

A new [UNCTAD research paper](#) examines trade facilitating and restrictive practices adopted by over 140 countries in the world during the Covid 19 pandemic. The focus is on what is commonly referred to as non-tariff measures (NTMs), i.e. measures other than ordinary customs tariffs that have economic impact on international trade, both in terms of facilitating and restricting international trade (in the latter case they are more properly defined “Non-Tariff Barriers”, NTBs).

The study analyses the data collected in a [database](#) developed by UNCTAD that provides an overview of COVID-19 NTMs and their implications for trade. Understanding how the different nations in the world use NTMs, with their implications and the impact they have on trade, is essential for policymakers to make more effective use of them and to formulate effective development strategies to meet the Sustainable Development Goals Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the strategy adopted by United Nations in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. This because NTMs are critical elements of trade policy. Although often used for valid reasons, as they are useful tools to achieve legitimate objectives, NTMs are sometimes viewed with a myopic lens of instruments of protection of national self-interests.

The UNCTAD study concludes that although NTMs imposed during COVID-19 had many positive effects, they also had (or have the potential to produce) negative repercussions outside the territory of the country where they were adopted. This happens because the international trade community is highly interdependent and every action adopted in a national context can have far-reaching and wide-ranging implications. It is therefore important to compare the pros and cons of any trade measure, as well as to analyse them in comparison with other alternatives that can achieve similar results with minimal negative consequences. This is what the UNCTAD report basically does.