

REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS DATABASE

USER GUIDE

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1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS (RTAS)

1.1 The WTO Rules

When a WTO Member enters into a regional trade agreement (RTA) through which it grants more favourable conditions than for trade with other WTO Members, it departs from the guiding principle of non-discrimination defined in the GATT, and the GATS. WTO Members are however permitted to enter into such arrangements under specific conditions which are spelled out in three sets of rules:

- ◆ [Paragraphs 4 to 10 of Article XXIV of GATT 1994](#) (as clarified in the Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXIV of the GATT 1994) provide for the formation and operation of customs unions and free-trade areas covering trade in goods, and interim agreements leading to one or the other;
- ◆ Paragraph 2(c) of the so-called [Enabling Clause](#) (i.e., the 1979 Decision on Differential and More Favourable Treatment, Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries) refers to preferential trade arrangements in trade in goods amongst developing country Members; and
- ◆ [Article V of GATS](#) governs RTAs in the area of trade in services, for both developed and developing country Members.

In addition, the [Transparency Mechanism](#) — negotiated in the Negotiating Group on Rules established under the Doha Development Agenda — provides for the early announcement of any RTA. Each of the above-mentioned sets of rules provide for the notification of RTAs to the WTO; notified RTAs are considered by Members on the basis of a Factual Presentation drafted by the WTO Secretariat in consultation with the parties to the RTA. See the [dedicated webpage](#) on the WTO General Council Decision on 14 December 2006.

1.2 The WTO Bodies

The consideration of RTAs shall be carried out by the WTO [Committee on Regional Trade Agreements](#) (CRTA), except for those RTAs that are notified under the Enabling Clause, which are considered by the WTO [Committee on Trade and Development](#) (CTD) meeting in dedicated session.

1.3 Types of Agreements

The parties to an RTA can notify several types of RTAs:

- ◆ A Free Trade Agreement (FTA), as defined in [Paragraph 8\(b\) of Article XXIV of GATT 1994](#);
- ◆ A Customs Union (CU), as defined in [Paragraph 8\(a\) of Article XXIV of GATT 1994](#);
- ◆ An Economic Integration Agreement (EIA), as defined in [Article V of GATS](#); *or*
- ◆ A "Partial Scope" Agreement (PS). "Partial Scope" which is not defined or referred to in the WTO Agreement, means that the agreement covers only certain products. Partial scope agreements are notified under [paragraph 4\(a\) of the Enabling Clause](#).

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1.4 WTO Consideration Process

- ◆ Early Announcement

Under the Transparency Mechanism, Members participating in new negotiations aimed at the conclusion of an RTA shall endeavour to inform the WTO Secretariat of such negotiations. Members which are parties to a newly signed RTA shall convey to the Secretariat information on the RTA.

- ◆ Notification

WTO Members entering into RTAs are required to notify such RTA to the WTO, either under Article XXIV of the GATT 1994 or the Enabling Clause (for RTAs covering trade in goods), or under Article V of the GATS (for RTAs covering trade in services). In a case of an RTA covering both goods



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and services, two notifications are required. The notification should be made following ratification of the RTA and before the application of preferential treatment between the parties.

- ◆ Notification of Changes

Any changes affecting the implementation of an RTA, or the operation of an already implemented RTA, should be notified to the WTO as soon as possible after the changes occur.

- ◆ Subsequent reporting

At the end of the RTA's implementation period, the parties shall submit to the WTO a short report on the realisation of the liberalization commitments contained in the RTA.

- ◆ Factual Presentation (FP)

The Factual Presentation is a document prepared on the responsibility of the WTO Secretariat in conformity with Article 7 (b) of the Transparency Mechanism in full consultation with the parties to serve as the basis for the consideration of an RTA by the WTO Membership. It describes the trade environment, the main characteristics of the agreement, and its impact on market access in the parties to the RTA. The parties are required to submit trade and tariff line information as specified in Annex I of the Transparency Mechanism, within a specified period (usually 10 weeks but 20 weeks for agreements exclusively between developing countries) after notification.

- ◆ Factual Abstract (FA)

The Factual Abstract is a short summary of the main features of the agreement, prepared by the WTO Secretariat in conformity with Article 22(b) of the Transparency Mechanism. It is prepared for older agreements for which an examination has already been completed by the CRTA.

- ◆ The case of agreements notified to the GATT 1947

In the case of agreements notified to the GATT 1947 and covered by Paragraph 22 (a) of the Transparency Decision, the consideration status may be "No report" or "Report adopted", depending on whether or not a GATT 1947 working party conducted an examination of such agreements and issued a report. For Agreements falling under the Enabling Clause, no examination was mandated and hence such agreements do not have a working party report.

- ◆ Questions and Replies

Before an agreement is considered by WTO Members, they may submit questions in writing to the parties to the agreement. The parties are expected to provide written answers to these questions in advance of the meeting to consider that RTA. A document containing the questions and replies submitted by Members and the parties is issued three working days in advance of the CRTA or the CTD meeting where the RTA is to be considered.

- ◆ Standard Format for information on RTAs

The objective of the Standard Format for Information on RTAs was to facilitate and standardize the provision of initial information by parties to regional trade agreements. As of 2006, the practice of submitting standard formats has been discontinued and superseded by the transparency provisions of the Transparency Mechanism.

- ◆ Biennial report

Paragraph 9 and 11 of the *Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXIV of the GATT 1994* provide for the biennial submission of a report on the operation of agreements notified under Article XXIV. As of 2006, the practice of submitting biennial reports has been discontinued and superseded by the transparency provisions of the Transparency Mechanism.

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2 WHAT IS THE REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS DATABASE

The Regional Trade Agreements Database is a comprehensive database of all RTAs notified to the GATT/WTO. The application allows users to search and export available information on any notified RTA, as well as on the consideration process of a particular RTA within the CRTA or the CTD. In particular, it allows a dynamic search through all notified RTAs according to a selection of criteria, such as year of entry into force, type of agreement, etc. The RTA Database is maintained in the WTO's three official languages, English, French and Spanish by the [Regional Trade Agreement Section](#) in the Trade Policies Review Division of the WTO.

The RTA Database contains information only on those agreements that have been notified, or for which an early announcement has been made, to the WTO. Information on the content of these agreements and the parties thereto reflects information provided by the parties to the WTO. Therefore, membership to the agreement may not be up to date if changes have not been notified by the parties; similarly, any subsequent change, any additional protocol etc. to the agreement will be available in the database only to the extent that it has been notified. For further information, please consult either the RTA Parties' website(s) or contact the RTA Section (see "Contact RTA Section").

2.1 What kind of information is available in the RTA Database?

2.1.1 The "ID-Card" and its content

The information is presented in the form of an "ID-Card", which displays all the factual information available on a given agreement: its signatories, date of signature and entry into force, a link to the website where the text of the agreement and its annexes can be found, the WTO process that has taken place regarding that agreement, etc. A list of the RTA provisions covered by the agreement is provided for the vast majority of RTAs (a glossary which indicates the approach that has been taken for each of the provisions selected is available as a separate document). Also, the tariff and trade data that have been received from the parties for the preparation of the Factual Presentation is included in the ID-Card.

2.1.2 Early announcements, agreements notified but not yet in force and inactive agreements

- ◆ In addition to notified agreements, the database also contains available information on early announcements of those agreements that have not yet been notified.
- ◆ By default, the information that is presented by the database concerns those notified RTAs that are in force, but it is also possible to retrieve information on RTAs notified but not yet in force and on inactive RTAs.

2.1.3 Figures on RTAs

Four tables provide [detailed figures](#) on the number of RTAs notified to the GATT/WTO and still in force, sorted by coverage, by WTO legal provision, by type of agreement and by examination/consideration status.

2.1.4 Background WTO documents

The search by country/territory also makes available a number of background WTO documents on WTO Members' trade laws, policies, or trade environment, such as the Trade Profile, the Tariff Profile or the most recent Trade Policy Review.

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2.2 RTA Information Search facility

2.2.1 Search by country/territory

- ◆ Allows the user to select any country/territory, either by clicking on the map or on a drop-down list and retrieve details of all RTAs that have been notified or early announcements.

2.2.2 Search RTAs

- ◆ Allows the user to select a combination of search parameters to obtain a list of RTAs meeting those parameters. The user can then click on the RTA name to obtain its ID Card. For example, the user can select the following criterion: Type of Agreement = Economic Integration Agreements (EIA); the list will show all notified agreements that are: either EIAs (for trade in services only); or EIAs and Customs Unions, or EIAs and Free Trade Agreements (for agreements covering trade in goods and services). It is also possible to search by multiple criteria, e.g. all FTAs, signed by a given country, with a specific year of entry into force. Please note that the search by criteria facility is structured around an "AND" rule basis, meaning that only those RTAs meeting ALL parameters selected will show.

2.2.3 Search by RTA Provisions

- ◆ This option allows users to search the database for RTAs that contain one or several specific provisions. The consolidated list of all provisions (and sub-provisions) is available from the database homepage in the form of a "Glossary". It can also be found in the top-right hand corner of each tab dedicated to the "RTA Provisions". This glossary also indicates the approach that has been taken for each of the provisions selected.

2.2.4 Search by agreement

- ◆ This option allows the selection of an RTA from the list of short RTA titles in alphabetical order. The user can also search by a specific string of characters, for example typing "asia" will generate a list of all agreements whose short title contains the string "asia", such as the Asian Free Trade Agreement (AFTA).
- ◆ The short RTA titles are not the full titles of the agreements, which can be found under the Text of the Agreement.

2.2.5 Sort agreements

- ◆ The list of RTAs generated by a search can also be sorted using any of the field names at the top of the screen in either ascending or descending order.

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3 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Composition of Regions

Each signatory to an RTA, whether a WTO Member or not, is considered to be part of one of the following regions:

REGIONS
<p>Africa Algeria; Angola; Benin; Botswana; Bouvet Island; British Indian Ocean Territory; British Overseas Territory of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Ceuta and Melilla; Chad; Comoros; Congo; Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Djibouti; Egypt; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Eswatini; Ethiopia; French Southern Territories; Gabon; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Heard Island and McDonald Islands; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Libya; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mayotte; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; Sao Tomé and Principe; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Sudan; Tanzania; The Gambia; Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; Western Sahara; Zambia; Zimbabwe</p>
<p>Caribbean Anguilla; Antigua and Barbuda; Aruba, the Netherlands with respect to; Bahamas; Barbados; Cayman Islands; Cuba; Curaçao; Dominica; Dominican Republic; French Antilles; Grenada; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; Netherlands Antilles; Netherlands Antilles (incl. Aruba); Saint Barthélemy; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Martin; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Sint Maarten; Trinidad and Tobago; Turks and Caicos Islands; Virgin Islands, British</p>
<p>Central America Belize; Costa Rica; El Salvador; Guatemala; Honduras; Nicaragua; Panama</p>
<p>Central Asia Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan</p>
<p>East Asia Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Christmas Island; Cocos (Keeling) Islands; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea, Democratic People's Republic of; Korea, Republic of; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Philippines; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Viet Nam</p>
<p>Europe Albania; Andorra; Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; European Union; Faeroe Islands; Finland; France; Germany; Gibraltar; Greece; Greenland; Guernsey; Holy See; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Isle of Man; Italy; Jersey; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Moldova, Republic of; Monaco; Montenegro; Netherlands; North Macedonia; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; San Marino; Serbia; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Spain; Svalbard and Jan Mayen; Sweden; Switzerland; Türkiye; Ukraine; United Kingdom; UNMIK/Kosovo; Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic of</p>
<p>Middle East Bahrain, Kingdom of; Iran; Iraq; Israel; Jordan; Kuwait, the State of; Lebanese Republic; Oman; Palestine; Qatar; Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of; Syrian Arab Republic; United Arab Emirates; Yemen</p>
<p>North America Bermuda; Canada; Mexico; Puerto Rico; Saint Pierre and Miquelon; United States of America; Virgin Islands, US</p>
<p>Oceania American Samoa; Australia; Cook Islands; Fiji; French Oceania; French Polynesia; Guam; Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Micronesia, Federated States of; Nauru; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Niue; Norfolk Island; Northern Mariana Islands; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Pitcairn; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tokelau; Tonga; Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands; Tuvalu; United States Minor Outlying Islands; Vanuatu; Wallis and Futuna Islands</p>
<p>South America Argentina; Bolivia, Plurinational State of; Brazil; Chile; Colombia; Ecuador; Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas); Guyana; Paraguay; Peru; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; Suriname; Uruguay; Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of</p>
<p>West Asia Afghanistan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Maldives; Nepal; Pakistan; Sri Lanka</p>

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3.2 Glossary of RTA ID-CARD terms

Term	Definition
Accession	The RTA is an accession (i.e. Accession = Yes) if the agreement provides for a new signatory to adhere to an existing agreement. In that case, the existing agreement appears under "related agreements".
Agreement title	Shortened title of the agreement, or acronym. The full title of the agreement can be found in the official text of the agreement.
Consideration status	Stage reached in process of consideration of the RTA in the WTO, including the underlying documentation. The consideration status can be one of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awaiting data from the Parties to draft the Factual Presentation 2. Factual Presentation currently being drafted 3. Awaiting comments from the parties on the Factual Presentation 4. Factual Presentation being finalized 5. Factual Presentation issued and available from the RTA Database 6. Factual Presentation to be done (include mainly RTAs with non-WTO Members) 7. Factual Presentation on hold (include RTAs for which specific commitments in services have not yet been agreed) 8. Factual Abstract issued and available from the RTA Database 9. Report adopted: a report has been adopted for this RTA and is available from the RTA Database. 10. No report: no report has been issued for this RTA. Items 9 and 10 relate only to those RTAs notified during the GATT years.
Coverage	Goods, or services, or both, as notified by the signatories to the agreement.
Composition	Bilateral (two signatories) or plurilateral (three or more signatories) to the agreement.
Cross Regional	The signatories to the agreement belong to at least two regions.
Party Type	This field indicates if one Party is an RTA, or if all parties are RTAs.
Related agreement	Another agreement with the same signatories but a change of scope, for example an additional agreement to include services or the same agreement with new signatories (Accession).
Signatories, original	The original signatories are the entities that signed the agreement.
Signatories, current	The current signatories are those entities that are currently party to the agreement. These signatories appear "as notified by the Parties" and may not always reflect the current <u>real</u> membership of some plurilateral RTAs which were notified a long time ago and have not since been updated by the parties.
Status	The current status of the agreement as notified by the parties, can be one of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early announcement-Under negotiation: early announcement to the WTO of an RTA that is under negotiation. 2. Early announcement-Signed: early announcement of an RTA that has been signed but is not yet in force. 3. Not yet in force: the RTA is notified but is not yet in force. 4. In force for at least one Party: the RTA is notified but is not yet in force for all Parties 5. In Force: the RTA is in force for all Parties. 6. Inactive: the RTA is notified as no longer being in force.
Trade-related data	Tariff and trade data that have been used to compile the statistics presented in the Factual Presentation.
Type of agreement	The type of agreement notified by the parties can be one of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customs Union 2. Free Trade Agreement 3. Partial Scope Agreement 4. Economic Integration Agreement 5. Free Trade Agreement & Economic Integration Agreement 6. Partial Scope & Economic Integration Agreement 7. Customs Union & Economic Integration Agreement
Notification under	WTO provisions invoked when the agreement is notified by the parties are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GATT Art. XXIV 2. Enabling Clause 3. GATS Art. V
WTO Members	Indicates whether or not all parties to the RTA are WTO Members



4 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ◆ **Why is there a difference between the number of RTA notifications and the number of RTAs?**

WTO rules provide for notification of trade in goods and trade in services aspects of RTAs separately. The number of notifications can thus exceed the number of RTAs.

- ◆ **Where do I get the underlying data for the Graphs provided in the Database ?**

The underlying data for all Graphs provided in the Database is available for download in excel format in the top-right hand corner of the page.

- ◆ **What are "inactive RTAs"?**

"Inactive RTAs" refer to those RTAs, previously in force and notified to the GATT/WTO, which are no longer in force to date.

- ◆ **What are the "Trade-related data" excel files provided in the ID Cards?**

The tariff and trade data excel files compile the statistics received from the parties of an RTA for the preparation of the Factual Presentation. Consequently, these files are only available for those RTAs which have been subject to a Factual Presentation.

- ◆ **What is the Preferential Tariff Analysis?**

This helps users to extract the preferential tariff commitments made by a party within different RTAs for different partners for selected products. The tariff information provided in the Database is taken from the tariff liberalization schedules provided by the parties in accordance with the Transparency Mechanism for RTAs. Users should be aware that actual preferential rates may differ from those available here.

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5 FEEDBACK AND CONTACT POINT

Any feedback on this database, including any problem encountered with the content or the user interface, should be reported to the RTA Section:

**Regional Trade Agreements Section
Trade Policies Review Division
World Trade Organization
154, rue de Lausanne
CH-1211 Geneva 2**

Email: rta@wto.org

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