

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreement

The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the “SPS Agreement”) aims to ensure that WTO members’ health protection measures in the areas of food safety, animal and plant health do not restrict international trade more than necessary.

Annual overview

The WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures oversees the implementation of the SPS Agreement and is a forum for discussion of members’ specific trade concerns. The information in this brochure is based on the 2020 Annual Overview of the Implementation of SPS Transparency Provisions and Specific Trade Concerns.

About the WTO

The World Trade Organization is the international body dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible, with a level playing field for all its members.

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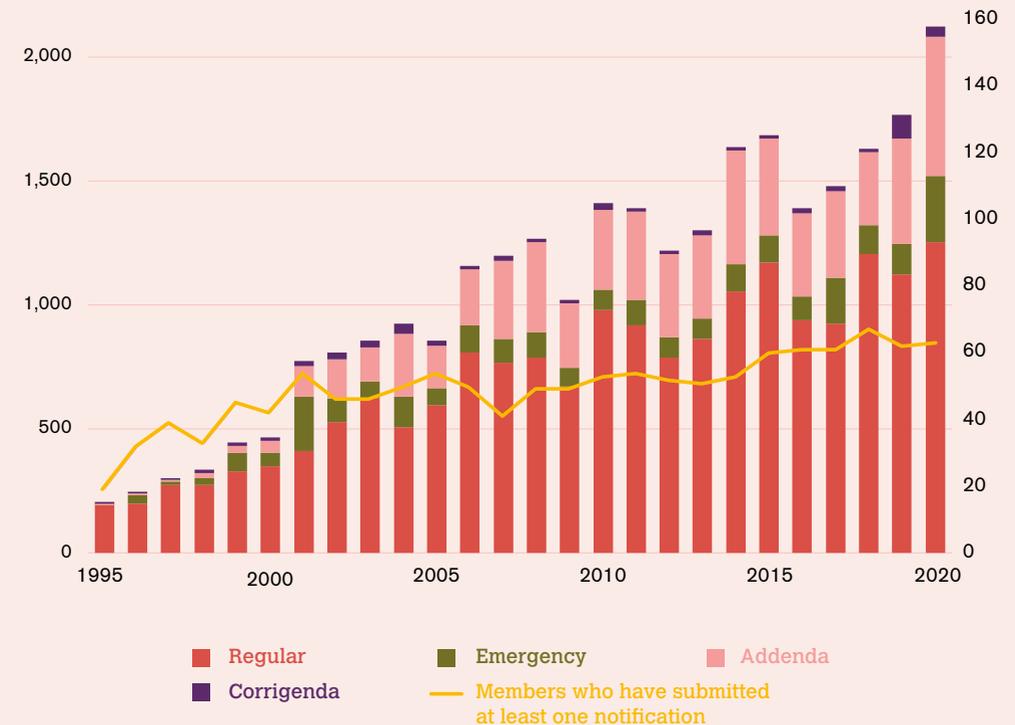
Over four-fifths of members used online system to submit notifications in 2020.

1

WTO members submitted over 2,000 SPS notifications in 2020, an all-time high.

These notifications about proposed SPS regulations provide members with the opportunity to comment on draft measures before they enter into force, helping to reduce the potential for trade conflicts. The 2,122 SPS notifications in 2020 were submitted by 63 members, continuing an upward trend since 1995.

SPS notifications submitted, and number of submitting members

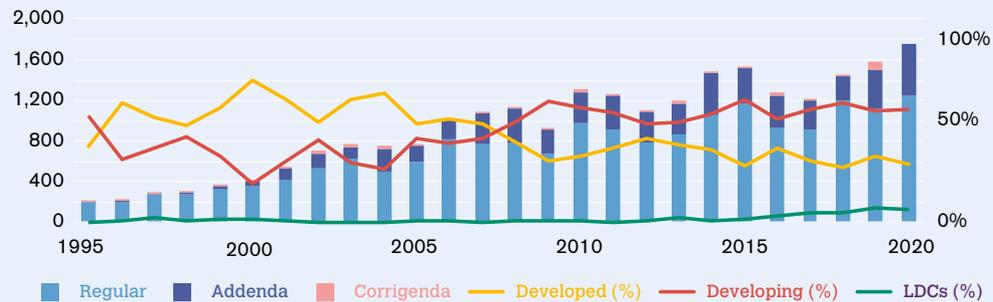


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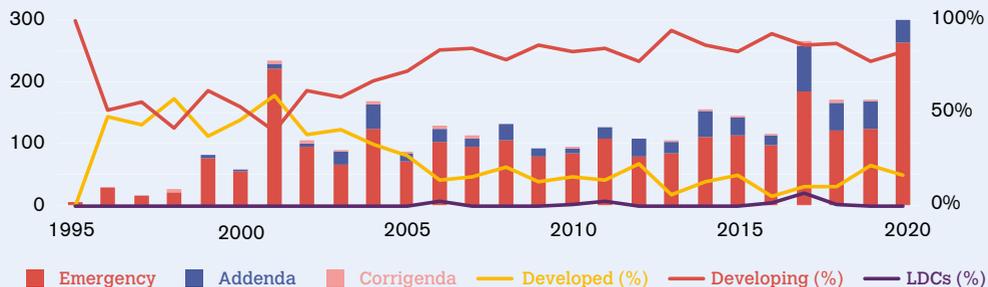
Developing countries have submitted more SPS notifications than developed countries.

The share of notifications submitted by developing countries has steadily increased since 2000. Moreover, developing countries have submitted a higher share of regular notifications than developed countries since 2008. A similar trend is visible for emergency notifications since 2002. This confirms their growing commitment to fulfilling the transparency obligations of the SPS Agreement.

Regular SPS notifications submitted, and % submitted by developed, developing and LDC members



Emergency SPS notifications submitted, and % submitted by developed, developing and LDC members

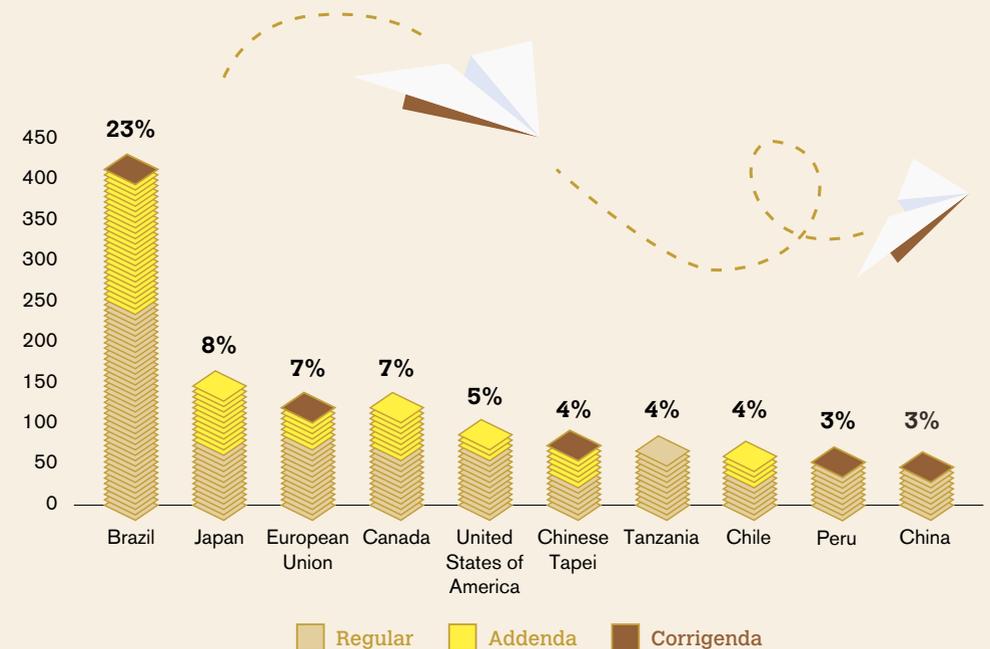


3

Tanzania was among the top ten notifiers of SPS notifications in 2020.

Tanzania, the only least-developed country among the top ten notifiers, submitted approximately 4 per cent of the SPS notifications received last year, mainly related to food safety. Brazil, at 23 per cent, submitted the largest share of SPS notifications in 2020.

Top 10 notifiers, 2020

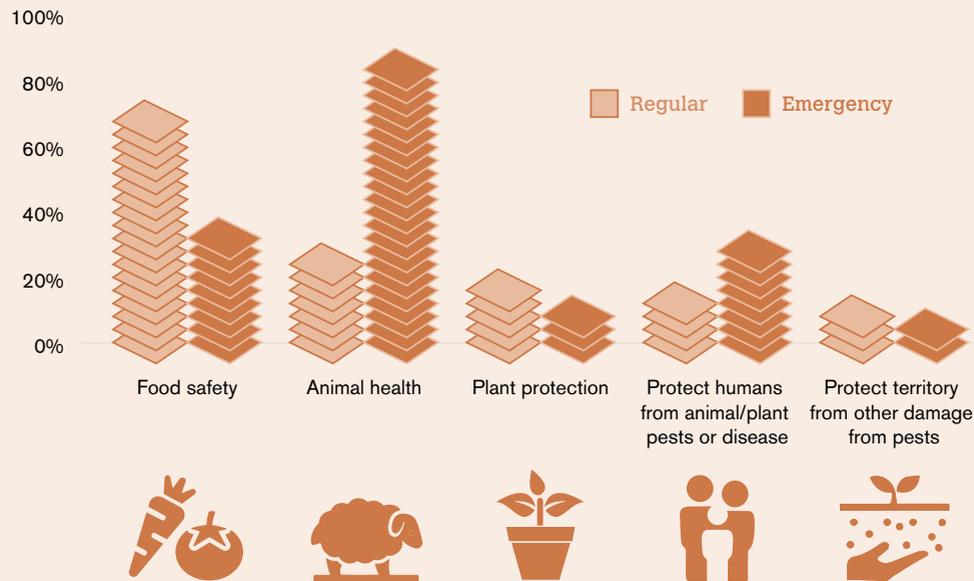


4

More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of regular notifications submitted in 2020 related to food safety.

Some 84 per cent of emergency notifications related to animal health. Food safety and animal health have been the most frequently cited objectives for regular and emergency notifications over the last five years. SPS notifications may also refer to plant protection, protection of humans from animal and plant pests or diseases, and protection of territory from other damage from pests.

Objectives of SPS notifications submitted in 2020

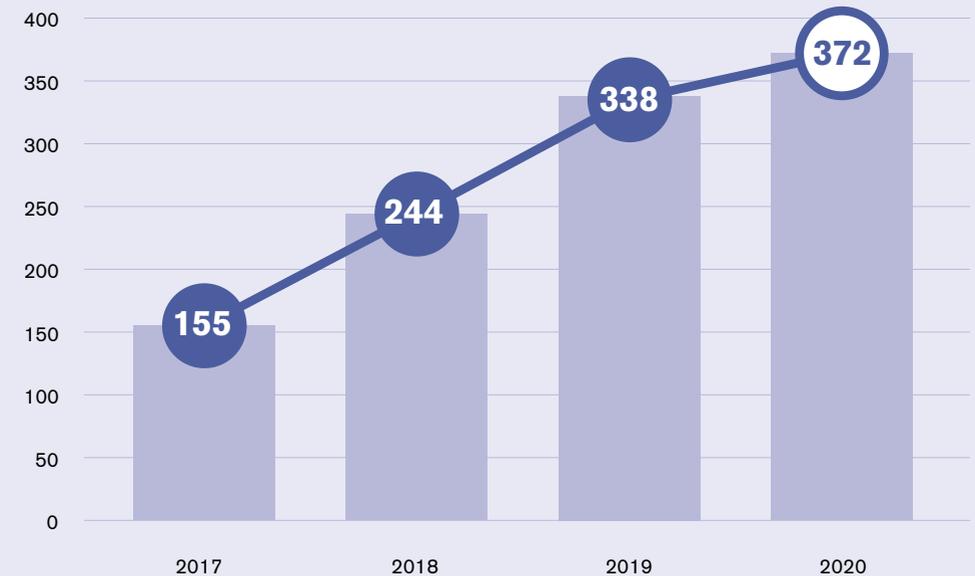


5

The number of trade-facilitating SPS measures notified by members in 2020 was more than twice as high as in 2017.

Of the 372 trade-facilitating measures notified by members in 2020, 6 per cent were related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their objective was to help food and agricultural products flow smoothly across borders – for example, by easing certification requirements. The implementation period of most of these measures has been extended.

Trade-facilitating measures

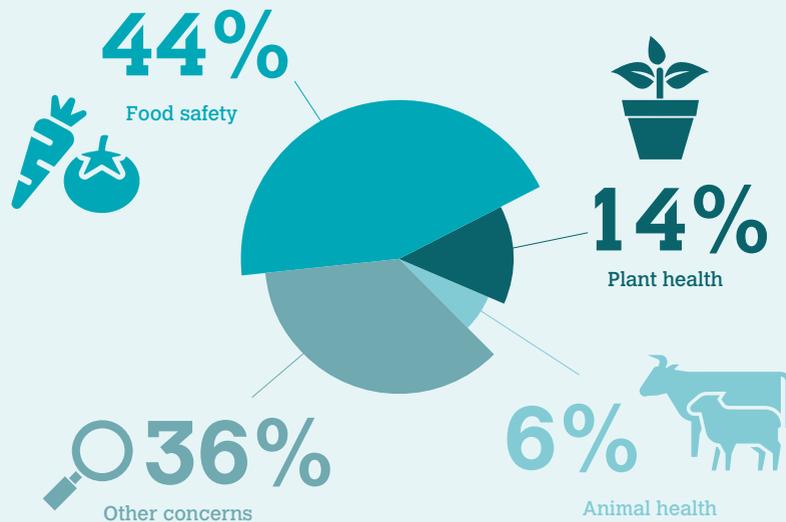


6

Almost half of the new specific trade concerns (STCs) discussed in the SPS Committee in 2020 referred to food safety.

The 36 new STCs raised by members is the highest number since 2003. This is despite the fact that only two SPS meetings were held in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these STCs, 44 per cent referred to food safety measures and 36 per cent to other concerns, such as certification, inspection and approval procedures. The remaining concerns referred to plant health (14 per cent) and animal health (6 per cent) measures.

Breakdown of specific trade concerns raised in 2020



7

In 2020, 63 members submitted at least one SPS notification and 14 members raised at least one STC in the SPS Committee.

Since 1995, 129 members have submitted at least one notification and 65 members have raised at least one STC. The active involvement of such a large number of members reflects the value they attach to the transparency of their SPS measures and the importance of consultation to address trade concerns.

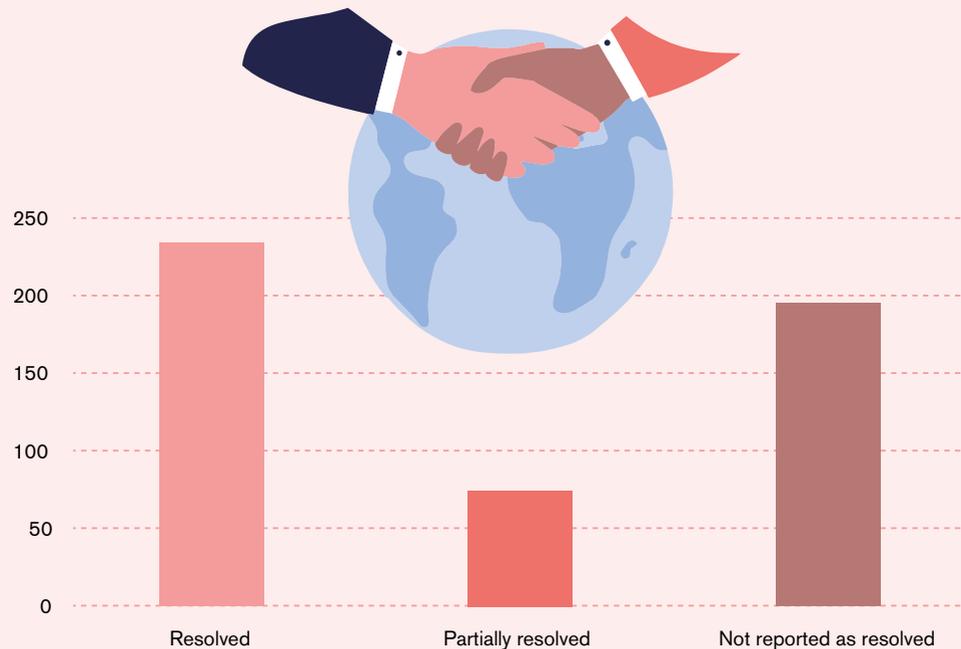


8

More than half of the 505 specific trade concerns (STCs) discussed in the SPS Committee up to 2020 have been either resolved or partially resolved.

In 2020, members reported 35 STCs as resolved and 42 as partially resolved, confirming the importance of the SPS Committee as a forum for members to resolve trade issues.

**Status of STC discussions
in the SPS Committee as of end-2020**



9

In 2020, the SPS Committee adopted the Fifth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement.

The report resulting from this contained recommendations on new or continued work on the various topics discussed. Members review the implementation of the SPS Agreement every four years.



10

Over four-fifths of members – 84 per cent – used the online SPS Notification Submission System to submit their notifications in 2020.

An increasing number of members use the System, which ensures that notifications are rapidly made available.



Further information

Further information about the implementation of the SPS Agreement is available in the 2020 Annual Overview of the Implementation of SPS Transparency Provisions and Specific Trade Concerns (G/SPS/GEN/804/Rev.13; G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.21).



“Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures” – a publication in the WTO Agreements Series – provides an overview of the SPS Agreement and its key principles. It can be downloaded from the WTO website.

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