



TF Provisions in RTAs - Traits and Trends

Nora Neufeld



Summary

Observations

... and a few surprises

Different Stages

- In some ways, reflection of broader trends
- In others, different development

Influential factors

- Type of Agreement
- Date of conclusion
- Launch of WTO negotiations
- Level of development
- Number of RTAs concluded
- Specific interests
- Geography

Despite large diversity, certain broad trends

- Growing emphasis not just on border-related customs issues but on deeper, behind the border obstacles
- Increasingly detailed and comprehensive legal commitments
- Growing similarity of facilitation approaches and objectives (both among regional initiatives and between regional and multilateral ones)
- Rapid expansion in number and variety of countries involved - not just within continents but between them

Discrimination

- Less of an issue than in other areas

Convergence

- Element of convergence between regional and multilateral facilitation efforts

RTAs versus TFA

- WTO plus?
- WTO minus?
- Commonalities
- Differences

No clear correlation between scope of TF provisions and number of signatories

- Time of conclusion and parties' level of development more relevant

Impact of development level not always clear-cut

- Tendency for treaties between developed Members to be more ambitious - but not always the case

Absence of concrete conflicts

- Despite proliferation of RTAs and multiplication of TF components with resulting risk of incompatibilities - no practical cases of conflicts found

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