



Global Trade Helpdesk

The Small and Medium Size Enterprise Gateway to Trade

The Global Trade Helpdesk offers a digital one-stop shop for businesses and policymakers to access trade data and practical information about target markets.

Rationale

Information transparency issues are among the main obstacles experienced by companies across countries in international trade. Analyses show that the smaller the company, the more it is affected by trade information transparency issues. Reasons for this include among others the fixed cost nature of researching and complying with different market requirements and trade procedures. In order to mitigate the potential negative impact of information asymmetry on trade, it is crucial to increase transparency and to improve accessibility of information for exporters in developing countries.

High tariff rates used to be one of the main barriers to international trade. In recent years, however, tariff rates applied by countries around the world have fallen to historic low levels thanks to the growing number of multilateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements. In many cases, goods being traded are not subject to custom tariffs but are likely required to comply with various regulations before they are allowed to enter the destination market. Examples of such regulations include licenses or permits to import, quality requirements, inspections and price controls. These requirements increase the complexity for exporters and make access to reliable trade data even more pertinent.

Objectives and activities

This multi-agency project aims to build and expand a global online Trade Helpdesk with relevant and up-to-date market information that facilitates trade and investment related decisions of SMEs. It addresses the problem of the lack of information transparency and the complexity of information sources. The goal is to support SMEs to make fully informed trade and investment decisions that lead to greater international trade activity. To make the Global Trade Helpdesk beneficial to any company in any country, it is provided free of charge as a Global Public Good. At the 2023 Trade and Investment Minister's Meeting of the G20 in India, representatives recognized inadequate access to information as one of the key constraints facing small businesses in their ability to integrate into global trade. Building on reliable, timely and relevant information is crucial, thus members called for an upgrade of the Global Trade Helpdesk platform due to the inclusivity and veritable information provided to small businesses.

Country/region

Global

Executing agency

ITC, UNCTAD, WTO

Duration

2021-2025

Total budget

USD 1,400,000

SECO contribution

USD 1,000,000



The Helpdesk gathers the best market information available from the databases of ITC, UNCTAD, WTO, and UNIDO as well as of other relevant partner organizations and turns it into practical trade intelligence for the use of SMEs, policy makers as well as trade and investment support institutions. The Global Trade Helpdesk integrates comprehensive information from various sources on:

1. Market requirements (customs tariffs, taxes, rules of origin, non-tariff measures, notifications of WTO Members, etc.);
2. Export/Import procedures (pre-shipment formalities, certification and inspection processes, transport documents, etc.);
3. Business opportunities, included e-commerce marketplaces (market prices, digital payment methods, company directory, upcoming events, etc.);
4. Policy outlook (trade statistics, export potential analyses, trade agreements etc.).

Governance Structure

SECO funding is allocated through a soft-earmarked contribution to Window 1 ITC Trust Fund. The Consultative Committee of ITC's Trust Fund (CCITF) is the key governance mechanism to contribute to steering of ITC operations funded by Window 1 and the strategy going forward. Going beyond financial perspective, the CCITF reports provide detailed information on thematic and geographic use of donors' funds. To complement these, ITC offers individual Annual Institutional Review (AIR) meetings to funders.

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Rules-based trade system



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