UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Start-up meeting

Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence-Powered Transparency on Trade-Related Regulations for Gender-Sensitive Policymaking in Africa

Gender-AI-Trade/NTM (GAIN)

October 2026

Trade Analysis Branch, UNCTAD

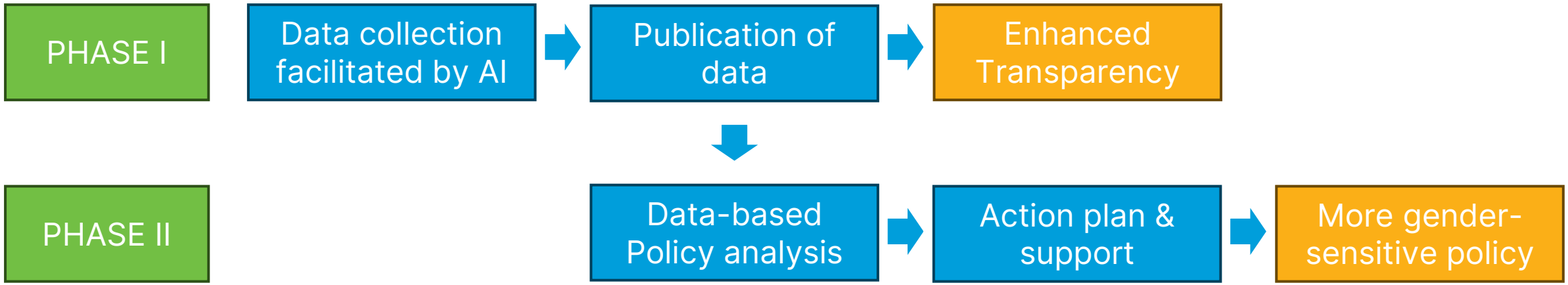
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Our team

Gender-AI-Trade/NTM project

- To improve transparency on trade-related regulations including NTMs, with digitalization and AI to better develop gender-sensitive trade policies
- 2026-2029 (4 years)



Key questions

1. Where does UNCTAD non-tariff measures data come from?
2. Why the use of AI? Why aiming for NTM Transparency?
3. How does the NTM data collection contribute to better gender-sensitive policies?

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Non-Tariff Measures

"Non-Tariff Measures are 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)

→ neutral concept!

NTMs include a broad range of policy instruments including

1. traditional trade policy instruments, quotas, price controls, rules of origin
2. regulatory and technical measures, from non-trade objectives related to safety, health and environmental protection
   - Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures
   - Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)

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From text to data:
extensive projects in each country

UN trade & development

1. Regulations

GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT No. 23 OF 2018

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(Laws, Volume XIV, Cap. 236)

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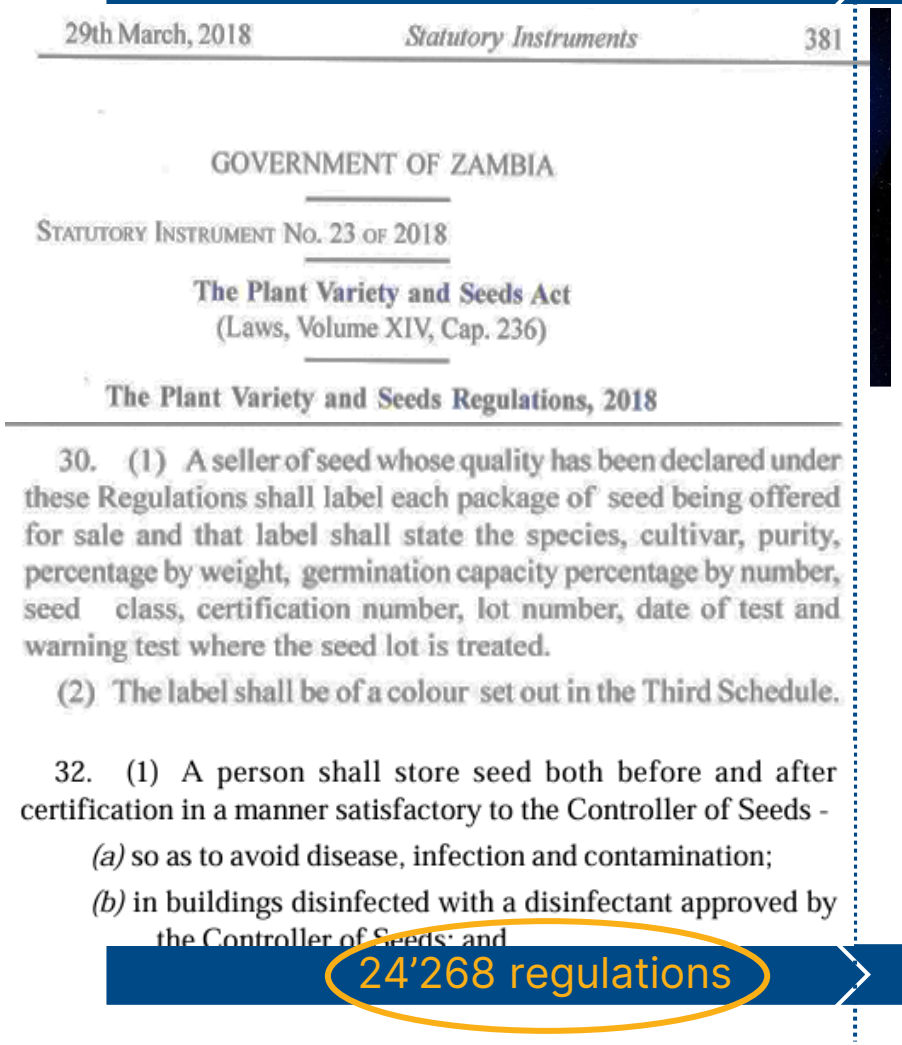
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24’268 regulations

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1. Regulations → 2. Measure coding

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34 SPS types and 24 TBT types.

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24’268 regulations → 103’895 measures

From text to data:
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1. Regulations	2. Measure coding	3. Product coding

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coriander seeds 090921,
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24’268 regulations	103’895 measures		

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Any number of **~5000 product codes** in the Harmonized System at 6 digits

24’268 regulations	103’895 measures	

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24’268 regulations	103’895 measures	9’635’881 pairs

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All partners

Any applicable list of affected partners

From text to data:
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Sample data collection

§ 557.2 Eligibility of foreign countries for importation of fish and fish products into the United States.

The countries eligible to export specific process categories of **fish and fish products** are listed at *http://www.fsis.usda.gov/importlibrary*. Such products must be covered by **foreign inspection certificates** of the country of origin as required by **§ 557.4**. Products from such countries are eligible under the regulations in this subchapter for entry into **the United States** after **inspection and marking** as required by the applicable provisions of this part.

Affected countries

Affected products description => Recorded together with their corresponding HS codes/national tariff lines

Measure reference (location of requirement within the legal document)

Non-tariff measure (the official requirement) => recorded together with their respective NTM code, here, certificate A83, inspection A81, marking A32

Imposing country, here, the US

The paragraph as a whole: A measure description

Key questions

1. Where does UNCTAD non-tariff measures data come from?
2. **Why the use of AI? Why aiming for NTM Transparency?**
3. How does the NTM data collection contribute to better gender-sensitive policies?

AI-powered data collection

- TRAINS database covers 133 countries

1.

Most recent available year	Number of countries	Share
2023–2025	73	54.9%
2020–2022	18	13.5%
2008–2019	42	31.6%
Total	133	100.0%

2. Average data update cycle: 3 years (excluding one-time collection)

- Collecting and updating NTM data is resource-intensive

1. Large volumes of regulations
2. 30+ structured data fields
3. Complexity (legal text, classification, languages)

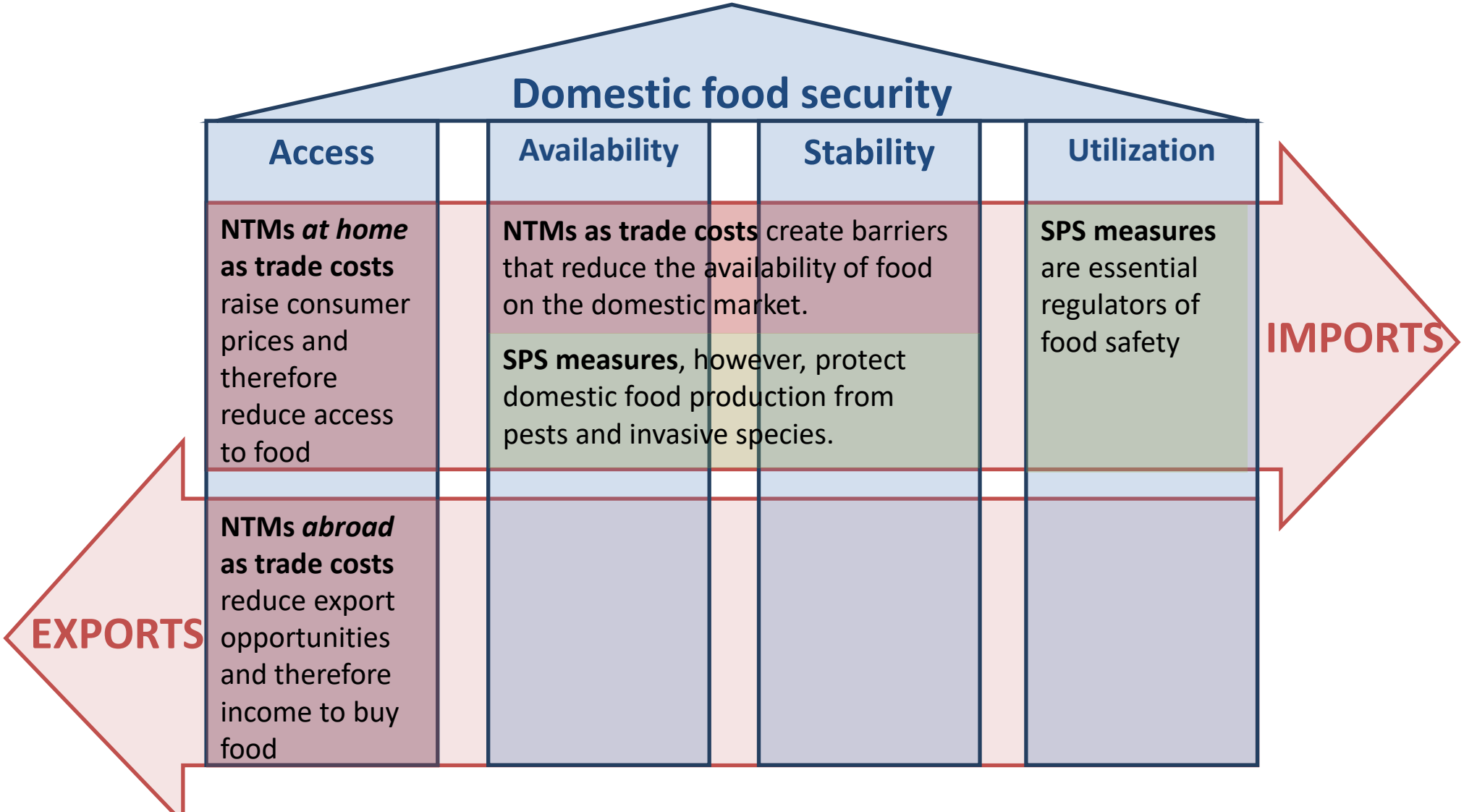
- Objective: To reduce the average time and cost of data collection by 30% for more frequent data update

Why are NTM relevant for development?

- Affect quantities or prices traded
- restrictors and distorting effect on international trade
- affect smaller enterprises and poorer countries

- Access to information is a significant challenge (and a cost)
- A reason why there is little understanding about NTM

Conceptualizing the multi-dimensional impact of SPS measures and TBT on food security



Why promote transparency?

- Gains for businesses and consumers ➔ **20% cost reduction of NTMs** (especially for MSMEs)
- Enhanced national coordination and cost-saving for Ministries and other regulating bodies
- Compliance with the AfCFTA agreement: *"Each State Party shall promptly publish or make publicly available (…) its laws, regulations, procedures and administrative rulings of general application (…) relating to any trade matter …"* (Art 16)

OBJECTIVE OF NTMs DATA COLLECTION
Transparency



Comprehensiveness

- All currently applied measures
- Official governmental sources

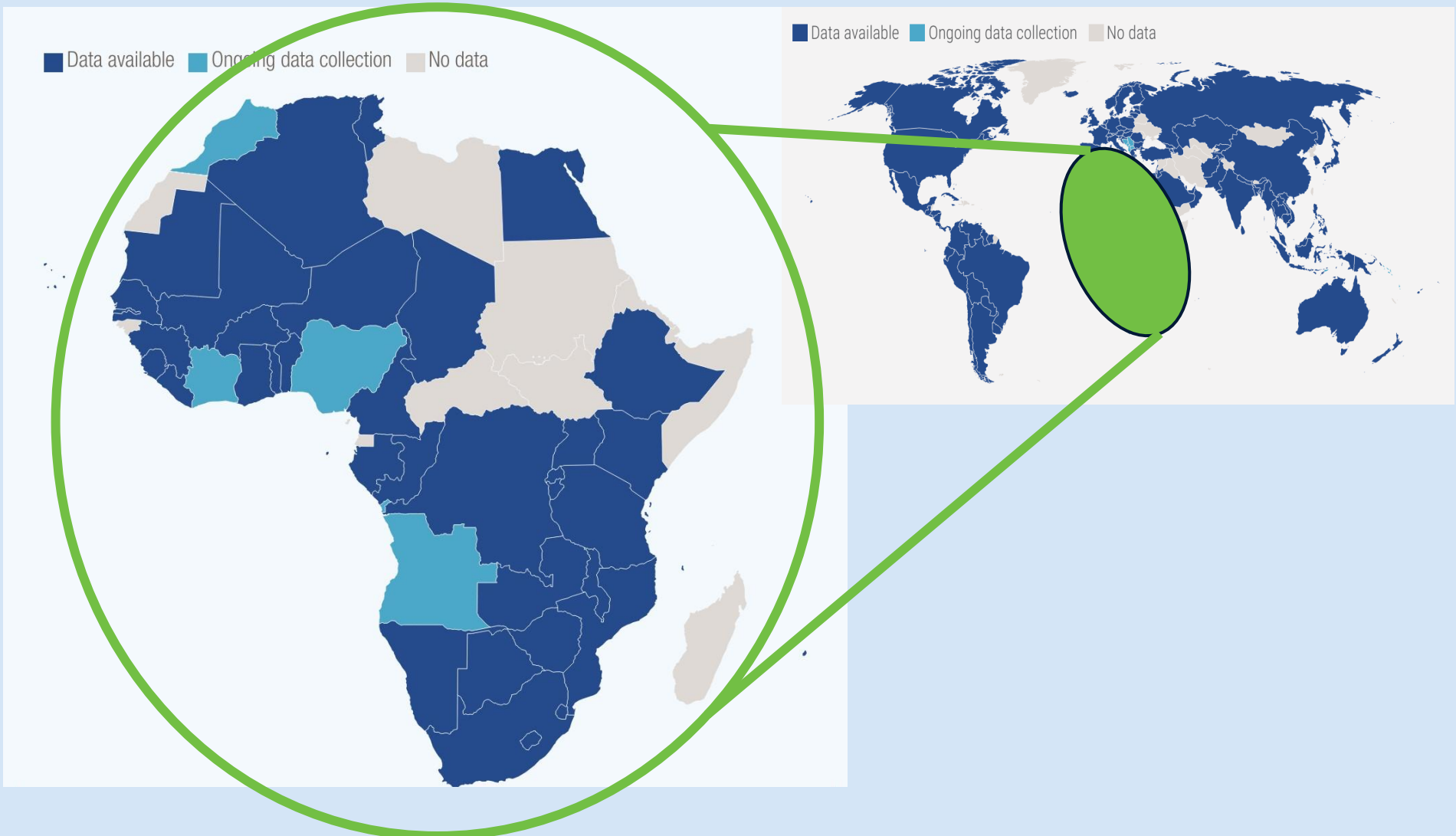
Comparability

- Consistent data collection methodology for all countries
- Data quality check by UNCTAD

Accessibility

- One stop (online) shop
- What info is available – same variables – Full regulation detail

Global transparency initiative: already available in most countries

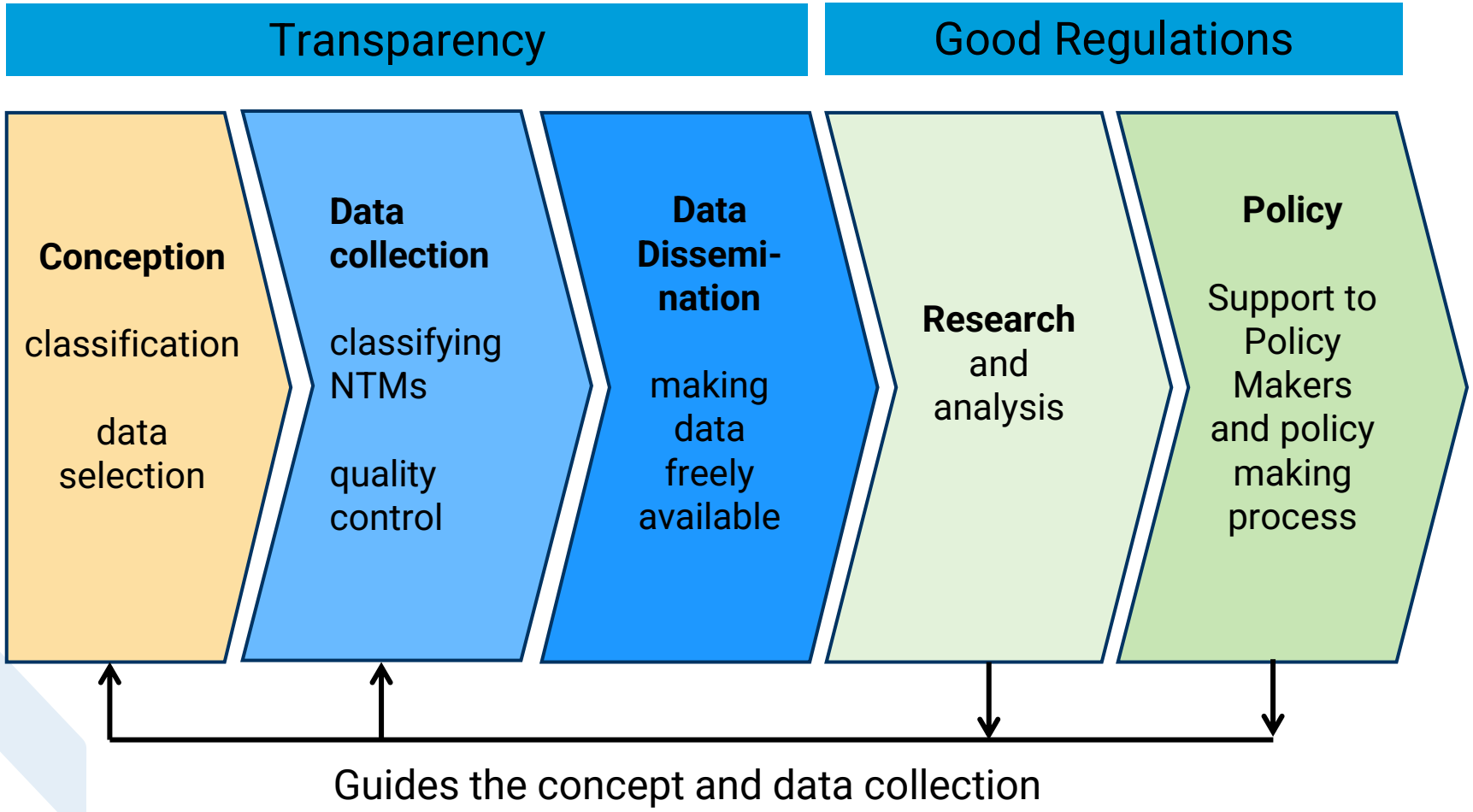


Same comprehensive data available at:

- *trainsonline.unctad.org* → for policy makers
- *globaltradehelpdesk.org* → for traders
- *macmap.org* → for traders
- *wits.worldbank.org* → for researchers

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UN Trade and Development NTM Programme
unctad.org/ntm



What can we use the data for?

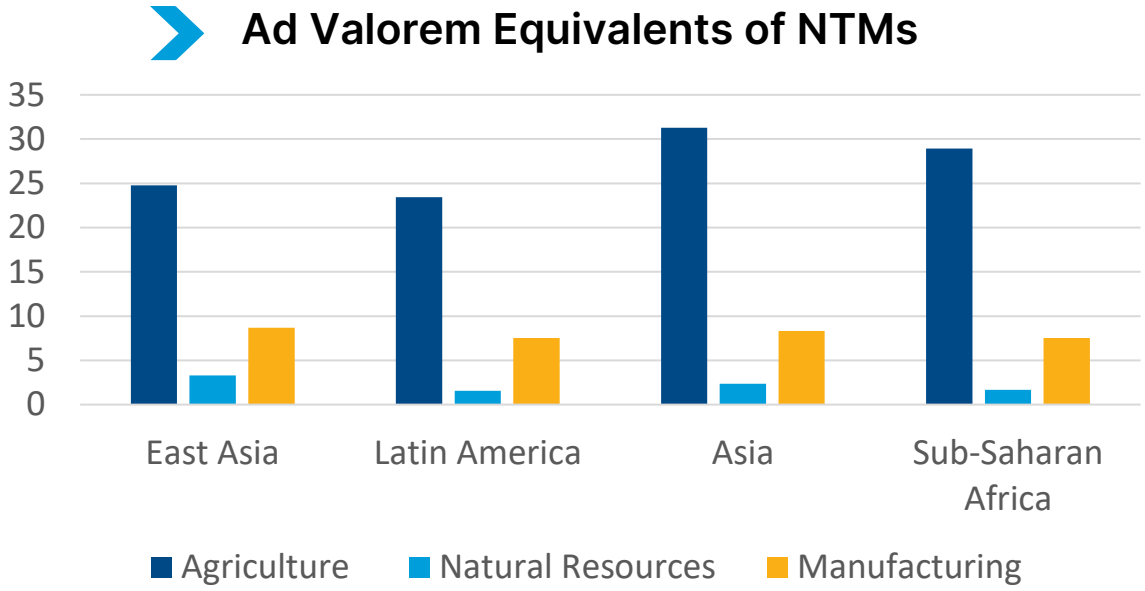
Reduce trade costs and enhance the benefits from trade

- Transparency and predictability help SME
- Improve effectiveness and efficiency of trade regulations
- GRP
- Deep integration



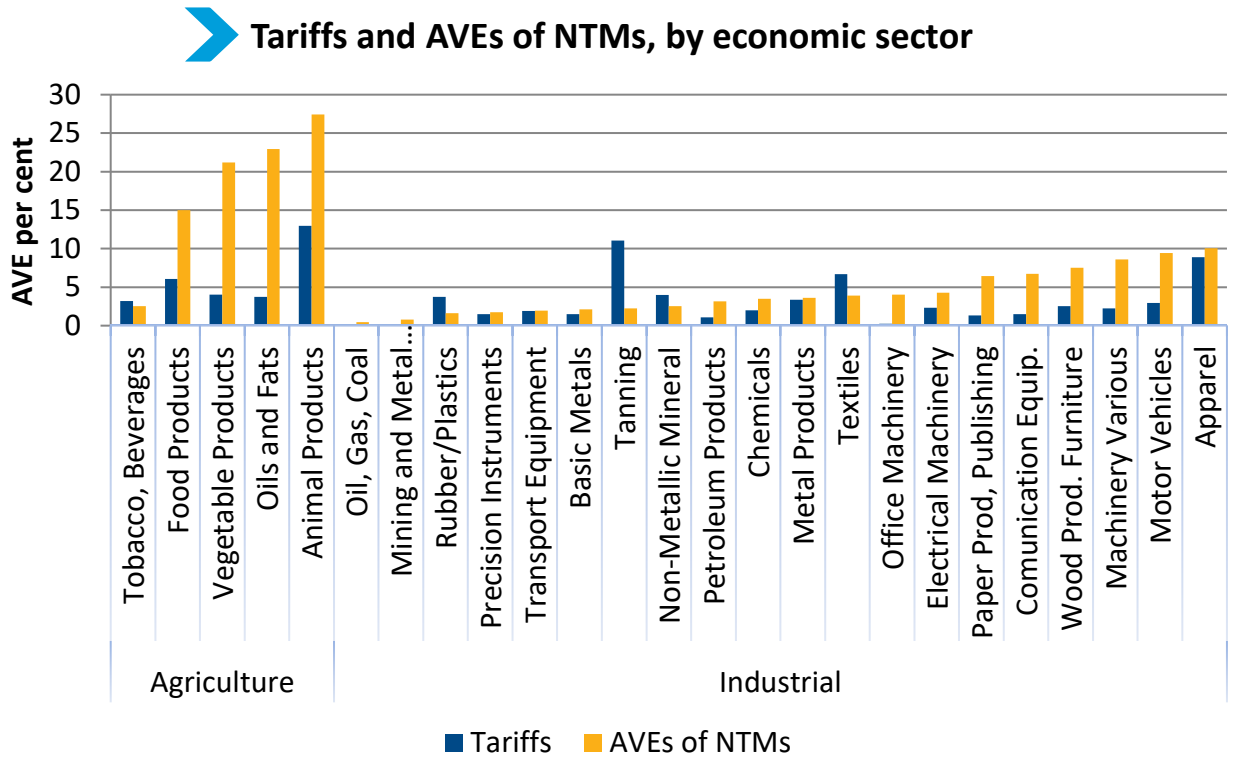
Statistical use of data. AVE

How much NTMs add to the costs of exporting?

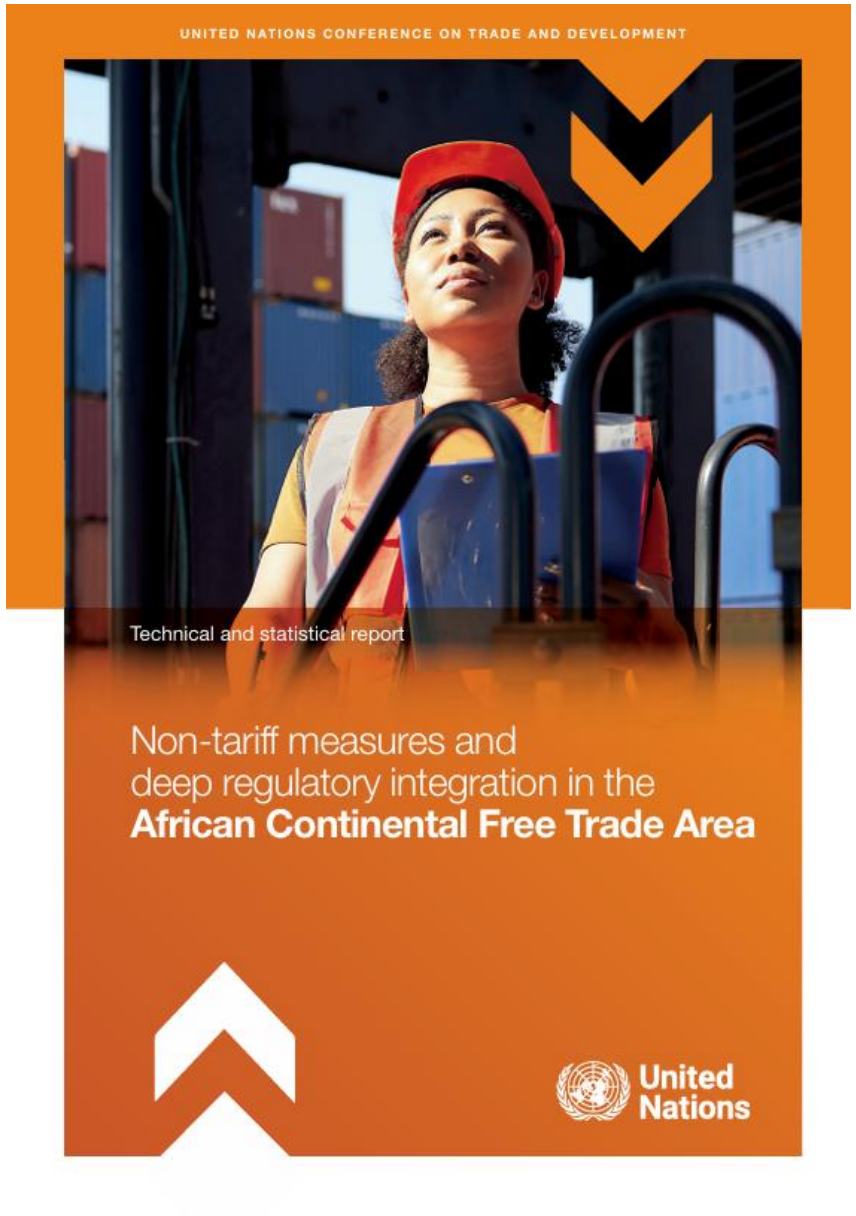


Costs may be very large in specific products and markets.

Statistical use of data. AVE



- Tariffs are normally less costly than AVE
- AVE for agriculture are much higher
  - Those countries that are net food exporters will be more affected



Eliminating non-tariff barriers and regulatory convergence towards international and regional standards can bring annual gains of US$ 7.1 billions to Africa.

https://unctad.org/publication/non-tariff-measures-and-deep-regulatory-integration-african-continental-free-trade-area

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Thank you

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