

# How the WCO can support the implementation of the WTO TF Agreement

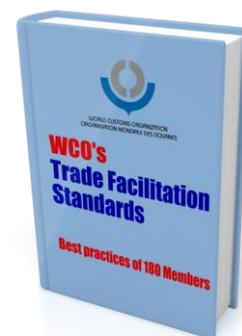
The World Customs Organization (WCO), with its wide network of 180 Customs administrations, is the centre of Customs expertise and practical information for trade facilitation and border management. The WCO is recognized as the voice of the international Customs community. Article 23 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) states that the TFA Committee shall maintain close contact with WCO.

- 1.5. The Committee shall maintain close contact with other international organizations in the field of trade facilitation, such as **the WCO**, with the objective of securing the best available advice for the implementation and administration of this Agreement and in order to ensure that unnecessary duplication of effort is avoided. To this end, the Committee may invite representatives of such organizations or their subsidiary bodies to:
- (a) attend meetings of the Committee; and
  - (b) discuss specific matters related to the implementation of this Agreement.

In June 2014, in the presence of WTO Director-General Azevêdo, the WCO Council launched the WCO Mercator Programme - a strategic initiative to support trade facilitation. The Programme better positions the WCO to consolidate and promote its efforts in the area of trade facilitation support. The WCO has already produced a wide range of instruments and tools which support the implementation of the TFA and has delivered an extensive number of capacity building and technical assistance projects on trade facilitation.

## 1. Expertise in developing trade facilitation standards

- The WCO has the expertise to give advice on the implementation of the provisions of the TFA. The WCO's instruments and tools cover all TFA provisions. They reflect the experiences and practices of 180 Customs administrations, as well as practices from other border agencies, trade and academia. They are not theoretical documents but provide useful practical guidance to make the TFA potential a reality.
- The TFA, for instance, requires Members to establish a Single Window but it does not explain how. A wide range of activities such as coordination with border regulatory agencies, harmonized data sets and IT architecture and best practices of other governments need to be considered. The WCO has the know-how. The same applies to other TFA provisions, including advance ruling, pre-arrival processing, authorized operators, risk management, post-clearance audit and transit.
- The WCO developed the TFA Implementation Guidance to make it easier to find information on the Revised Kyoto Convention, other WCO tools such as the Coordinated Border Management Compendium, Single Window Compendium, Risk Management Compendium, AEO Compendium, Voluntary Compliance Framework and many other tools. The Guidance contains best practices of several countries on each TFA provision. All stakeholders, including the private sector, may access the Implementation Guidance (<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/atf.aspx>) free of charge.



## 2. Expertise in monitoring implementation

- WCO Members regularly review the implementation of trade facilitation measures. In particular, the WCO Time Release Study (TRS) is a powerful method to review the effectiveness and efficiency of border measures. The TRS, which is explicitly referred to in Article 7.6 of the TFA, helps Members identify bottlenecks in border management and makes it possible to eliminate them. The TRS is based on the “reality” of trade. The WCO can support monitoring of the implementation of TFA by further developing the TRS guidelines.
- The TRS also allows Members to monitor the effectiveness of new trade facilitation measures - e.g. whether the designed new Single Window, new AEO programme or other trade facilitation measures actually do reduce time for import, export or transit procedures. Furthermore, it enables Members to learn which trade facilitation measures are the most effective to reduce the time needed for border management procedures. The TRS is therefore fully in line with the spirit of the TFA.
- The WCO has a pool of Customs experts in TRS who understand and can support Members with the application of the WCO TRS Guide. They are prepared to conduct a TRS and to monitor the implementation of the TFA provisions together with Members.

## 3. Expertise for consultation

- The WCO established the WCO TFA Working Group to help countries implement the TFA by sharing best practices and finding solutions for implementation challenges. The Working Group is the forum which is best placed to discuss the technical and practical aspects of the implementation of the TFA.
- The WCO TFA Working Group is open to Customs administrations, trade negotiators in Geneva, other government agencies, international organizations, academia, donor countries and institutions and the private sector. The WTO Secretariat attends the TFA Working Group.
- The WCO Secretariat is ready to offer its technical expertise on particular trade facilitation measures. The WCO Secretariat is able to give useful recommendations, based on the WCO instruments and tools and Customs expert networks.

## 4. Expertise for capacity building

- With a wealth of expertise and experience in global Customs technical assistance and capacity building - including a network of accredited experts at its disposal - and comprehensive donor engagement mechanisms, the Mercator Programme provides tailor-made support to countries for implementing the TFA.
- For those countries that have identified their needs in technical areas, the WCO has delivered around 210 technical assistance missions to more than 70 countries in the past 2 years and will continue to do so. The needs are often related to Category B and C commitments.
- From those experiences, the WCO has acquired the necessary knowledge to assist governments to introduce new trade facilitation measures. In all capacity building projects, practical knowledge and experience are the main enablers to improve procedures or systems. The WCO is ready to allocate WCO staff or national Customs experts who are best suited to meet the needs.



### For further information

Web: [www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/mercator-programme.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/mercator-programme.aspx)  
E-mail: [facilitation@wcoomd.org](mailto:facilitation@wcoomd.org)