



Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 2021

Based on the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation





The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.*

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FOREWORD

For all the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on people and economies across the globe, it has also highlighted the importance of trade facilitation and the benefits of streamlining trade procedures. As suggested by the findings of this report, many countries renewed their efforts to simplify and digitalize trade after realizing the essential role that international trade and supply chains play in accessing essential supplies.

The results of the fourth United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries show positive rates of implementation of a wide range of trade facilitation measures, going beyond those included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). It is worth noting that the Survey includes many advanced measures that ASEAN has been pioneering as part of implementing its ASEAN Single Window Agreement.

Accelerating trade digitalization remains a key priority as the next phase of the ASEAN digital transformation agenda begins, and the report shows that during the pandemic ASEAN as a group has continued to make progress on simplifying and digitalizing trade procedures. Several countries have achieved world leading performance, making ASEAN particularly ready for its consideration of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, leveraging the UN treaty to address capacity gaps within the bloc as well as to promote its digital solutions to the wider Asia-Pacific region.

As ASEAN economies now strive to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, more still needs to be done to make trade easier for all, including by implementing sustainable trade facilitation measures for SMEs and other most-affected groups and sectors. The ASEAN Member States also recognised that trade digitalization is critical in ASEAN's recovery efforts to exit the pandemic and sustain dynamic and resilient economic growth. It is therefore imperative to embark and accelerate strategic efforts that will support the transformation of ASEAN into a leading digital community that is innovative, inclusive, secure, integrated and digitally connected. In particular, applying technology and innovation to international trade procedures through deeper regional cooperation — building upon the collective efforts of the ASEAN countries, and supported by this report and the associated interactive database at unftsurvey.org — will ultimately pave the way in making trade simpler, cheaper, and more resilient and sustainable.

The Bandar Seri Begawan Roadmap (BSBR) on the ASEAN Digital Transformation Agenda adopted by the 53rd ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting on 8 September 2021 and subsequently endorsed by the 20th ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Meeting on 18 October 2021 would continue to harness and leverage on-going ASEAN trade digitalization initiatives to further advance an inclusive ASEAN paperless trading agenda going forward and lay the groundwork and clear roadmap toward the development of the ASEAN digital economy in the future.



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The ASEAN report is part of a global survey effort on the implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade measures, undertaken jointly by the five United Nations Regional Commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and West Asia (ESCWA).

The report was jointly prepared by ESCAP and the ASEAN Secretariat. Jiangyuan Fu and Chorthip Utoktham, under the guidance of Soo Hyun Kim and the overall supervision of Yann Duval, all from the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division (TIID) of ESCAP, provided the analysis of data for ASEAN countries, collected as part of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021. Cuong Ba Tran of the Trade Facilitation Division of the ASEAN Secretariat provided an analysis of recent ASEAN trade facilitation initiatives, which have been initiated and implemented during the time of conducting the survey, to further enrich and strengthen the report. He also provided factual validation in ASEAN countries, contributed and reviewed the report. The research assistance provided by Ruixin Xie, Yifan Tan and Linyi Chen in data collection and finalizing the report is appreciated. Anisa Hussein informally edited the earlier version of the report and formatted the report and Tony Oliver informally edited the final draft of the report.

Support from the following organizations and individuals is gratefully acknowledged. Sangwon Lim from ESCAP contributed to the survey efforts, particularly by facilitating data collection from relevant experts and data validation in several countries. The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT), a knowledge community supported by ESCAP and ECE, also greatly facilitated data collection.

Inputs to the expert group meeting on trade facilitation in times of crisis and epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region (virtual, July 2020). In addition, the results from a pilot survey on trade facilitation in times of crisis and pandemic – conducted in 2020 for the Asia-Pacific countries, the results of which were published in a regional report in January 2021 – contributed to the development of the additional trade facilitation measures in times of crisis. Comments and suggestions received from participants at the launch of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 (virtual, July 2021), at which the 2021 survey results were presented, are gratefully acknowledged. The authors are also grateful to the following organizations and individuals for their inputs and suggestions for the development of the 2021 survey: Alexander R. Malaket, formerly from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Banking Commission and Andrew Wilson from the ICC for the trade finance facilitation component; Candice White from the World Economic Forum (WEF); and Alexandre Larouche-Maltais and Sijia Sun from UNCTAD for the women in trade facilitation component.

Preparation of the report benefited from the United Nations Development Account project “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics: contactless, seamless and collaborative UN solutions”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

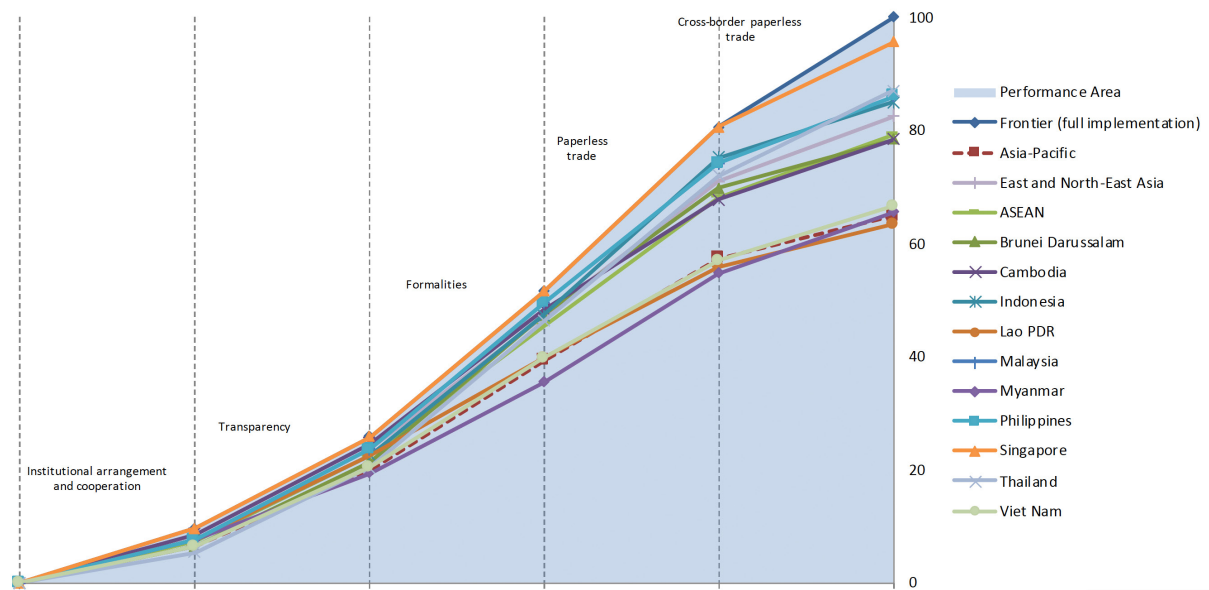
Reducing trade costs is essential in enabling economies to participate in regional and global value chains effectively, and to continue using trade as an important engine of growth and sustainable development. The recent surge in shipping costs and the subsequent disruption of the international supply chain has put additional pressure on already high trade costs in Asia and the Pacific. Trade facilitation plays a significant role in avoiding unnecessary costs and enhancing efficiency through streamlined and digitalized trade. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and regional trade digitalization initiatives such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific provides guidance on measures that should be considered for implementation.

In this context, this report presents the results of the 2021 United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for 10 ASEAN countries that reviewed the progress of trade facilitation reforms. It provides a detailed analysis based on 58 trade facilitation measures that are classified into four groups (“General Trade Facilitation”, “Digital Trade Facilitation”, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” and “Other Trade Facilitation”) and a further 11 sub-groups covering both binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures, as well as measures beyond the scope of WTO TFA. The report reveals that:

- The ASEAN implementation rate of the measures stands at 79%, significantly higher than the Asia-Pacific regional average of 64.9%. Within the region, the implementation level of ASEAN is next only to Australia and New Zealand and East and North-East Asia subregions;
- Implementation varies widely across the ASEAN countries. The implementation rate of Singapore has achieved a world-leading level, standing at more than 90%. The Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand achieved high implementation rates of more than 80%. Cambodia achieved the most significant increase of eight percentage points, standing at approximately 80%. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic has also made significant progress in implementation and is now standing at more than 60%;
- ASEAN countries made the most progress in implementing ‘Cross-border Paperless Trade’ and ‘Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation’ related measures between 2019 and 2021, standing at 57% and 77%, respectively;
- With the continued expansion and improvement of the ASEAN Single Window (ASW), significant progress has been made in implementing cross-border paperless trade systems in ASEAN countries during the past two years. This is evidenced by the implementation rate of ‘Cross-border Paperless Trade’ being higher than the regional average. In addition to the significant role of ASW Live Operation since 2018, ASEAN Member States have also been deepening the discussion with ASEAN Dialogue Partners on the exchange of trade-related documents;
- Measures under the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” category are least implemented, particularly those targeting women and SMEs. For example, implementing measures to enhance gender balance in national trade facilitation faces considerable challenges with average implementation rates of 32%, suggesting that there is plenty of room for improvement. Implementation of SMEs in the AEO scheme is less than 30%;
- Measures related to trade facilitation in times of crisis are relatively well-implemented (approximately 74%, higher than the regional average level). ASEAN Member States also have a relatively high implementation rate of long-term measures, thanks to the cooperation between the ASEAN Member States, which are strengthening during this pivotal time. ASEAN wide self-certification has been implemented with a platform for traders in all member States to self-declare the origin of their exports to minimize close contact. All ASEAN Member States have enabled the exchange of ATIGA Form D through a Single Window.

The report suggests that most trade cost reductions are associated with paperless trade measures rather than conventional trade facilitation measures. Full Implementation of binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures could decrease trade costs by 2.6%. On the other hand, digital trade facilitation measures enabling the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders will help to significantly reduce trade costs by more than 8% for ASEAN in a full implementation scenario. Adding to existing initiatives and collaboration among ASEAN Member States, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific could provide ASEAN countries with opportunities to promote ASEAN initiatives and solutions as well as support further development of the ASEAN Single Window for interoperability with other paperless trade systems being developed in other parts of the region and world.

Figure. Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Note: the figure shows cumulative trade facilitation implementation scores of Asia-Pacific sub-regions for 31 common trade facilitation measures included in the survey. Full implementation of all measures =100.

Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

This ASEAN report should be read in conjunction with the upcoming Global and Asia-Pacific report on the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, which will be available at <https://untfsurvey.org/>.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Authorized Economic Operator
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	ASEAN Single Window
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ENEA	East and North-East Asia
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLDC	Landlocked Developing Country
NCA	North and Central Asia
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
OCO	Oceania Customs Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIDE	Pacific Island Developing Economies
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEA	South-East Asia
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSWA	South and South-West Asia
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNNExT	United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport for Asia and the Pacific
UNRC	United Nations Regional Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization





1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Objective

It is well-understood that reducing trade costs is essential in enabling economies to effectively participate in regional and global value chains and continue to use trade as a main engine of growth and sustainable development. As shown in table 1, based on the latest data from the ESCAP-World Bank International Trade Cost Database, comprehensive non-tariff trade costs between the middle-income ASEAN economies (76% tariff-equivalent) are still significantly higher than the costs of trading goods among the three largest European Union economies (42% tariff-equivalent) or those between China, the Republic of Korea and Japan (55% tariff-equivalent).

International costs of trading across borders are rising. The global supply chain was disrupted, initially caused by ad hoc border measures and lockdown of production/logistic facilities due to the covid-19 pandemic since 2020. International shipping costs have recently risen to the highest on record and are continuing to rise, further disrupting the global supply chain, which relies deeply on sea freight transport. This recent phenomenon has put additional pressure on already escalated trade

costs.¹ However, trade facilitation, which is aimed at avoiding unnecessary costs by enhancing efficiency through streamlined and digitalized processes, can help to bend the trend of increasing trade costs.

1. See articles from UNCTAD (2021) for more details at <https://unctad.org/news/shipping-during-covid-19-why-container-freight-rates-have-surged> and <https://unctad.org/news/how-cushion-consumers-high-maritime-freight-rates>

Table 1: Intra-and extra-regional comprehensive trade costs in the Asia-Pacific region

(Unit: Per cent)

Region	ASEAN-4	East Asia-3	North and Central Asia - 4	PIDEs-3	SAARC-4	AUS-NZL	EU-3
ASEAN-4	76.7%	79.4%	319.0%	308.5%	135.2%	103.3%	103.8%
	(3.9%)	(6.8%)	(-1.7%)	(-3.8%)	(5.1%)	(5.0%)	(-3.2%)
East Asia-3	79.4%	56.9%	168.2%	241.6%	125.4%	89.0%	85.2%
	(6.8%)	(9.8%)	(-3.6%)	(-14.0%)	(1.0%)	(2.1%)	(0.3%)
North and Central Asia - 4	319.0%	168.2%	110.6%	417.1%	268.7%	318.8%	148.2%
	(-1.7%)	(-3.6%)	(-8.6%)	(13.7%)	(-8.5%)	(-8.5%)	(-2.7%)
PIDEs-3	308.5%	241.6%	417.1%	117.9%	409.8%	117.3%	397.9%
	(-3.8%)	(-14.0%)	(13.7%)	(-12.6%)	(3.2%)	(1.3%)	(-3.0%)
SAARC-4	135.2%	125.4%	268.7%	409.8%	128.4%	138.0%	113.7%
	(5.1%)	(1.0%)	(-8.5%)	(3.2%)	(13.4%)	(0.2%)	(-0.5%)
AUS-NZL	103.3%	89.0%	318.8%	117.3%	138.0%	54.0%	105.8%
	(5.0%)	(2.1%)	(-8.5%)	(1.3%)	(0.2%)	(3.6%)	(-1.1%)
EU-3	103.8%	85.2%	148.2%	397.9%	113.7%	105.8%	41.4%
	(-3.2%)	(0.3%)	(-2.7%)	(-3.0%)	(-0.5%)	(-1.1%)	(-5.9%)
USA	86.6%	66.2%	190.5%	199.8%	114.2%	99.7%	66.7%
	(2.0%)	(5.4%)	(7.1%)	(-4.5%)	(3.6%)	(0.5%)	(0.1%)

Source: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, updated July 2021. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

Note: Trade costs may be interpreted as tariff equivalents. Percentage changes in trade costs between 2014-2019 are in parentheses.

ASEAN-4 – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand; East Asia-3 – China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; South Asia-4 – Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; West Asia-3 – Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia; North America – Canada and the United States; European Union-3 – Germany, France and United Kingdom.

In general, many trade cost reductions have been achieved by eliminating or lowering tariffs over the past few decades.² Recent studies suggest that trade costs of non-tariff measures can be twice as much as that of ordinary customs tariffs.³ Further trade cost reductions, therefore, will have to come

from tackling non-tariff sources of trade costs, such as inefficient transport, logistics infrastructure and services, as well as cumbersome regulatory procedures and documentation. In this context, this report provides an overview of the results for ASEAN of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, conducted between January and July 2021. In addition, potential impacts of implementing trade facilitation measures in ASEAN are assessed based on a trade cost model.

2. For example, see ESCAP, 2011, Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2011, United Nations

3. See ESCAP, 2019, Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019: Non-tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development, United Nations

1.2 Survey Instrument and Methodology

The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 builds upon the original instrument (formerly known as the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation), which was prepared according to the final list of commitments included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and supplemented by forward-looking measures that are sought to be implemented under the United Nations treaty – the CPTA.⁴

The 2021 survey covers 58 trade facilitation measures commonly used by five United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs). The 58 common measures are classified into four groups and 11 subgroups (annex 1). The first group, “General Trade Facilitation”, includes many WTO TFA measures with subgroups of ‘Transparency’, ‘Formalities’, ‘Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation’ and ‘Transit Facilitation’. The second group, “Digital Trade Facilitation” measures, includes ‘Paperless Trade’ and ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’. The third group of “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” measures includes ‘Trade Facilitation for SMEs’, ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’ and ‘Women in Trade Facilitation’ subgroups. In 2021, the UNRCs introduced a new “Other Trade Facilitation” group, which comes with two sub-groups: ‘Trade Finance Facilitation’⁵ and ‘Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis’.

The overall scope of the survey goes beyond the measures included in the WTO TFA. Most paperless trade measures, particularly for cross-border paperless trade, are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA. However, their inclusion in many cases would support better implementation of the TFA and in digital form. Most “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” group measures are not specifically included in the WTO TFA, except for some of the ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’ measures. The “Other Trade Facilitation” group is added with considerations of trade finance’s role in facilitating trade flows. In addition, addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the global

trade and supply chain, ‘Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis’ is introduced to the survey. This would support “build back better” sustainable and resilient recovery practices, which are required to avoid future systemic vulnerabilities.

ESCAP adopted a three-step approach to developing the dataset (annex 2). Data were collected between January and July 2021. Based on the data collected, each of the trade facilitation measures included in the survey was rated as “fully implemented”, “partially implemented”, “on a pilot basis” or “not implemented”. Definitions for each stage are provided in annex 3. A score of 3, 2, 1 or zero was assigned to each of the four implementation stages to calculate implementation rates for individual measures across countries, regions or groupings. Country groupings used in the analysis are shown in figure 1. Further details and examples on the calculation of implementation rates are available online.⁶

4. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/cpta>

5. Trade finance facilitation was an optional subgroup in the 2019 survey; three regional commissions – ESCAP, ESCWA and ECE – used this optional subgroup in their surveys. In 2021, this subgroup is developed in cooperation with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and surveyed across all regions

6. For more information on the methodology used for this global survey, see <https://www.untfsurvey.org/files/documents/2021-Survey-Methodology.pdf> and the survey questionnaire at <https://www.untfsurvey.org/files/documents/2021-Survey-Questionnaire-English.pdf>



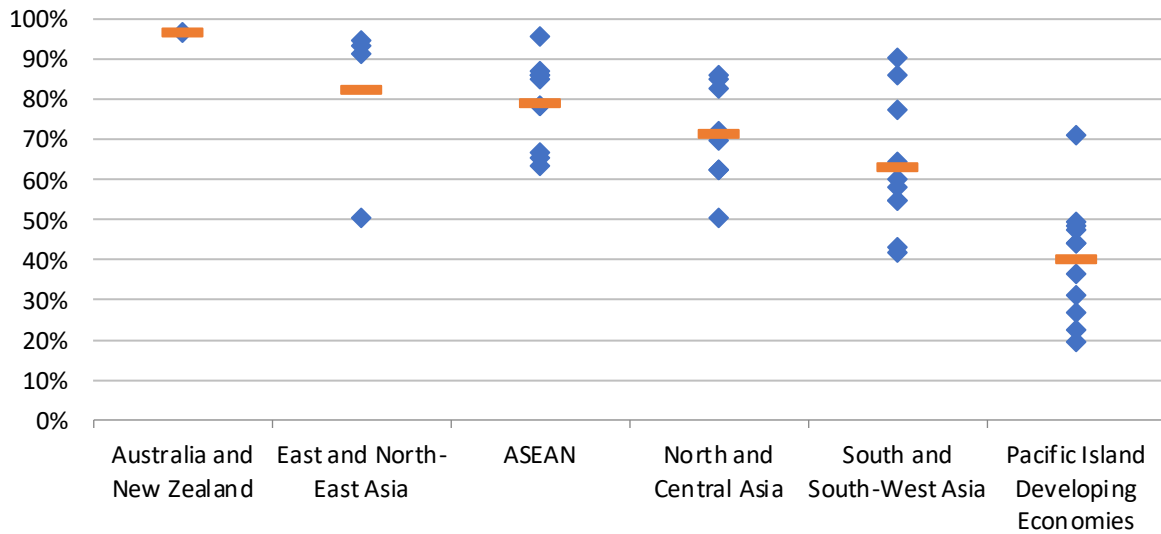
2

Trade Facilitation Implementation: Overview

The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 reveals that ASEAN Member States average implementation of a common set of 31 trade facilitation and paperless trade measures stands at 79.3%, significantly higher than the Asia-Pacific regional average of 64.9% (figure 1).⁷ Within the region, the implementation level of ASEAN is next only to Australia and New Zealand, and East and North-East Asia subregions.

7. The survey questionnaire covers 58 trade facilitation measures that are categorized into 11 subgroups: Transparency, Formalities, Institutional Cooperation and Arrangement, Paperless Trade, Cross-border Paperless Trade, Transit Facilitation, Trade Facilitation for SMEs, Trade Facilitation and Agricultural Trade, Women in Trade Facilitation, Trade Finance Facilitation and Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis and Pandemic. The General Trade Facilitation measures and Transit Facilitation measures are essentially measures featured in the WTO TFA. In contrast, most paperless trade and, in particular, cross-border paperless trade measures are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA, although their implementation in many cases would support the better and digital implementation of the TFA. To better reflect trade facilitation in the context of SDGs, three subgroups of trade facilitation measures, 'Trade facilitation for SMEs', 'Trade Facilitation for Agricultural Trade' and 'Women in Trade Facilitation' were added to the Survey in 2019. The 2021 Survey added the 'Other Trade Facilitation' group with 'Trade Finance Facilitation' and 'Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis'.

Figure 1. Trade facilitation implementation in Asia-Pacific subregions including ASEAN

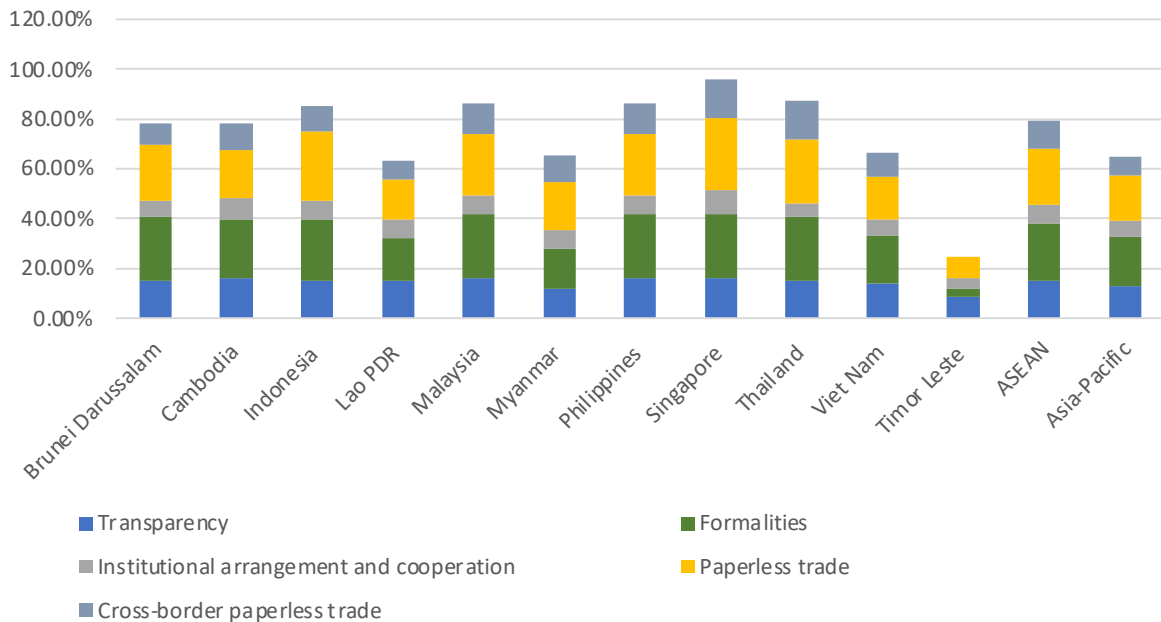


Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

The implementation rate of trade facilitation measures varies widely across the ASEAN Member States. The Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have high implementation rates of more than 80%. The implementation rate of Singapore has achieved a world-leading level,

standing at more than 90% (ranking third globally and in leading developing economies). In contrast, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam implementation rates stand below the average in this subregion (figure 2).

Figure 2. Overall implementation of trade facilitation measures in ASEAN countries



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

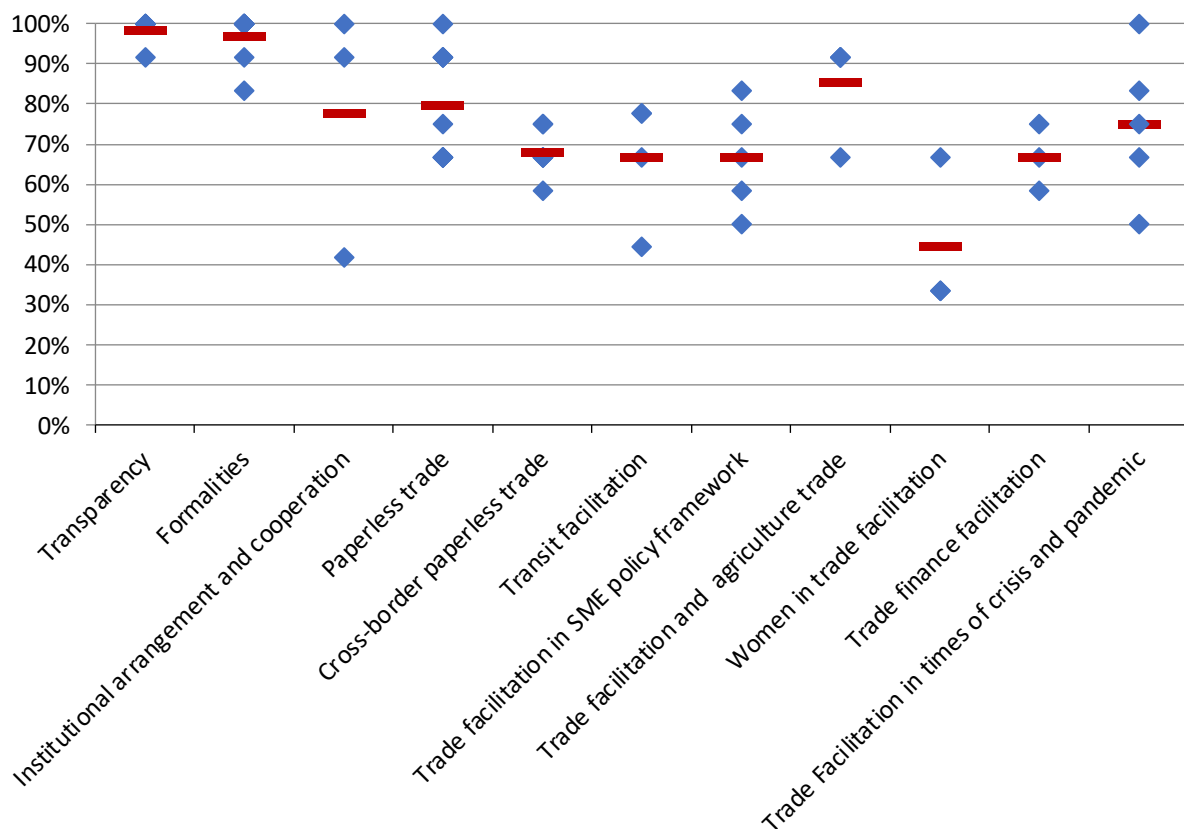
Note: Implementation rate based on a WTO TFA+ set of 31 trade facilitation and paperless trade measures from the UN Global Trade Facilitation Survey.

ASEAN members have implemented the 31 trade facilitation and paperless trade measures (general and digital TF categories) to a large extent; the implementation rates of all these measures are nearly 80%. It is important to recognize the impressive progress on implementing cross-border paperless trade,⁸ which reveals the active work from ASEAN over the past two years, a nine percentage point increase since 2019 despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent supply chain disruptions. Notably, the ASEAN Single Window (ASW) is one of the most advanced cross-border paperless trade initiatives in the world, with fast progress. Two trade-related documents, i.e., e-ATIGA Form D and ASEAN Customs Declaration Document (ACDD), have been exchanged through the ASW, while the e-Phyto certificate is going to be

tested by the end of 2021 between Indonesia and Thailand and is planned to be exchanged among the ready ASEAN Member States in 2022. The ASEAN Member States are also actively discussing with China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States the possibility of exchanging trade-related documents. Considering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is still room for improvement for 'Women in Trade Facilitation' in the ASEAN countries. It stands at only 47%, the least implemented subgroup covered in the survey (figure 3).

8. Cross-border paperless trade means trade in goods, including their import, export, transit and related services, taking place on the basis of electronic communications, including exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form.

Figure 3. Implementation of different groups of trade facilitation measures by ASEAN members



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

2.1 Most And Least Implemented Trade Facilitation Measures By Asean Member States

Table 2 provides information on the most and least implemented trade facilitation measures under each subgroup included in the survey.

For example, measures of 'advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation' and 'stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)' are tied as the most implemented measures under 'Transparency'. 'SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee' is the least implemented measure in the 'Trade Facilitation for SME' subgroup.

Table 2. Most- and least-implemented measures in each group of trade facilitation measures by ASEAN Member States

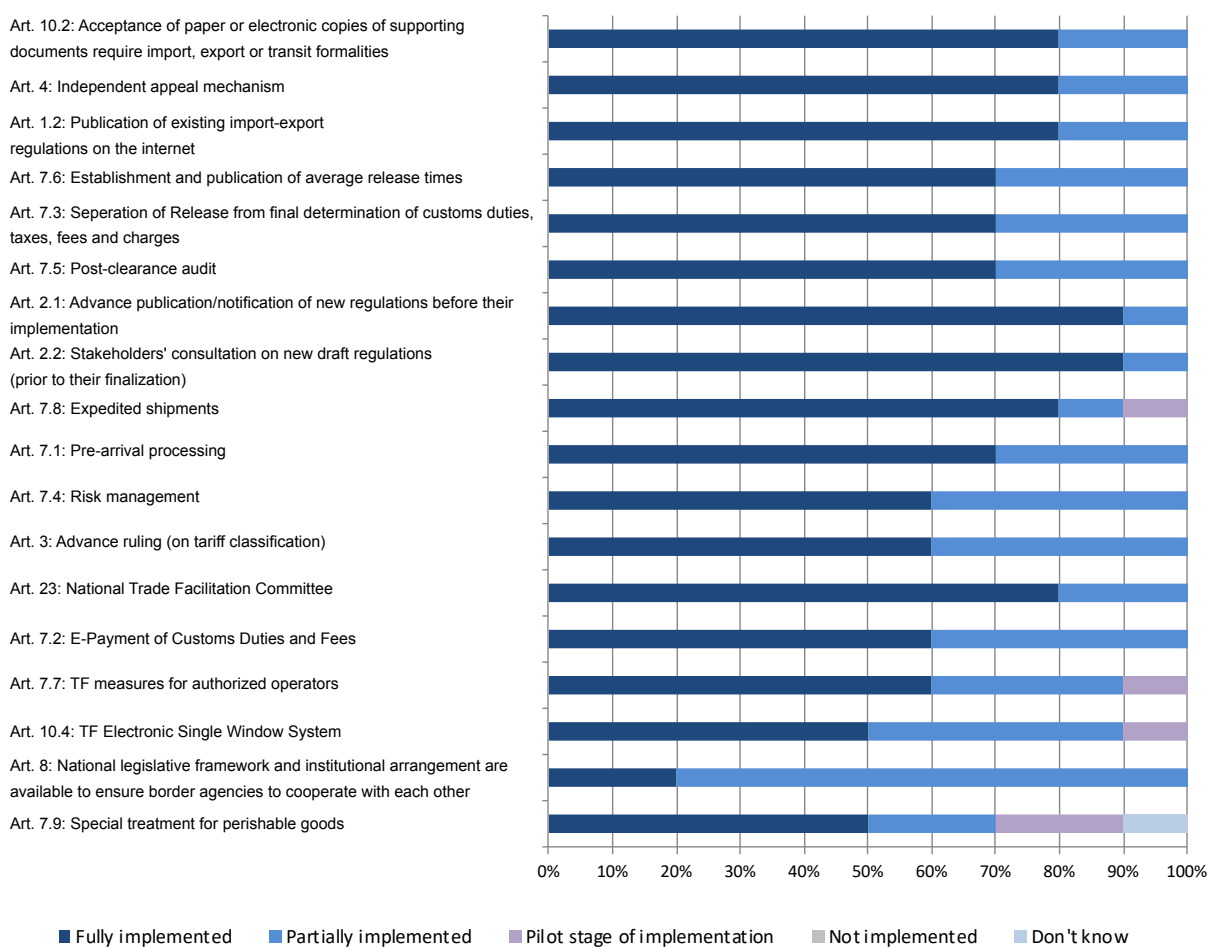
Sub-groups	Most implemented (% of countries)		Least implemented (% of countries)	
	Measure	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / Full implementation (%)	Measure	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / Full implementation (%)
Transparency	- Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation - Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	100.0 / 90.0	- Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	100.0 / 60.0
Formalities	- Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities - Expedited shipments	100.0 / 80.0	- TF measures for authorized operators	100.0 / 60.0
Institutional arrangement and cooperation	- National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	100.0 / 80.0	- Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities	90.0 / 10.0
Paperless trade	- Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies - Automated Customs System - Electronic submission of Customs declarations	100.0 / 70.0	- Electronic Application for Customs Refunds	60.0 / 10.0
Cross-border paperless trade	- Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	100.0 / 40.0	- Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit	50.0 / 10.0
Transit facilitation	- Cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit	90.0 / 60.0	- Supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	70.0 / 30.0
Trade facilitation for SMEs	- Trade-related information measures for SMEs	100.0 / 60.0	- SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee	50.0 / 10.0
Agricultural trade facilitation	- Special treatment for perishable goods	90.0 / 50.0	- Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates	70.0 / 20.0
Women in trade facilitation	- TF measures to benefit women involved in trade	70.0 / 0.0	- TF policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade - Women membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies	50.0 / 0.0
Trade finance facilitation	- Variety of trade finance services available	70.0 / 10.0	- Single window facilitates traders access to finance - Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance	30.0 / 0.0
Trade Facilitation in times of crisis	- Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises - Online publication of emergency TF measures	100.0 / 50.0	- Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	90.0 / 20.0

Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

Figure 4 shows the level of implementation of measures directly related to the WTO-TFA requirements, based on data collected during the survey. The results are broadly consistent with the information provided by countries in official notifications to WTO. The most implemented measures in ASEAN countries are 'acceptance of paper or electronic copies of supporting documents

required', 'independent appeal mechanism' and 'publication of existing import-export regulations on the internet', which all ASEAN Member States have fully or partially implemented. Even though 'special treatment for perishable goods' is the least implemented measure, 50% of countries in ASEAN have fully implemented it with an additional 20% declaring that they have partially implemented it.

Figure 4. Level of implementation of WTO TFA-related measures (excluding transit) by ASEAN members



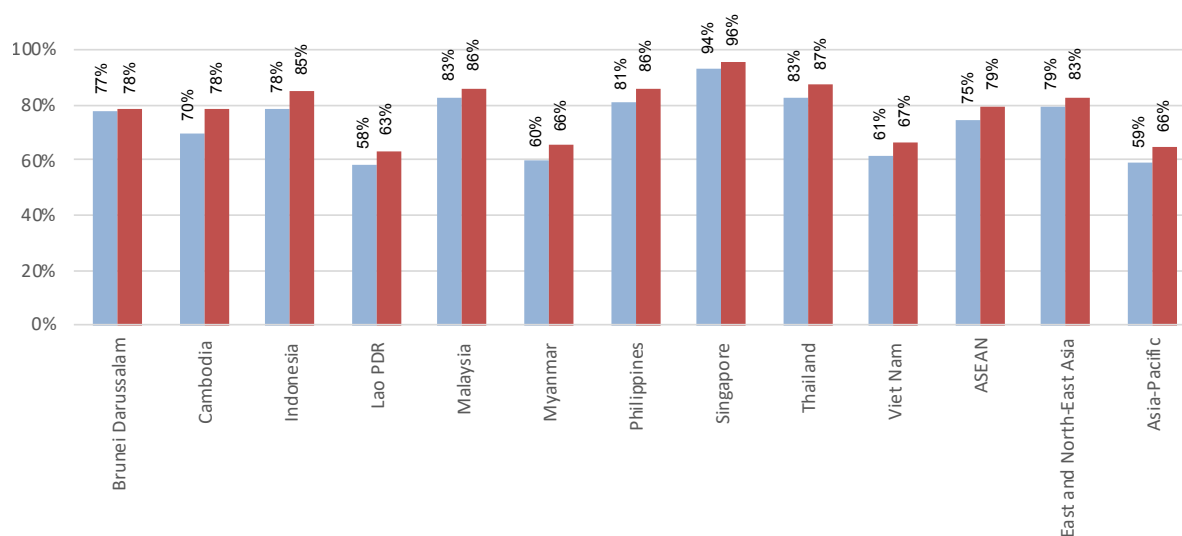
Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

2.2 Progress In Implementation between 2019-2021

There has been significant progress in trade facilitation implementation in ASEAN between 2019 and 2021. The average implementation

rate increased by approximately four percentage points from 75% in 2019 to 79% in 2021. The highest progress is recorded in Cambodia, whose implementation rate increased by nearly eight percentage points (from 70% in 2019 to 78% in 2021), followed by Indonesia (from 78% in 2019 to 85% in 2021) (figure 5).

Figure 5. Trade facilitation implementation by ASEAN Member States between 2019 and 2021

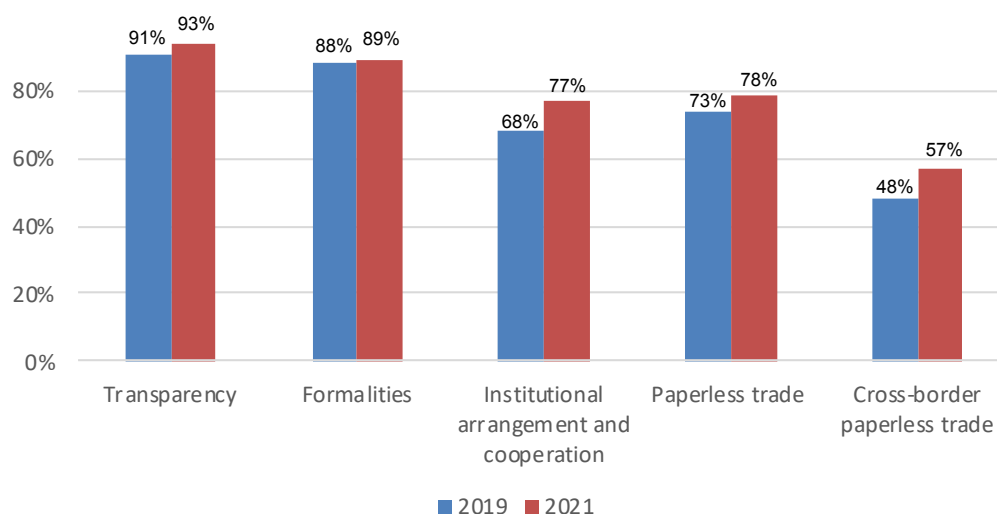


Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, [untdpsurvey.org](https://untdp.org/).

The ASEAN Member States made the most progress in implementing 'Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation' and 'Cross-border Paperless Trade' between 2019 and 2021, with implementation rates rising by approximately

nine percentage points. The implementation of 'Paperless Trade' has also increased five percentage points, from 73% in 2019 to 78% in 2021. In contrast, 'Transparency' and 'Formalities' saw modest growth of two and one percentage points, respectively (figure 6).

Figure 6. Average implementation of different subgroups of trade facilitation measures by ASEAN Member States between 2019 and 2021



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, [untdpsurvey.org](https://untdp.org/).



3

Implementation of Trade Facilitation Measures: A Closer Look

3.1 'Transparency'

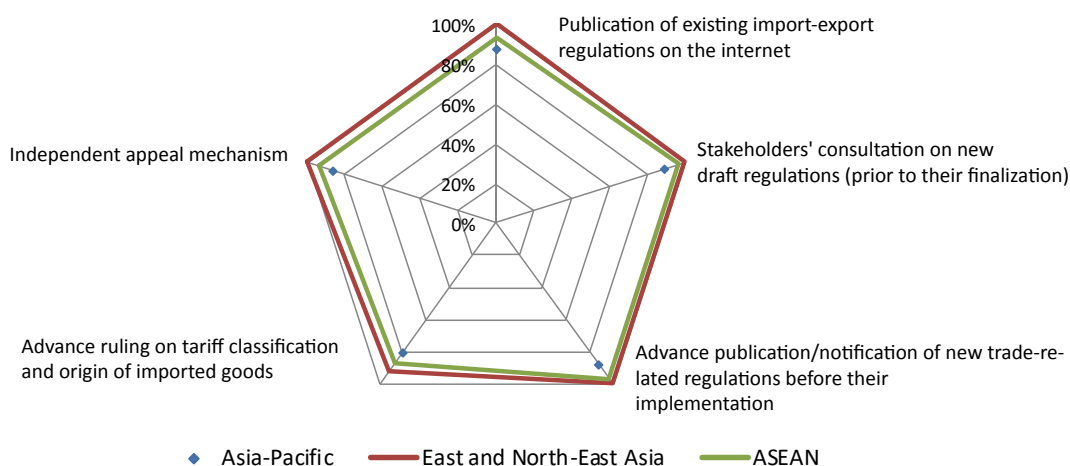
'Transparency' includes five measures related to Articles 1-5 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article X on Publication and Administration of Trade Regulations. The average level of implementation of this subgroup by ASEAN countries is 93%, significantly higher than the Asia-Pacific average.

Figure 7 suggests that implementation of all measures in 'Transparency' by ASEAN has exceeded the regional average. Subregional implementation of 'stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)' and 'advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation' both achieved 97%. Figure 8 shows that all measures in 'Transparency' have been fully or partially implemented across all ASEAN Member States. 'Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation' and 'stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)' are the most implemented measures. Both have been fully implemented by 90% of the countries in this subregion. In 2021, with the adoption of the priority of "Strengthened notification of draft measures or actions which may directly or indirectly nullify or impair any benefit to other

AMS, or impede the attainment of any objective in accordance with Article 11 of the ATIGA and the NTM Guidelines", ASEAN Member States have notified most of its draft measures in English to the ASEAN Secretariat for uploading onto its website.

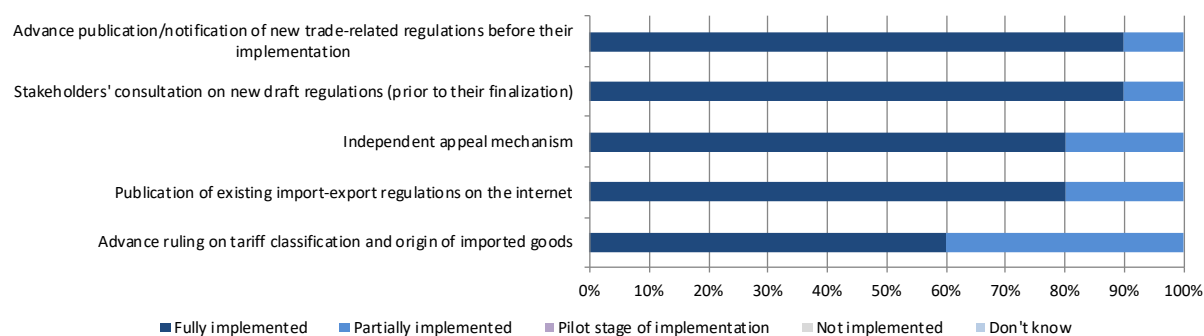
The action further enhances transparency at the regional level. It allows the private sector to have a greater chance to provide comments and inputs on the draft measures before entering into force. The combination of national and regional implementation of 'Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation' has enhanced their implementation of transparency. Even though the implementation rate of 'advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods' is the lowest one in 'Transparency', 60% of countries in ASEAN have fully implemented it.

Figure 7. State of implementation of 'Transparency' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unctfsurvey.org.

Figure 8. State of implementation of 'Transparency' in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unctfsurvey.org.

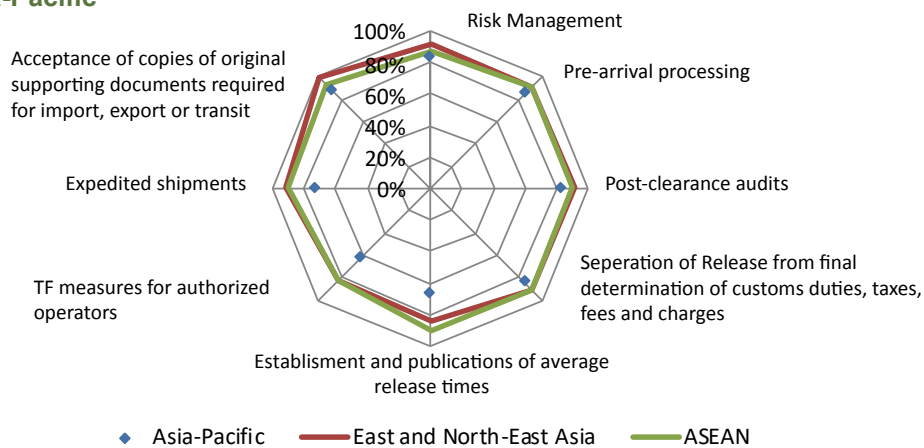
3.2 Formalities

Eight of the general trade facilitation measures included in the survey are grouped as a 'Formalities' subgroup related to streamlining trade procedures. They reflect the requirements of Articles 6-10 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article VIII on "Release and Clearance of Goods". The implementation levels of most of the measures in 'Formalities' are over 90% this year. The implementation of every single measure in ASEAN is higher than the regional average of Asia and the Pacific. 'Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities' is the measure with the highest implementation rate in the subregion, standing at 93%. Subregional implementation rates for 'post-clearance audits', 'establishment and publication of average release times', 'pre-arrival processing', 'expedited shipments' and 'separation of release from the final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges' have

reached 90% (figure 9).

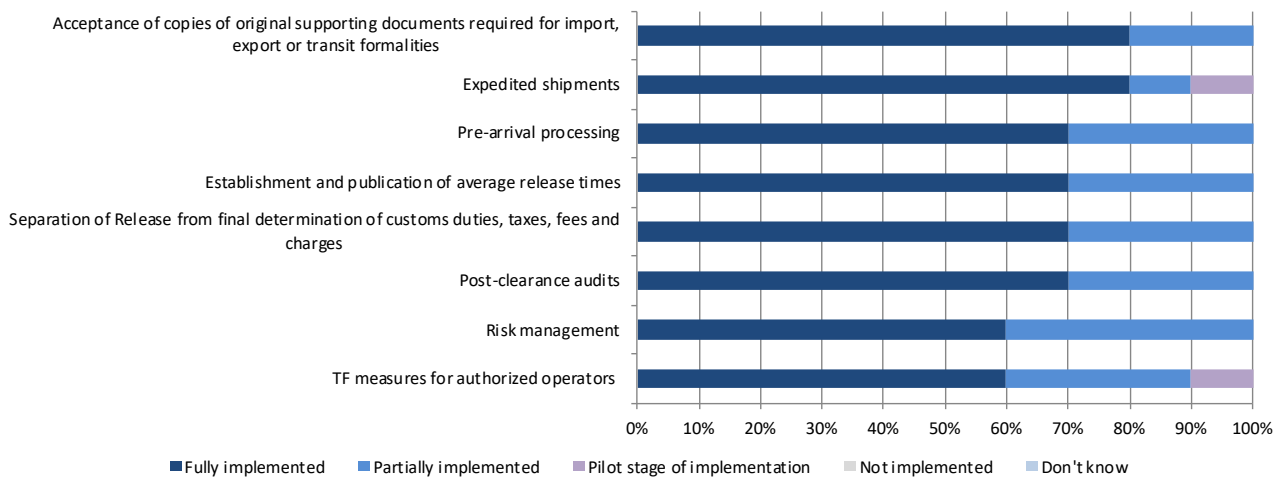
More than 90% of all ASEAN member countries have fully or partially implemented all 'Formalities' measures. The least implemented measure is 'TF measures for authorized operators', which has been fully implemented by 60% of the countries together with 30% and 10% of the countries declaring that they have partially implemented it or that it is in the pilot stage of implementation, respectively (figure 10). To improve this measure, ASEAN Member States are continuing to establish national Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programmes in three remaining countries, i.e., Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, which are expected to be completed by 2021. The completion of this establishment would facilitate the secured movement of goods in the region and be crucial to establishing all AMS in the ASEAN AEO Mutual Recognition Arrangement (AAMRA) mechanism, which is now under study.

Figure 9. State of implementation of 'Formalities' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untdsurvey.org.

Figure 10. State of implementation of trade 'Formalities' in ASEAN



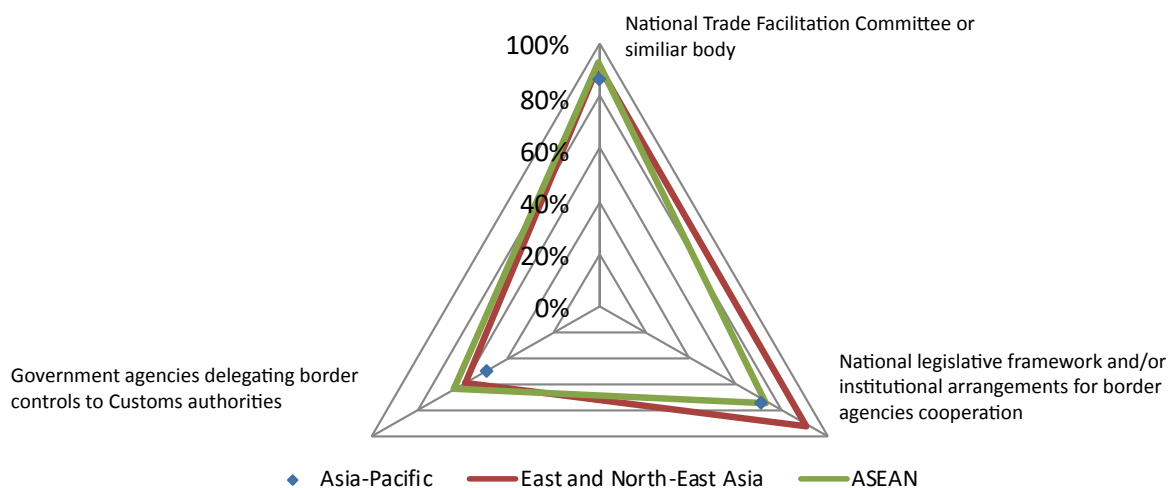
Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untdsurvey.org.

3.3 Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation

Three trade facilitation measures featured in the survey are grouped into 'Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation'. They are related to the long-standing recommendation that a national trade facilitation body be implemented to ensure coordination and cooperation among the various government agencies and other stakeholders involved in trade facilitation activities. All three measures are also specified in various Articles of the WTO TFA. The implementation rate of the three measures in ASEAN stands at 77%, which is higher than the Asia-Pacific regional average level.

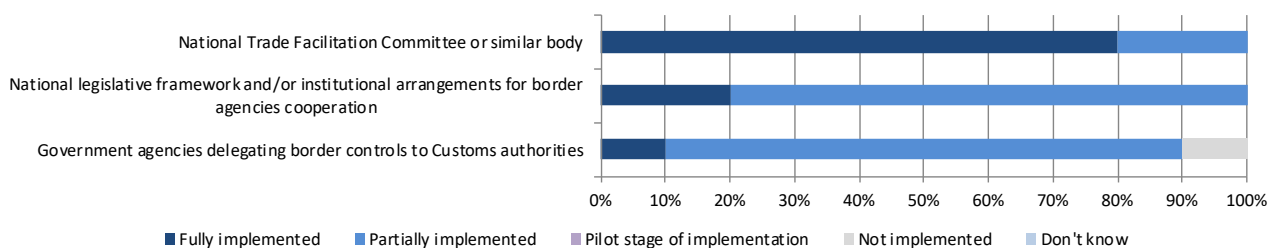
Figure 11 reveals that the state of implementation of each measure in this subgroup varies widely. The implementation rate of the 'National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body' is more than 90%. The high implementation rate is supported by eight ASEAN Member States having fully established the committee and two partially implementing this committee. The implementation rate of 'national legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation' is 73%. Ten per cent of countries in this subregion have not implemented 'government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities', which makes it the least implemented measure of this subgroup (figure 12).

Figure 11. State of implementation of 'Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

Figure 12. State of implementation of 'Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation' measures for trade facilitation in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

3.4 Transit Facilitation

Three trade facilitation measures included in the survey relate specifically to 'Transit Facilitation' and WTO TFA Article 11 on Freedom of Transit. These measures are intended to simplify, as much as possible, the formalities associated with traffic in transit, allowing goods to be seamlessly transported through one or more transit countries. These measures are particularly important to landlocked developing countries, as goods typically need to go through a neighbouring country's territory for transit. The implementation level of 'Transit Facilitation' in the subregion is around 80%, higher than that of the Asia-Pacific region.

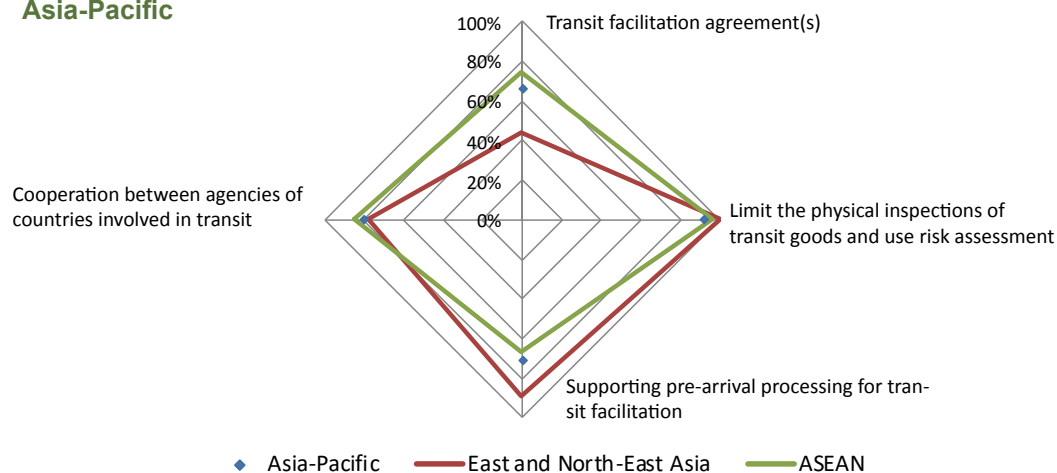
'Limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment' is the most implemented measure (subregional implementation rate is 96% with full implementation by 70% of the countries), followed by 'cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit' (85% at the subregional level, and fully implemented by 60%

of the countries). One factor that may contribute to the improvement of transit facilitation is the implementation of the ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS) among the six Participating Member States⁹ (PMS) since 2 November 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 situation the changing of trucks at the border is allowed as a temporary measure. To further enhance the utilization of the ACTS, other related initiatives such as the engagement of the Multi-modal Transport (MMT) and the expansion of ACTS to the remaining ASEAN Member States along the Borneo corridor¹⁰ are underway. With this, it is expected that this subgroup of trade facilitation will be further improved in the coming years. A total of 10% of the countries in ASEAN have not implemented 'supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation', while 60% have fully or partially implemented it (figures 13 and 14).

9. The ACTS six participating member States comprise Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

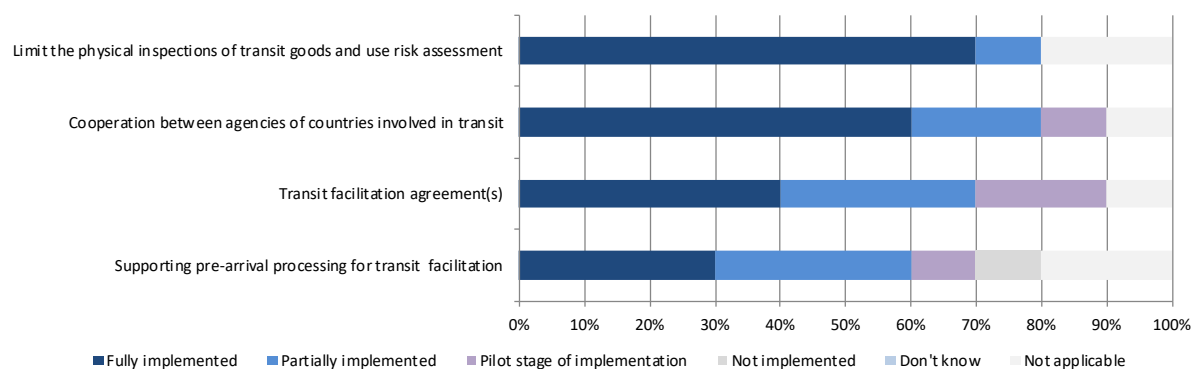
10. The ACTS Borneo corridor involves Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Figure 13. State of implementation of 'Transit Facilitation' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

Figure 14. State of implementation of 'Transit Facilitation' in ASEAN



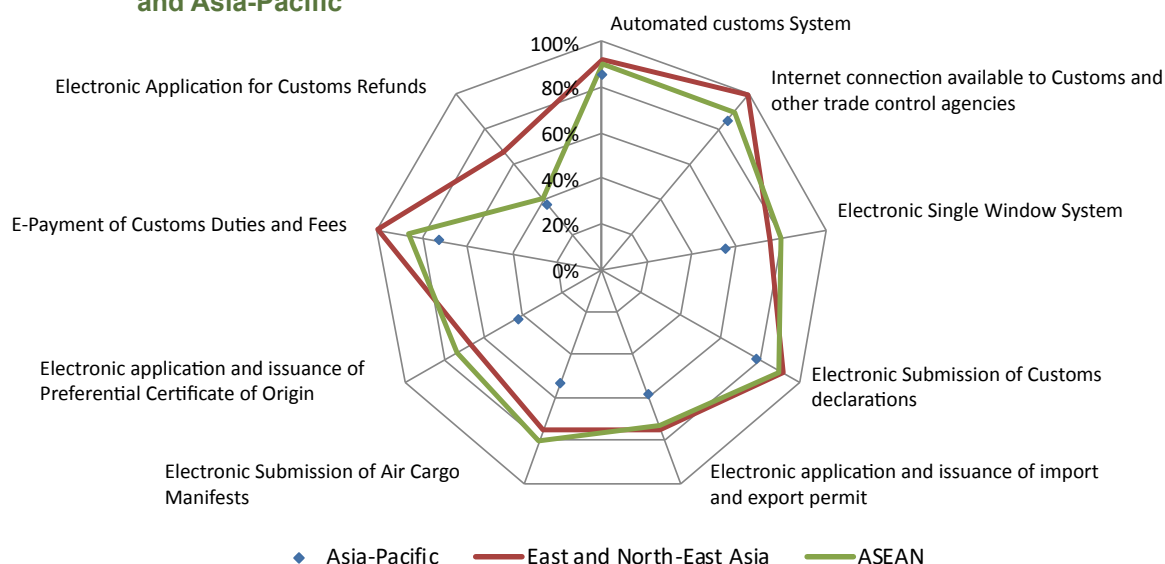
Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

3.5 Paperless Trade

Nine of the trade facilitation measures included in the survey are grouped into 'Paperless Trade' sub-group. All these measures involve using and applying modern information and communications technologies (ICT) to trade formalities, starting from the availability of internet connections at border-crossings and customs automation to full-fledged electronic Single Window facilities. Many of the measures featured here are closely related to those specified in the WTO TFA. However, the new WTO agreement typically only encourages economies to implement such measures rather than make them a requirement.

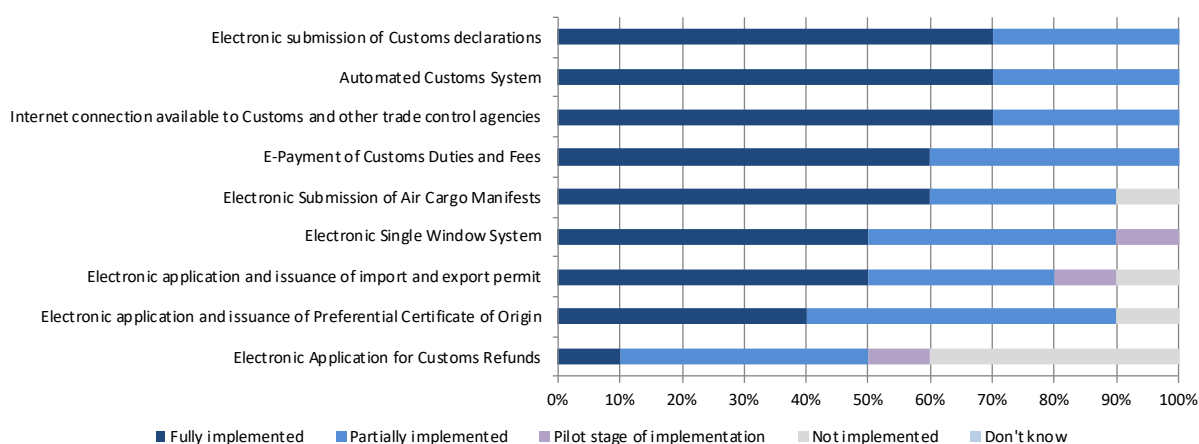
There is a huge difference between the most and least implementation rates of 'Paperless Trade' measures, ranging from 40% to 90%. As shown in figure 15, the implementation rates of 'automated Customs System', 'Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies' and 'electronic submission of Customs declarations' are 90%, the highest level in this subgroup. In contrast, the least implemented measure is 'electronic application for customs refunds' (implementation rate 40%), which is only fully implemented by 10% of countries in ASEAN. Implementation of this measure has not yet started in 40% of the countries in the subregion (figure 16).

Figure 15. State of implementation of 'Paperless Trade' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

Figure 16. State of implementation of 'Paperless Trade' in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

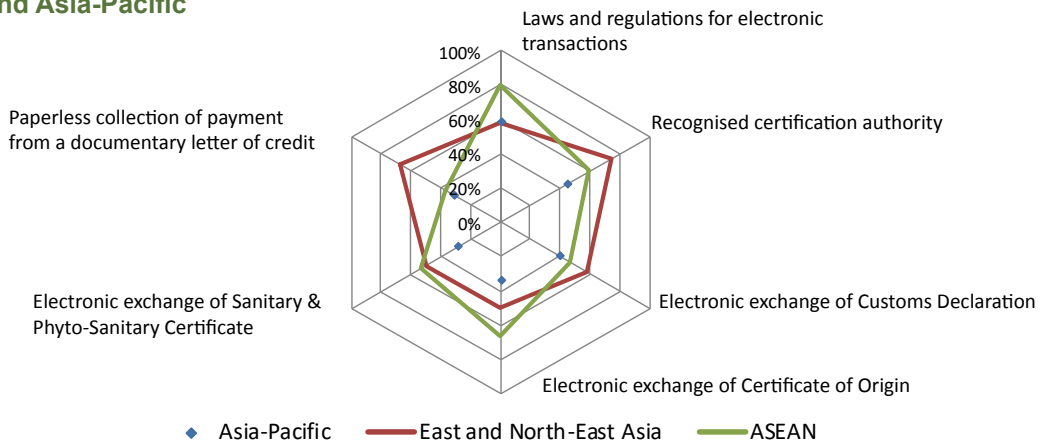
3.6 Cross-Border Paperless Trade

'Cross-border Paperless Trade' includes six measures. Two measures, i.e., namely 'laws and regulations for electronic transactions' and 'recognized certification authority', are basic building blocks towards enabling the exchange and legal recognition of trade-related data and documents among stakeholders within a country and ultimately between stakeholders along the entire international supply chain. The other four measures relate to the implementation of systems enabling the actual exchange of trade-related data and documents across borders to remove the need for sending paper documents.

The implementation rate of 'Cross-border paperless trade' in ASEAN stands at 57%. Subregional implementation of measures in this subgroup is significantly higher than the regional average, and for specific measures, it is even higher than that of ENEA (figure 17). This may be partly explained by the continued expansion of scope and reach of the ASEAN Single Window

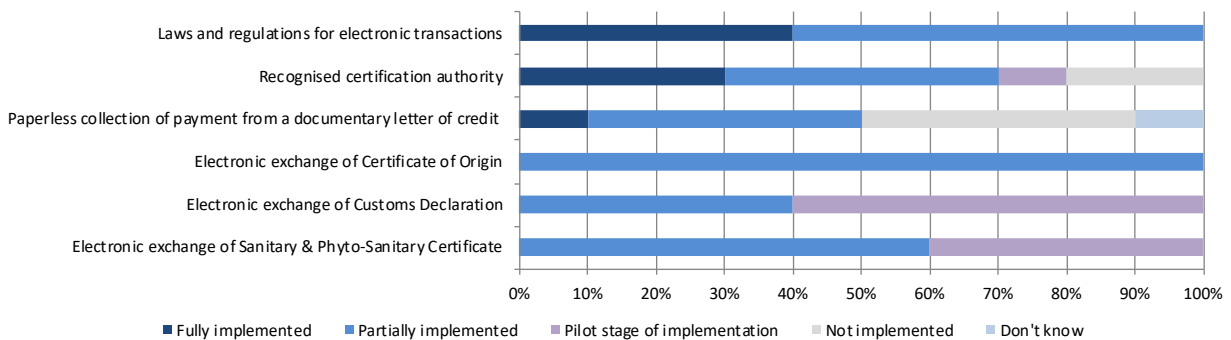
over the past two years. It is worth noting that the ASW Live Operation started in January 2018 with the full exchange of ATIGA e-Form D among 10 ASEAN Member States. In 2020 alone, AMS exchanged more than 800,000 ATIGA e-Form D through ASW. Currently, ASEAN Member States are expanding the ASW to exchange other trade-related documents, including exchanging the ASEAN Customs Declaration Document (ACDD) among five AMS; the remaining five AMS target to join the live operation by the end of 2021. The ASEAN Member States are also discussing with Dialogue Partners, e.g., China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States, the exchange of trade-related documents, such as the e-Certificate of Origin and the Customs Declaration Document, among others. Figure 18 shows that 70% of the countries in this subregion have fully or partially implemented 'laws and regulations for electronic transactions', 'electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin and Recognized certification authority'. 'Paperless collection of payment from documentary letter of credit' is the least implemented measure, which has not been implemented in 40% of the countries.

Figure 17. State of implementation of 'Cross-Border Paperless Trade' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unfssurvey.org.

Figure 18. State of implementation of 'Cross-border Paperless Trade' in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unfssurvey.org.

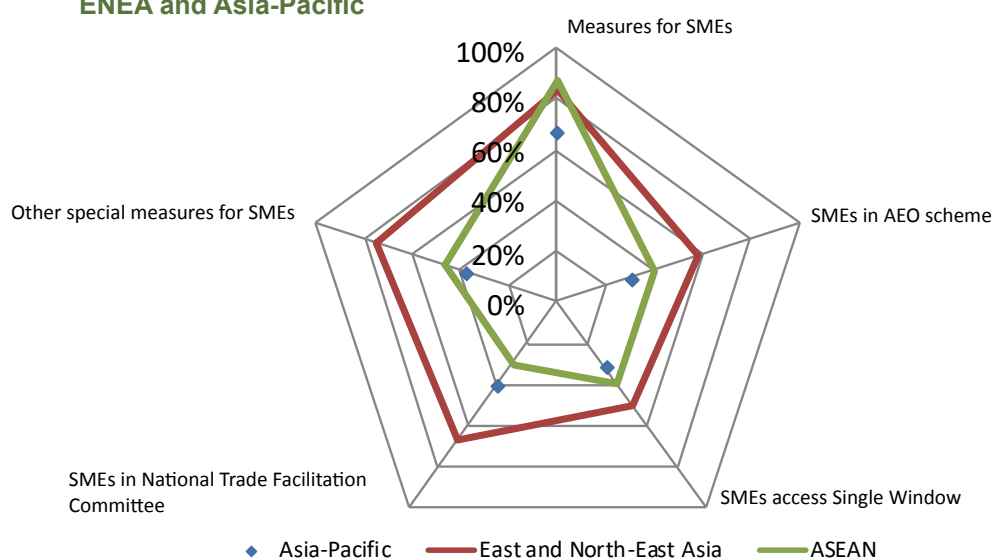
3.7 Trade Facilitation for SMEs

The Asia-Pacific average level of implementation of all five measures in 'Trade Facilitation for SMEs' varies widely (figure 19). Compared to other trade facilitation subgroups, the ASEAN countries' implementation rate of these measures is relatively low at approximately 48%.

All the countries in ASEAN have fully or partially

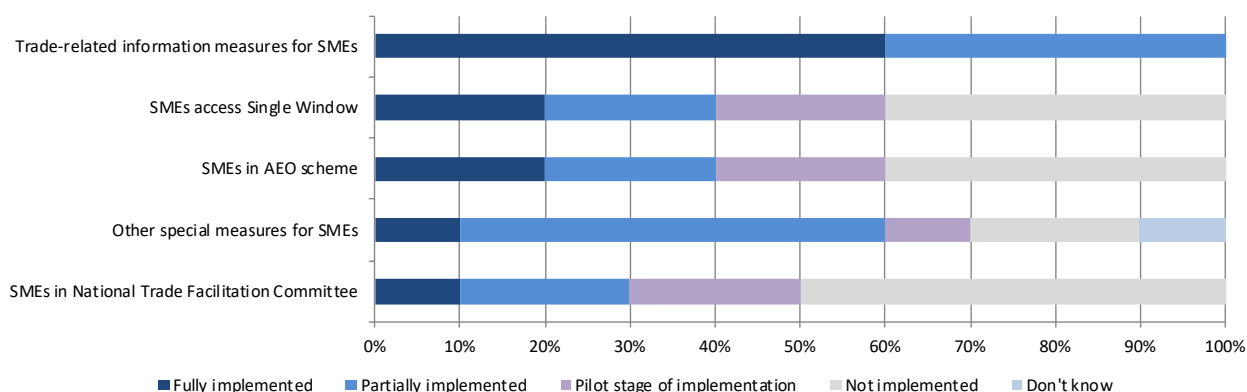
implemented 'trade-related information measures for SMEs', with the implementation rate standing at 87%, followed by 'other special measures for SMEs'. The implementation rate of 'SMEs access Single Window' and 'SMEs in AEO scheme' stands at 40%, with 20% of the countries declaring that it had been partially implemented and the other 20% declaring that it was in the pilot stage of implementation. The least implemented measure is 'SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee', which has not been implemented in half of the countries (figure 20).

Figure 19. State of implementation of 'Trade Facilitation for SMEs' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unfssurvey.org.

Figure 20. State of implementation of 'Trade Facilitation for SMEs' in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unfssurvey.org.

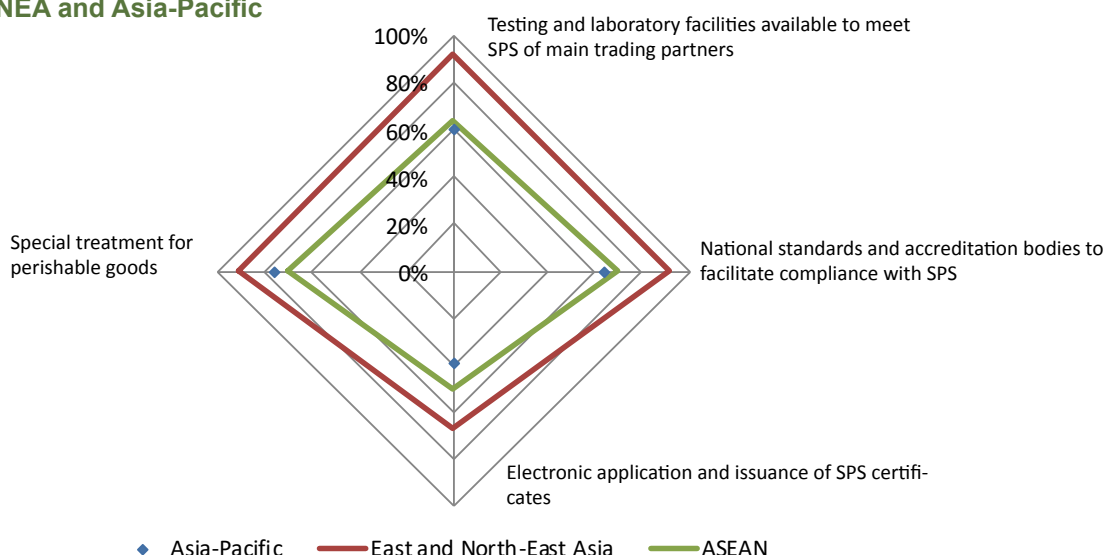
3.8 Agriculture Trade Facilitation

The ASEAN subregional average implementation rate of 'Agricultural Trade Facilitation' stands at more than 60%, slightly higher than the Asia-Pacific average. However, compared with ENEA, ASEAN is still lagging in implementing all four measures in this subgroup (figure 21).

facilities available to meet SPS of main trading partners' standing at 63%. The least implemented measure in this subgroup is 'electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates' (subregional implementation rate 50%). Implementation of this measure is often incomplete. Only 20% of the countries in the subregion have fully implemented this measure (figures 21 and 22).

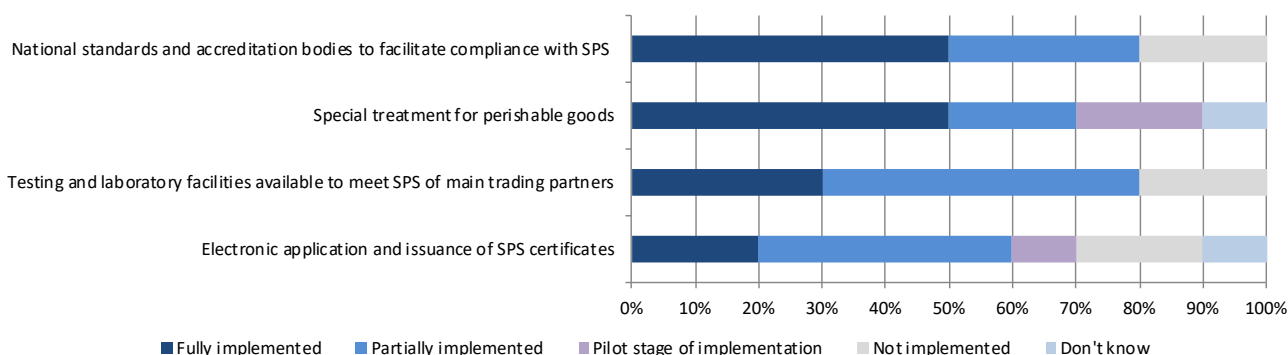
'National standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS' and 'special treatment for perishable goods' are the two most implemented measures with an implementation rate of 70%, followed by 'testing and laboratory

Figure 21. State of implementation of 'Agricultural Trade Facilitation' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

Figure 22. State of implementation of 'Agricultural Trade Facilitation' in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

3.9 Women in Trade Facilitation

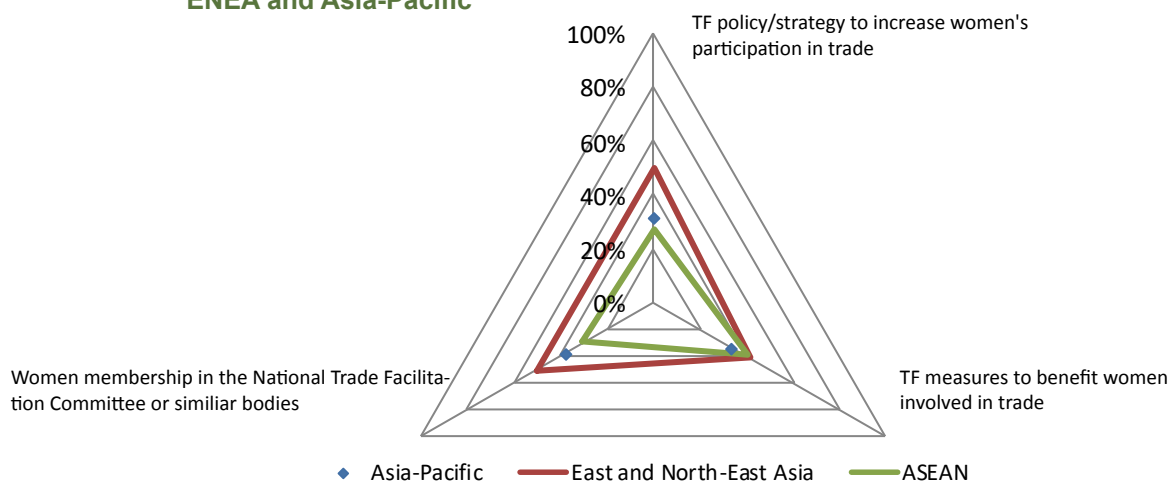
The ASEAN level of implementation of the three 'Women in Trade Facilitation' measures is extremely low, standing at 32% – lower than the Asia-Pacific average – suggesting that there is plenty of room for improvement. This could be explained by the fact that despite gender equality being mainstreamed in many policy initiatives, specific gender concerns for female traders remain limited and do not extend to trade facilitation. 'TF measures to benefit women involved in trade' is the most implemented measure standing at 40%. Implementation rates of the other two measures in this subgroup do not exceed 30% (figure 23).

A total of 70% of the countries have, to some extent, introduced 'TF measures to benefit women involved in trade'. However, implementation is on a partial and pilot basis. Specific measures

include, but are not limited to having a gender focal point in the relevant border agencies, from promoting balanced participation of men and women in training, to offering specific training for women involved in trade. 'Women membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies' and 'TF policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade' have been implemented in only half of the countries, and implementation is incomplete (figure 24).

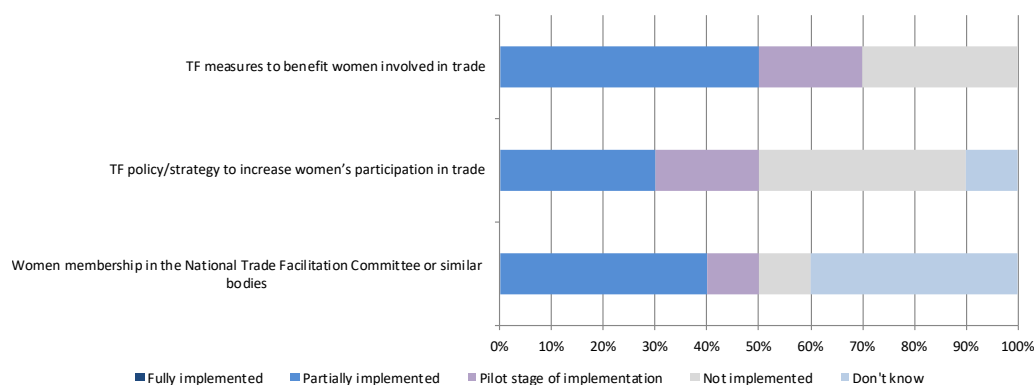
Gender equality and women's empowerment are important elements of the Sustainable Development Agenda, but women still have few opportunities to participate in trade and trade facilitation. With the development of gender equality, it is time for more countries to consider feasible measures to enhance gender balance in national trade facilitation committees and to incorporate strategies for increasing women's participation in trade.

Figure 23. State of implementation of 'Women in Trade Facilitation' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unctfsurvey.org.

Figure 24. State of implementation of 'Women in Trade Facilitation' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, unctfsurvey.org.

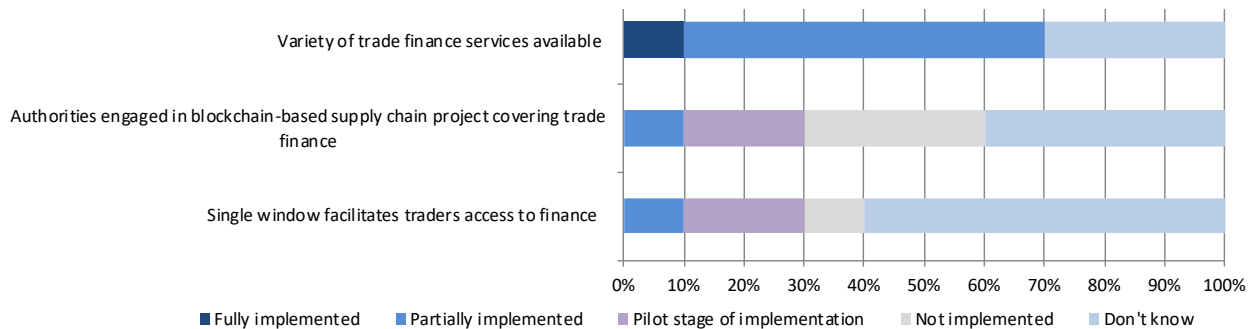
3.10 Trade Finance Facilitation

'Trade Finance Facilitation' is the least implemented sub-group of measures in ASEAN. The most implemented measure is 'variety of trade finance services available', with more than 70% of countries declaring that it is has been fully or partially implemented. The implementation rates of 'Single Window facilitates traders access to finance' and 'authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance' are relatively low, with only 30% of countries implementing the measures on a partial or pilot basis (figure 25).

However, it was challenging to collect data on

this topic as part of the survey. For example, no evidence of the implementation of Single Window features that facilitate traders' access to finance could be obtained from trade facilitation experts and officials who provided or validated the survey, indicating general unfamiliarity with trade finance. Traditional trade facilitation actors, including Customs and Ministries in charge of trade, may see procedures related to financing and payment of international trade transactions as outside their scope of work. However, given the interdependence between goods and financial flows, the results suggest a need for greatly enhanced coordination and cooperation with those involved in developing financial and payment services.

Figure 25. State of implementation of 'Trade Finance Facilitation' in ASEAN



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

3.11 Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis

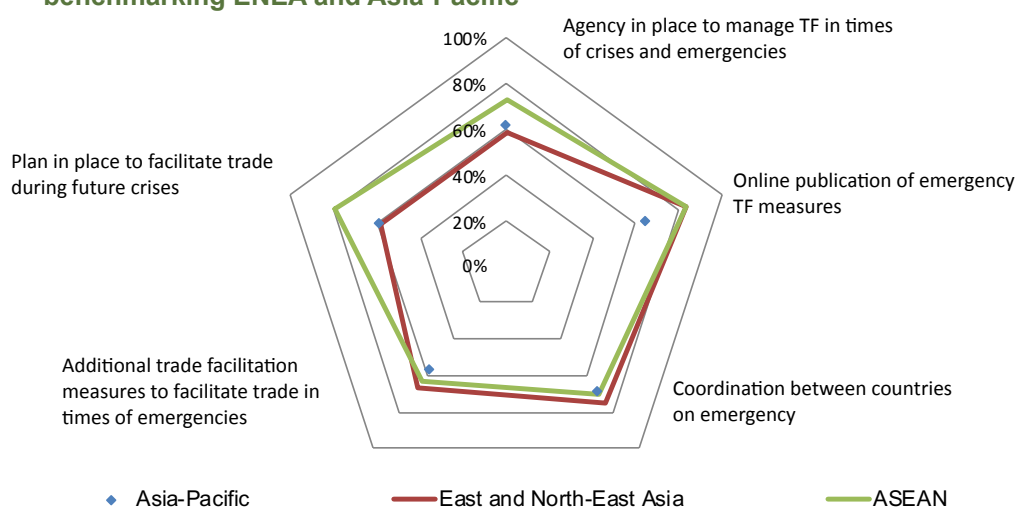
'Trade Facilitation Measures in Times of Crisis' has been incorporated in the 2021 survey for the first time in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 has impeded global trade unprecedentedly, and the ongoing impact has created considerable uncertainties for the global supply chain. The implementation level of this subgroup by ASEAN stands at more than 74%, higher than the Asia-Pacific average. 'Online publication of emergency TF measures' is the measure with the highest implementation rate at 83%, followed by 'plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises' and 'agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies' (subregional implementation rate is 80%, substantially higher than that of the ENEA and subregional average) (figure 26). Whereas most countries in the Asia-Pacific region have introduced immediate crisis-responsive trade facilitation measures, implementation of long-term measures is limited.¹¹ ASEAN countries are performing well in this regard. Half of the countries have already introduced long-term plans to secure future crises, while the rest of the ASEAN countries are actively preparing for such plans. Since September 2020, ASEAN-wide Self-Certification has been implemented, which provides convenience for traders to minimize the close contact to respond to the COVID-19 as they do not have to go to the issuing authorities' offices to apply for the Certificate of Origin Form D. In addition, all ASEAN Member States have agreed to accept electronically signed and sealed ATIGA

Form D which provides a simplified certification procedure for traders and competent authorities as well as helping to cope with lock-down measures by AMS due to COVID-19. In addition, the scanned copies of Certificates of Origin Form D are also accepted by all ASEAN Member States with different conditions.

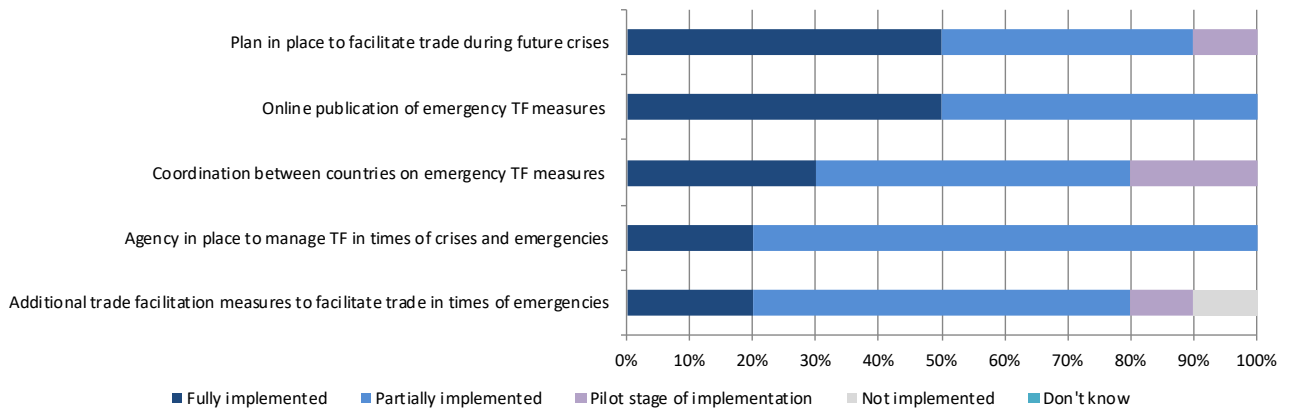
Given the problems created by restrictive measures, cooperation between countries should be further enhanced to avoid escalation of trade tensions and keep supply chains of essential goods flowing. A clear example of the close collaboration between the ASEAN Member States in easing the supply chain disruption and ensuring free flow of essential goods by keeping the market open for these goods, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is the signing on 13 November 2020 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Implementation of the Non-Tariff Measures on Essential Goods under the Hanoi Plan of Action on Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This included the initial list of 152 essential goods. In the continued follow-up, it was later agreed that another 107 food and agricultural products would be included in the list of essential goods, which reinstated the ASEAN Member States commitment to facilitating the seamless flow of essential goods in the region. That said, 'coordination between countries on TF measures' has been implemented to a lesser extent in the subregion. Only 30% of the countries have fully implemented this measure (figure 27).

11. . ESCAP, 2021, Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in Asia and Pacific 2021, available at <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/untf-survey-2021-regional?ref=untfsurvey.org>

Figure 26. State of implementation of 'Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis' by ASEAN benchmarking ENEA and Asia-Pacific



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.

Figure 27. State of implementation of 'Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis' in ASEAN

Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org.



4

Assessing the Impact of Trade Facilitation in ASEAN

To assess the potential impact of the implementation of trade facilitation measures in ASEAN, a trade cost model has been formulated as a function of trade facilitation implementation rates based on the United Nations survey data presented above. This is in addition to other traditional trade cost factors such as natural geographic factors (distance, “landlockedness” and contiguity), cultural and historical distance (e.g., common official language, former colonial relationships), the presence of regional trade agreements and maritime connectivity. The model is based on ADB/ESCAP (2021) by capturing the changes in trade costs resulting from implementation of trade facilitation measures by each country. The overall trade cost reductions expected in ASEAN from the implementation of three sets of trade facilitation measures are shown in table 3. The first set of trade facilitation measures is limited to the implementation of WTO TFA binding measures only.¹² The second set of measures includes all binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures included in the United Nations survey. The final and most ambitious set is a WTO TFA+ set of measures, including digital implementation of TFA measures and cross-border paperless trade. For each set of measures, the average changes in trade cost achieved if all ASEAN countries at least partially implement all measures, or if they all fully implement all measures, are calculated.

12. . The list of binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures is available in the Appendix of ADB/ESCAP (2021)

Table 3. Changes in trade costs in ASEAN resulting from implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade

ASEAN: trade costs model	WTO TFA (binding only)		WTO TFA (binding + non-binding)		WTO TFA+ (binding + non-binding + other paperless and cross-border paperless trade)	
	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Model 1						
Overall trade facilitation	-0.12%	-1.52%	-0.18%	-2.57%	-3.03%	-8.21%
Model 2						
General trade facilitation measures	-0.04%	-0.57%	-0.04%	-0.81%	-0.15%	-1.03%
Digital trade facilitation measures			-0.11%	-0.74%	-3.99%	-8.37%

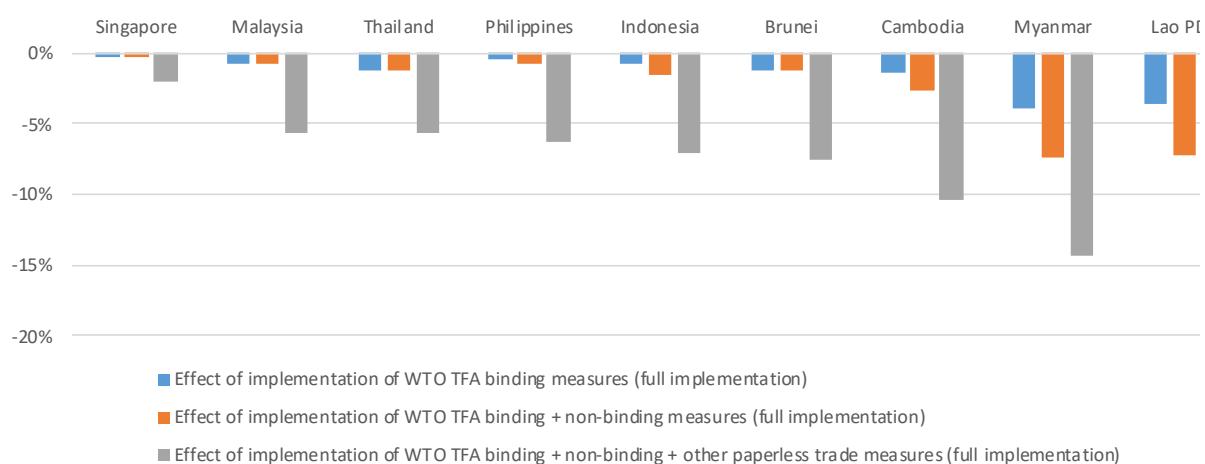
Source: ADB ESCAP 2021

Two main findings emerge from this impact analysis. First, complying with WTO TFA by implementing binding measures can only slightly reduce trade costs. Full implementation of binding measures in the overall trade facilitation model results in a decrease of trade costs of about 1.5%, while full implementation of all measures (both binding and non-binding) results in a 2.6% reduction. Second, the paperless implementation of the TFA measures, together with enabling the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders, will help to significantly reduce trade costs by nearly 8.2% for ASEAN as a whole. The results of model 2 also suggest that most of the trade cost reductions are associated

with paperless trade measures rather than conventional trade facilitation measures.

All ASEAN economies will reap significant benefits from accelerating the implementation of trade facilitation. As shown in figure 28, the full implementation of the three different sets of trade facilitation measures in all economies results in trade cost reductions for all economies. As expected, the trade cost reductions are much larger when cross-border paperless trade is achieved. However, achieving such trade cost reductions will require closer cooperation between economies on developing interoperable paperless trade systems, as envisaged in the CPTA (box 1).

Figure 28. Impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs of ASEAN economies



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, [untsfsurvey.org](https://www.untsfsurvey.org).

Note: Viet Nam is not included due to missing data on trade cost.

Box 1. A regional United Nations treaty, “leaving no-one behind” to accelerate trade digitalization

Developed by a diverse group of more than 25 Asian and Pacific countries at very different stages of development during a four-year period, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA) was adopted by ESCAP in May 2016. It is designed as an inclusive and enabling platform that will benefit all participating countries, regardless of where they stand in terms of trade facilitation implementation.

The Framework is fully dedicated to the digitalization of trade processes and the enabling of seamless electronic exchange and legal recognition of trade-related data and documents across borders, rather than only between stakeholders located in the same country. Full implementation of cross-border paperless trade will reduce transaction time and costs, increase regulatory compliance, and enable the more direct engagement of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) in international trade and cross-border e-commerce. Notably, the FA-CPT aims to facilitate and enable mutual recognition of electronic trade data and documents, but does not make electronic data exchange mandatory among all parties.

The Agreement entered into force on 20 February 2021 – as stated in Article 19 of the Agreement, it entered into force 90 days after the date on which the Governments of at least five ESCAP member States deposited their instruments of ratification or accession. Azerbaijan and the Philippines have acceded to it. The Islamic Republic of Iran, Bangladesh and the People’s Republic of China ratified it in 2020. In addition, Armenia and Cambodia signed it in 2017. Furthermore, several other ESCAP member States are in the process of completing their domestic processes for accession.

Achieving cross-border paperless trade across the region is a long and difficult endeavour, and it cannot be achieved without close collaboration between countries. The Framework Agreement is expected to support the process by providing a dedicated institutional framework for countries with the proven political will to develop legal and technical solutions for cross-border paperless trade, including pilot projects, capacity-building and technical assistance, based on existing international standards. Some of the benefits for ESCAP member States that become parties to the CPTA include:

- (a) Accelerated progress towards a paperless trade environment at the national level, based on the political will demonstrated during the accession process to FA-CPT, and through access to structured and regular sharing of lessons learnt on the implementation of best practices;
- (b) Reduction in overall investment costs and maximization of return from investments in paperless trade systems, through concurrent development of national paperless trade systems and environment for cross-border trade data exchange;
- (c) Ready access to potential counterpart countries interested in negotiating and achieving cross-border data exchange, avoiding or reducing the need for engaging in numerous and/or potentially incompatible bilateral initiatives;
- (d) Direct participation in the development of pragmatic solutions for the cross-border exchange of trade documents. For more advanced countries with relevant experience and existing practices, including many ASEAN economies, this will enable them to ensure that new regional systems and solutions will be harmonized and interoperable with what they have already achieved on a bilateral and/or subregional basis;
- (e) Compliance with commitments a Party may have made through in its bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements (RTAs) to collaborate in exchanging electronic data and documents (typically featured in “Paperless Trading” Articles in RTAs, or related provisions or agreements).

Note: Additional details on the Framework Agreement are available at: <https://www.unescap.org/kp/cpta>

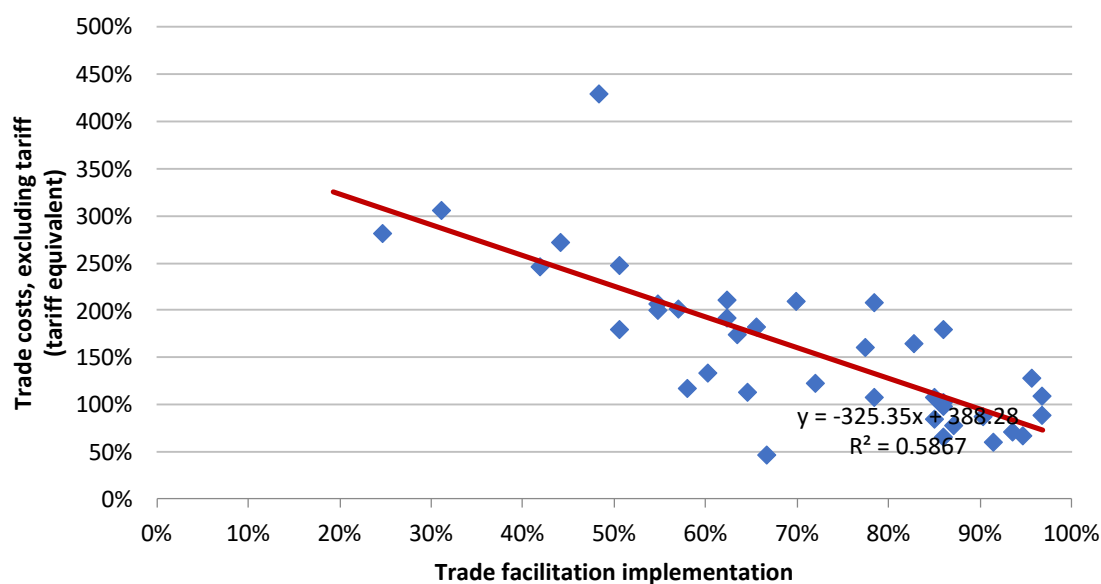


5

Conclusion and Way Forward

This report presents digital and sustainable trade facilitation implementation data collected from all ASEAN Member States and another 36 economies across the Asia-Pacific region. The survey not only covered the implementation of general trade facilitation measures, including most of those featured in the WTO TFA, but also more advanced ICT-based trade facilitation measures as well as measures aimed at the agricultural sector, SMEs, women traders, trade finance and in the context of emergency situations. Figure 29 confirms the strong relationship between the cost of international trade in Asia-Pacific countries and their level of implementation of trade facilitation.

Figure 29. Trade facilitation implementation and trade costs of Asia-Pacific economies



Sources: ESCAP-World Bank International Trade Cost Database (July 2021 update) and United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untfsurvey.org

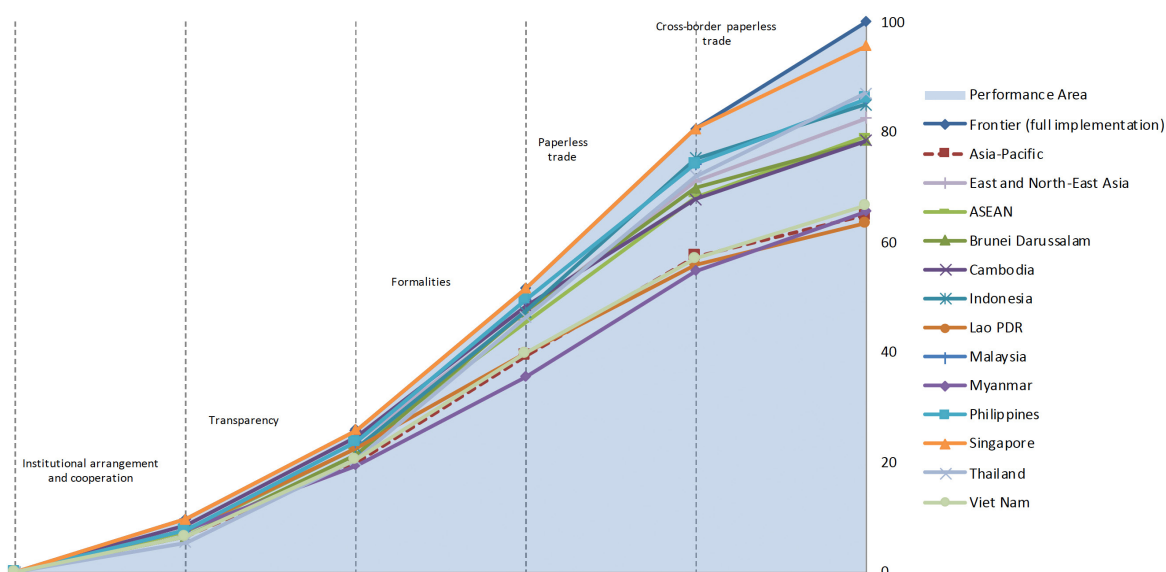
Based on a package of 31 trade facilitation measures included in the survey, the average implementation of trade facilitation in the region is approximately 65%, an increase of six percentage points compared with the previous survey results. ASEAN performs far better than the regional average, with an average implementation of 79%. The assessment reveals that most countries in the region have made great efforts to improve transparency, strengthen the coordination and cooperation among agencies, and streamline fees and formalities associated with trade transactions. While customs authorities in all the countries surveyed have been actively developing paperless systems to speed up customs clearance while also improving control, all countries in the region, they are now also engaged in implementing more advanced national multi-agency paperless systems – such as national electronic Single Windows – that enable electronic data and information sharing among government agencies and businesses to serve the purpose of paperless trade.¹³ With the continuous expansion and improvement of ASW, significant progress has been made in implementing cross-border (bilateral, subregional or regional) paperless trade systems in ASEAN countries during the past two years. This work can be further leveraged at the regional level by adopting and implementing the intergovernmental agreement to promote cross-border paperless trade. The Framework Agreement was negotiated as an inclusive and flexible intergovernmental platform, benefiting all parties regardless of their

current state of implementation of paperless trade. For ASEAN countries, it will provide opportunities to leverage and promote the existing cross-border paperless trade solutions it has developed under the ASEAN Single Window to other key trade partners in the region.

To further advance trade facilitation and paperless trade, figure 30 shows the implementation of trade facilitation as a step-by-step process, based on the measures included in this survey. Trade facilitation begins with setting up the 'Institutional Arrangement' to prioritize and coordinate trade facilitation measures. The next step is to make the trade processes more 'Transparent' by sharing information on existing laws, regulations and procedures as widely as possible and negotiating with stakeholders when developing new ones. Designing and implementing simpler and more efficient trade 'Formalities' is the third step. The re-engineered and streamlined processes may first be implemented based on paper documents, but can be further improved through ICT and 'Paperless Trade' systems. The ultimate step is to enable electronic trade data and documents exchange by traders, Governments and service providers within national (Single Window and other) systems, to be used and re-used to provide stakeholders in partner countries with the information they need to speed up the movement of goods and reduce the overall costs of trade.

¹³ This step-by-step process is inspired by, and generally consistent with the UN/CEFACT step-by-step approach to trade facilitation towards achieving a Single Window environment.

Figure 30. Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021, untdsurvey.org.

Going forward, the ASEAN Member States should consider accelerating the promotion of digital trade facilitation. The impact analysis of trade facilitation measures on ASEAN trade costs strongly supports the need for ASEAN to implement paperless trade and the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents between ASEAN and other trading partners to enhance trade competition force. According to the existing intra-ASEAN trade facilitation commitments set out in the ASEAN Single Window and other existing ASEAN Agreements, the reductions in trade costs through an ambitious digital trade facilitation strategy are estimated at 8% of the current trade costs. If the target is merely to achieve basic compliance with WTO TFA, it is only 1.5%. In this regard, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific does not only complement WTO TFA, but also provides a supporting platform for the ESCAP member States to support the electronic exchange of cross-border trade-related data and documents for those who have not implemented this mechanism. In addition, it could provide ASEAN countries with opportunities to promote ASEAN initiatives and solutions, and support further development of the ASEAN Single Window for interoperability with other paperless trade systems being developed in other parts of the region and the world. Therefore, all ASEAN countries are encouraged to become a party to the treaty as soon as possible and to promote harmonization of trade facilitation measures across the Asia and Pacific region.

In terms of ‘Sustainable Trade Facilitation’, the implementation of “inclusive” measures to promote

SMEs and the participation of women in trade remains low. SMEs are important participants in the global economy and also play an important role in digital trade, but trade facilitation measures tailored to SMEs are insufficient. Therefore, building the capacity of SMEs and taking them into account in trade facilitation policies are essential to achieving sustainable trade facilitation.¹⁴ The survey reveals a need for more understanding and cooperation among agencies responsible for trade finance and facilitation, in order to ensure that trade finance and payment instruments are integrated into trade facilitation implementation strategies, including Single Window development plans. Given their importance in achieving sustainable and inclusive development of economies in the region, particularly in times of crisis, trade facilitation strategies should be designed more holistically and inclusively. Last, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly exposed the weaknesses of the global trading system. The newly incorporated ‘Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis’ group shows that ASEAN Member States have paid close attention to restoring trade, and the implementation level exceeded the regional average. Since the pandemic is not over and will continue to affect the world economy, there is still room for ASEAN Member States to boost cooperation further to minimise the pandemic’s impact as well as improve the emergency response capacity to contribute to recovery and make adequate preparations for future crises. This includes the climate crisis, in which trade facilitation certainly has a mitigating role to play.¹⁵

14. See ESCAP and ITC, 2016, *Mainstreaming Trade Facilitation in SME Development Strategies*. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/MakingWTOFAWorkforSMEs.pdf>

15. Duval and Hardy, 2021. *A primer on quantifying the environmental benefits of cross-border paperless trade facilitation*. Available at <https://artnet.unescap.org/publications/working-papers/primer-quantifying-environmental-benefits-cross-border-paperless-trade>

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Grouping of trade facilitation measures and correspondence with TFA articles

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
General TF	Transparency (5 measures)	Publication of existing import-export regulations on the Internet	1.2
		Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	2.2
		Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation (e.g., 30 days prior)	2.1
		Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	3
		Independent appeal mechanism (for traders to appeal customs rulings and the rulings of other relevant trade control agencies)	4
	Formalities (8 measures)	Risk management (as a basis for deciding whether a shipment will be physically inspected or not)	7.4
		Pre-arrival processing	7.1
		Post-clearance audits	7.5
		Separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges	7.3
		Establishment and publication of average release times	7.6
		Trade facilitation measures for authorized operators	7.7
		Expedited shipments	7.8
		Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export, or transit formalities	10.2.1
	Institutional arrangement and cooperation (5 measures)	Establishment of a National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	23
		National legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation	8
		Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities	
		Alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings	8.2(a)
		Alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings	8.2(b)
	Transit facilitation (4 measures)	Transit facilitation agreement(s) with neighboring country(ies)	
		Customs authorities limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment	10.5
		Supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	11.9
		Cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit	11.16

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
Digital TF	Paperless trade (10 measures)	Automated Customs System (e.g. ASYCUDA)	
		Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies at border-crossings	
		Electronic Single Window System	10.4
		Electronic submission of Customs declarations	
		Electronic application and issuance of import and export permit	
		Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests	
		Electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests	
		Electronic application and issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin	
		E-Payment of Customs Duties and Fees	7.2
		Electronic Application for Customs Refunds	
	Cross-border paperless trade (6 measures)	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions are in place (e.g., e-commerce law, e-transaction law)	
		Recognized certification authority issuing digital certificates to traders to conduct electronic transactions	
		Electronic exchange of Customs Declaration	
		Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	
		Electronic exchange of Sanitary & Phyto-Sanitary Certificate	
		Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit	
Sustainable TF	Trade facilitation for SMEs (5 measures)	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	
		SMEs in AEO scheme (i.e. Government has developed specific measures that enable SMEs to more easily benefit from the AEO scheme)	
		SMEs access Single Window (i.e. Government has taken actions to make single windows more easily accessible to SMEs (e.g., by providing technical consultation and training services to SMEs on registering and using the facility.))	
		SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee (i.e. Government has taken actions to ensure that SMEs are well-represented and made key members of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs))	
		Other special measures for SMEs	

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
Sustainable TF	Agricultural trade facilitation (4 measures)	Testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS of main trading partners	
		National standards and accreditation bodies are established to facilitate compliance with SPS	
		Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates	
		Special treatment for perishable goods at border-crossings	7.9
	Women in trade facilitation (3 measures)	Trade facilitation policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade	
		Trade facilitation measures to benefit women involved in trade	
		Women membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies	
	Trade finance facilitation (3 measures)	Single window facilitates traders access to finance	
		Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance	
		Variety of trade finance services available	
		Agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies	
	Trade facilitation in times of crisis (5 measures)	Agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies	
		Online publication of emergency TF measures	
		Coordination between countries on emergency TF measures	
		Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	
		Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises	

Annex 2: A three-step approach for data collection and validation

Data submission by experts:	The ESCAP Secretariat sent the survey instrument to trade facilitation experts (in Governments, the private sector and academia) in Asia-Pacific countries to gather preliminary information. The questionnaire was also made publicly available online and disseminated with the support of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport for Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT). In some cases, the questionnaire was also sent to relevant national trade facilitation authorities or agencies as well as regional trade facilitation partners or organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute, the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). This first step took place essentially between January and May 2021.
Data verification by the UNRCs Secretariat:	The ESCAP Secretariat cross-checked the data collected in Step 1. Desk research and data sharing among UNRCs and survey partners were carried out to check the accuracy of data further. Face-to-face or telephone interviews with key informants were arranged to gather additional information when needed. Step 2 took place between January and May 2021. The outcome of Step 2 was a consistent set of responses per country.
Data validation by national governments:	Step 3 took place between May and June 2021. The ESCAP Secretariat sent the completed questionnaire to each national Government to ensure that the country had the opportunity to review the dataset and provide any additional information. The feedback from national Governments was incorporated to finalize the dataset. In the case of ASEAN Member States, the preliminary data were also made available for review by the ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee (ATF-JCC).

Annex 3: Definition of each Stage of Implementation

Stage of implementation	Coding/Scoring
<p>Full Implementation: the trade facilitation measure implemented is in full compliance with commonly-accepted international standards, recommendations and conventions such as the Revised Kyoto Convention, UN/CEFACT Recommendations, or the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA); it is implemented in law and in practice; it is available to essentially all relevant stakeholders nationwide, and supported by adequate legal and institutional frameworks, as well as adequate infrastructure and financial and human resources. A TFA provision included in the commitments given under Notifications of Category A may generally be considered as a measure, which is fully implemented by the country, with a caveat that the provision will be implemented by a Least-Developed Country (LDC) member within one year of the TFA agreement coming into force. If a country registers a positive response for all sub-questions concerning a given trade facilitation measure, that measure should be considered fully implemented.</p>	3
<p>Partial Implementation: a measure is considered to be partially implemented if at least one of the following is true: (1) the trade facilitation measure is in partial - but not in full - compliance with commonly-accepted international standards, recommendations and conventions; (2) the country is still in the process of rolling out the implementation of the measure; (3) the measure is being used but on an unsustainable, short-term or ad-hoc basis; (4) the measure is implemented in some - but not all - targeted locations (such as key border crossing stations); or (5) some - but not all - targeted stakeholders are fully involved.</p>	2
<p>Pilot Stage of Implementation: a measure is considered to be at the pilot stage of implementation if, in addition to meeting the general attributes of partial implementation, it is available only to a very small portion of the intended stakeholder group (or at a certain location) and/or is being implemented on a trial basis. When a new trade facilitation measure is at the pilot stage of implementation, the old measure is often continuously used in parallel to ensure that the service is still provided even when there has been a disruption with the new measure. This stage of implementation also includes relevant rehearsals and preparation for the full implementation.</p>	1
<p>Not implemented: a measure has not been implemented at this stage. However, this stage may still include initiatives or efforts towards implementation of the measure. For example, under this stage, (pre)feasibility studies or planning for the implementation can be carried out; and consultation with stakeholders on the implementation may be arranged.</p>	0

Based on the data collected, each of the trade facilitation measures included in the survey was rated as “fully implemented”, “partially implemented”, “on a pilot basis”, or “not implemented”. A score (weight) of 3, 2, 1 or 0 were assigned to each of the four implementation stages to calculate implementation scores for individual measures across countries, regions or groups. Definitions for each stage are provided in Annex 3.

