

Subregional workshop on non-tariff measures in Armenia and North and Central Asia

Organized by ESCAP and Food Safety Inspection Body by the Government of
Republic of Armenia

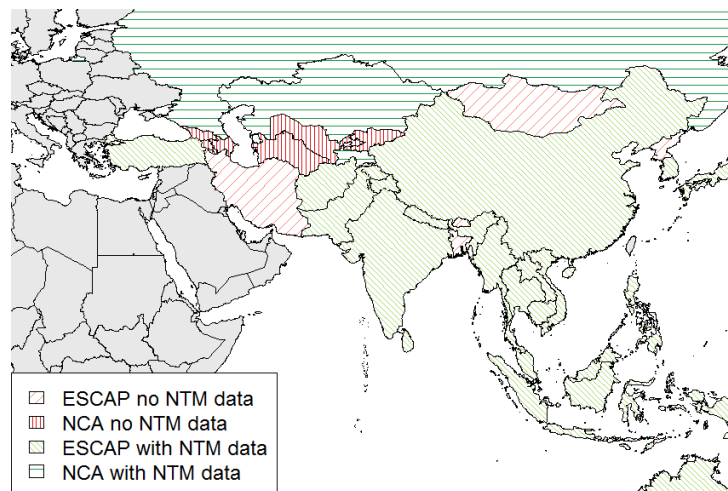
10-11 June 2019, Yerevan, Armenia

Draft Concept Note¹ (as of 3 April 2019)

I: Background

Non-tariff measures (NTMs) refer to a variety of trade measures other than tariffs and include technical barriers to trade (TBT) and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures that aim to protect human, animal and plant life as well as the environment. Such measures can become barriers to trade hampering economic development opportunities offered through international trade. NTMs have become more significant deterrents to trade than tariffs. Evidence indicates that NTMs can be three to four times more restrictive than tariffs and are significant contributors to trade costs. Unlike tariffs, however, NTMs are less transparent and more difficult to comply with, especially for small producers and traders. However, the effects of NTMs on trade and sustainable development are not well understood. This is particularly the case in North and Central Asia subregion, which has been identified to have among the lowest levels of NTM transparency, reflected in little publicly available information (see figure 1 below), and highest trade costs among the Asia-Pacific subregion.

Figure 1. NTM data availability in Asia-Pacific



¹ For the version of the latest programme, please go to <https://www.unescap.org/events/subregional-workshop-non-tariff-measures-armenia-and-north-and-central-asia>

Source: ESCAP based on data from UNCTAD (2017), available from <http://trains.unctad.org/Forms/WhatsAvailable.aspx>

This workshop is part of the ESCAP-led project, titled “Examining the impact of non-tariff measures (NTMs) on subregional trade among countries in North and Central Asia”, funded by the Government of the Russian Federation. As part of the project, a preliminary study on examining NTMs in the subregion was conducted by ESCAP, presented during the twelfth session of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Working Group on Trade (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 19 September 2018).² Next, a *Workshop on Reducing the Costs of NTMs in North and Central Asia* was held in Geneva, Switzerland, 11 October 2018, back-to-back with UNCTAD NTM Week 2018 (9-10 October, 2018).³ In addition, a follow-up workshop was organized in Bangkok, Thailand, 15 March 2019, during ESCAP’s Sixth Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week (11-15 Mar 2019).⁴ Furthermore, to increase the transparency of NTM in the subregion, ESCAP, in collaboration with UNCTAD, is compiling NTM data in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

II: Objectives

The objectives of this meeting are:

- To enhance capacity of member States in North and Central Asia to monitor and evaluate the impact of their own and their trade partner’s NTMs;
- To present findings and gather feedback on NTM data collection in Armenia;
- To share best practices and facilitate dialogue among North and Central Asian countries to address trade costs associated with NTMs.

III. Organization and participation

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), representatives of the Government agencies in North and Central Asian countries whose work pertain to NTMs, including trade, standards setting, food safety and customs.

IV: Documentation

ESCAP will disseminate background notes for the event. Please visit the ESCAP website for further information about the workshop and to see other documents related to the workshop: <https://www.unescap.org/events/subregional-workshop-non-tariff-measures-armenia-and-north-and-central-asia>

² <https://www.unescap.org/events/12th-session-speca-working-group-trade>

³ <https://www.unescap.org/events/ntm-week-2018-side-event-workshop-reducing-costs-ntms-north-and-central-asia>

⁴ <https://www.unescap.org/events/follow-workshop-reducing-costs-ntms-north-and-central-asia>