomic

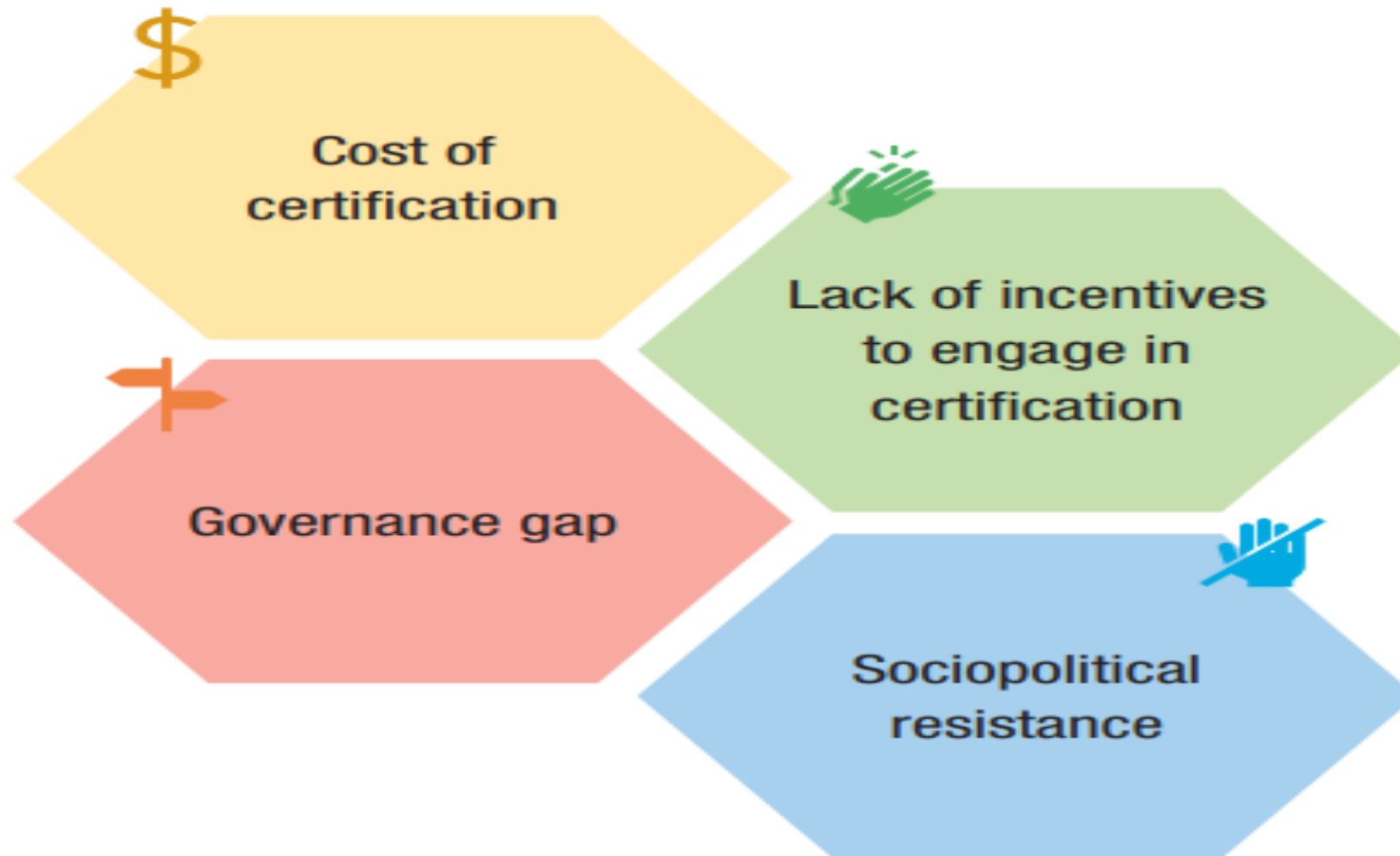


➤ Links between VSS and SDGs



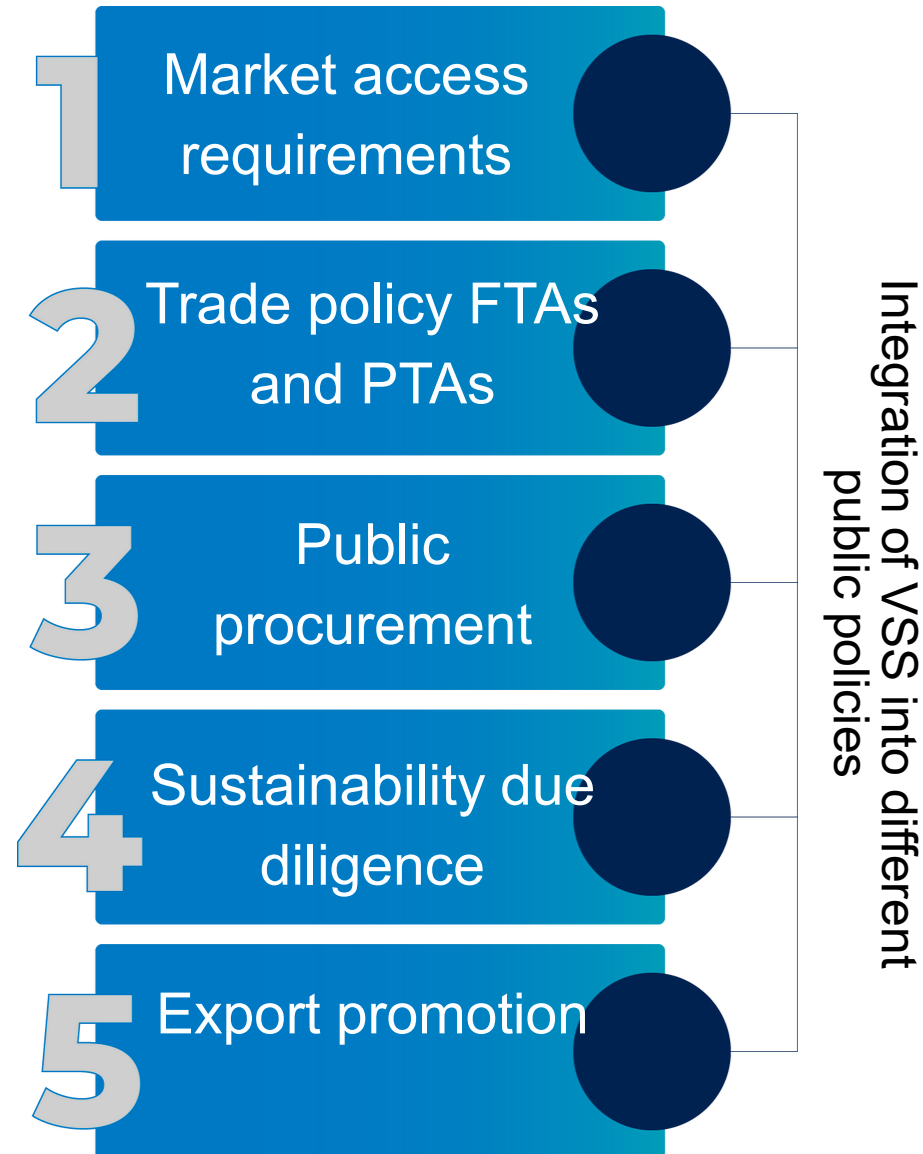
Source: "Voluntary Sustainability Standards, Trade and Sustainable Development, UNFSS 3rd Flagship (2018)

➤ Challenges to VSS adoption



VSS and Trade Policy

➤ VSS in Public Policy



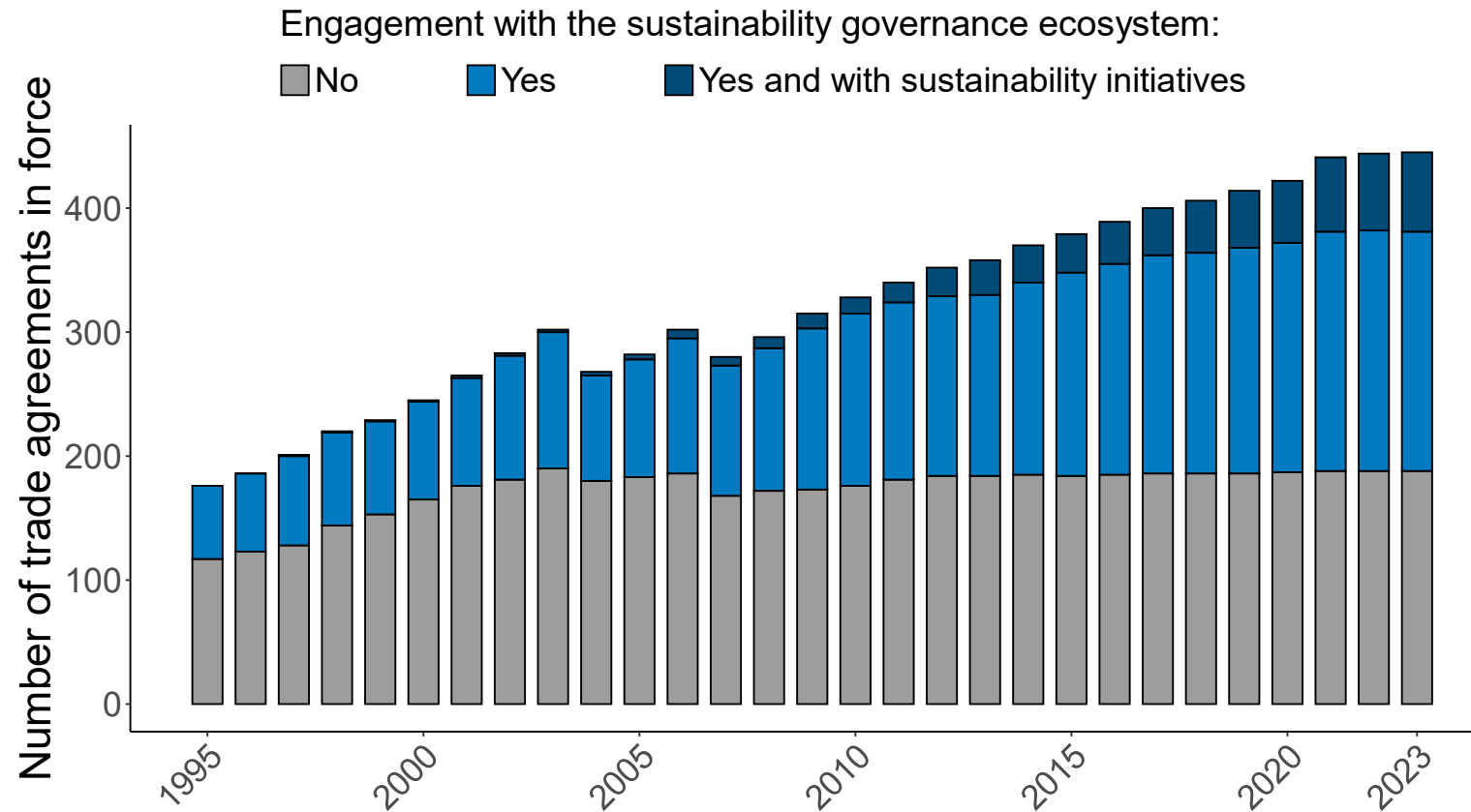
➤ VSS in International Trade

- VSS enabler of trade (value, volume-price)
 - (1) efficiency gains with enhanced production methods and volume effects
 - (2) price premiums which affect export value
 - (3) lower transaction costs - compliance public standards (importing country)
 - (4) product diversification

=> Trade facilitation crucial

- **Promotion** of VSS in FTAs
 - A number of FTAs include provisions which promote the support and uptake of VSS in the FTA (especially European Union FTAs) more generally
 - Recognition in provisions on governance of forests and fisheries
- VSS as **tariff differential**
 - EFTA/Indonesia FTA includes different tariffs for sustainable palm oil compared to conventional
 - EU-Indonesia CEPA (23/9/2025) – Protocol on Enhancing the Potential of CEPA to support Trade in Sustainable Palm Oil (Article 2 acknowledges that VSS are useful in supporting sustainability efforts of economic operators)

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Source: Towards more environmentally sustainable supply chains: The role of trade agreements and sustainability initiatives, OECD 2025

VSS challenges and developments for developing countries

Governance Gap

- Regulatory governance context in which VSS operate influences VSS adoption and effectiveness
- VSS can also 'overcome' or reduce the governance gap

National and international standards

- Complements or competitors?
- Multiplicity of standards
- Harmonization and mutual recognition

Due diligence as a new regulatory approach

- Strong increase in sustainability due diligence initiatives in developed countries
- Little evidence of developing countries moving towards legislation requiring mandatory DD
- Explore link and complementarity between DD and VSS

VSS in policy mixes

- Governments can play a key role in creating enabling conditions for VSS to be widely adopted and effectively implemented.
- Governments and VSS interact in different ways: governments can support or control VSS or VSS can support government policies
- Each of these interactions would result in different forms of public-private policy mixes.

United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS)



In 2013, five United Nations agencies established the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, henceforth, UNFSS, based on their existing mandates, activities and the different expertise. UNECE joined in 2021. UNCTAD is the Secretariat of the UNFSS.



- UNFSS is a neutral and independent forum that shall endeavor to promote sustainable development.
- UNFSS aims to align and contribute to the sustainable development goals (SDGs) or any other subsequent global agenda for sustainable development.
- UNFSS is the only forum that systematically conducts analytical, empirical and capacity-building activities in the field of VSS.

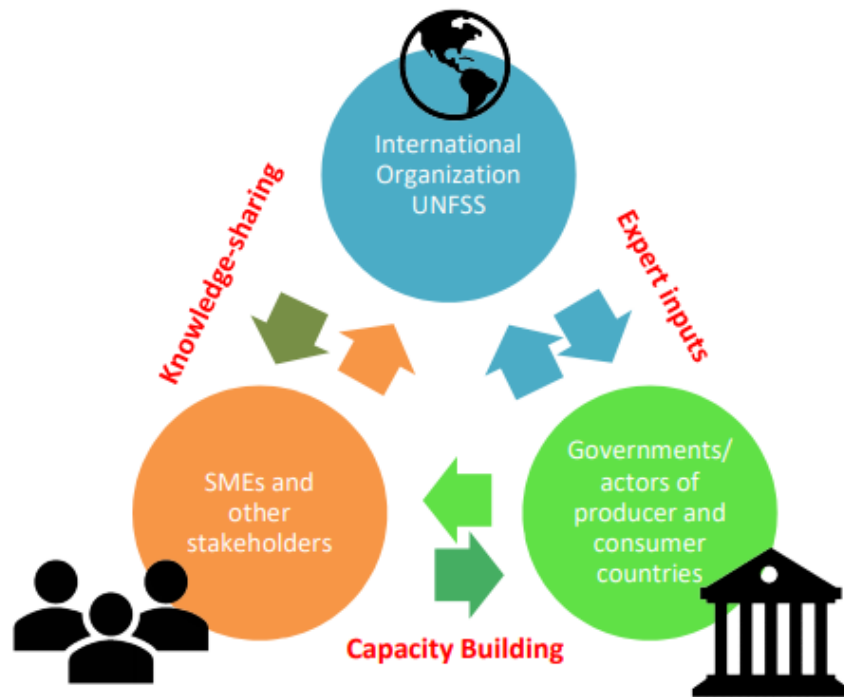


UNFSS

United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards

a joint initiative of **FAO, ITC, UNCTAD, UN Environment and UNIDO**

The objectives of the forum are:



- To identify and address issues concerning VSS by **engaging governments**, in particular of the developing countries, **and key stakeholders**, including, but not limited to, producers, traders, consumers, standard-setters, certification-bodies, trade diplomats, non-governmental organizations, and leading academicians, and facilitating meaningful dialogue between them.
- To **support stakeholders**, such as small-scale producers/SMEs, from developing and least-developed countries, to grasp the opportunities and challenges of VSS.
- To collaborate with national and international stakeholders to **support exchange of experience**, create knowledge, promote research, and cooperate on VSS and sustainable development.
- To disseminate **credible and impartial information** on issues related to VSS.

UNFSS Cornerstones

UNCTAD/ UN
VSS Reports



Research
& Analysis
Hub

Informed
Policy
Dialogue



Support
for
National
Platforms



Platforms/Initiatives:

- Consists of Multi-Stakeholder Assembly, a **Steering Council**, **Sectoral Committees** and a **Secretariat**
- More than **25 countries** participating in the **VSS National Platforms/Initiatives Network**



International Convention on Sustainable
Trade and Standards (ICSTS)

Berlin (2016), Qingdao (2017), New Delhi
(2018), Rio de Janeiro and Pretoria (2019),
New Delhi (2023)



Thank you

