WTO Trade Policy Review of India (2026) – Summary Note

The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** released the **Eighth Trade Policy Review (TPR) of India** in **July 2026** in Geneva. The review assessed India's trade and trade-related policies over the period **2021–2025**, evaluating developments in merchandise and services trade, investment, industrial policy, customs administration, agriculture, intellectual property, digital trade, and the broader regulatory framework. The review was based on two reports-one prepared independently by the WTO Secretariat and the other submitted by the Government of India-followed by discussions among WTO Members. The Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) is designed to enhance transparency, improve understanding of Members' trade policies, and encourage adherence to WTO principles rather than to judge compliance.

Strong Economic Performance and Trade Recovery

The WTO acknowledged India's robust macroeconomic performance during the review period, highlighting that India remained one of the fastest-growing major economies despite significant global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, supply chain disruptions, and persistent inflationary pressures. Strong domestic demand, public investment in infrastructure, digital transformation, and policy reforms contributed to sustained economic growth.

The review noted that India's merchandise exports reached record levels during the period while services exports-particularly in information technology, business services, financial services, and professional services-continued to expand rapidly. India's growing importance in global services trade was recognised as one of the country's major strengths. The WTO also observed that India has increasingly diversified its export destinations while continuing to consolidate its position as a significant player in global trade.

Trade Facilitation and Customs Modernization

The review appreciated India's continued efforts to modernize its trade facilitation ecosystem. Significant progress was noted in:

- Expansion of digital customs processes through faceless and paperless clearances.
- Greater use of risk management systems to expedite cargo movement.

- Improved implementation of the National Single Window System for trade-related approvals.
- Enhanced electronic documentation and customs automation.
- Reduction in average cargo clearance time at ports and airports.
- Continued implementation of commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

These initiatives were viewed as important measures to reduce transaction costs, improve ease of doing business, and enhance India's competitiveness in international trade.

Trade Policy and Tariff Regime

While recognising India's continued trade reforms, the WTO Secretariat observed that India maintains relatively high tariff protection compared with many major trading economies. During the review period, applied tariff rates changed frequently across several product categories, creating uncertainty for traders and investors.

The report highlighted that:

- Average applied MFN tariff levels remain relatively high.
- Tariff peaks continue in sectors such as agriculture, automobiles, textiles, and certain manufactured products.
- Frequent tariff revisions may affect predictability for businesses.
- Multiple duty exemptions and concessional schemes add complexity to the tariff structure.

The Secretariat suggested that greater tariff stability and simplification could improve the business environment and facilitate deeper integration into global value chains.

Increasing Use of Non-Tariff Measures

One of the important observations in the review relates to India's growing reliance on non-tariff measures (NTMs). The WTO noted increased use of:

- Quality Control Orders (QCOs);
- Technical regulations and conformity assessment requirements;

- Import licensing procedures;
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures;
- Export restrictions on selected agricultural and industrial products during periods of domestic shortages.

Several WTO Members sought clarification regarding the objectives, implementation timelines, and transparency of these measures. India explained that these policies are intended to ensure product quality, consumer safety, environmental protection, food security, and strategic supply chain resilience, while remaining consistent with WTO obligations.

Industrial Policy and Manufacturing Promotion

The review devoted considerable attention to India's evolving industrial policy framework. WTO Members raised questions regarding initiatives such as:

- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes;
- Make in India programme;
- Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives;
- Electronics and semiconductor manufacturing policies;
- Renewable energy manufacturing incentives.

India clarified that these programmes aim to strengthen domestic manufacturing capacity, improve competitiveness, attract investment, integrate domestic firms into global value chains, and generate employment. According to India, these initiatives pursue legitimate development objectives and are implemented in a manner consistent with WTO commitments.

Agriculture and Food Security

Agriculture continued to receive significant attention during the review. WTO Members discussed:

- Public stockholding programmes;
- Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanisms;
- Domestic support to agriculture;
- Food security policies;

- Export restrictions on wheat, rice, sugar, and onions introduced during periods of domestic supply concerns.

The document highlighted India’s efforts in strengthening its animal health surveillance and biosecurity framework to facilitate safe trade in poultry and poultry products. As part of these efforts, the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD)** revised the **National Action Plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza (2021)**, providing a comprehensive framework for the prevention, early detection, surveillance, reporting, containment, and eradication of Avian Influenza outbreaks. On 26 July 2023, the DAHD submitted a formal self-declaration to the World Organization of Animal Health (WOAH) asserting freedom from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in total 44 poultry compartments located in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.

The inclusion of **Chhattisgarh** among the states with internationally recognized HPAI-free poultry compartments is particularly significant. It demonstrates that poultry enterprises in the state have implemented biosecurity and disease management systems that meet internationally accepted standards. This recognition enhances the credibility of poultry products originating from these compartments and creates opportunities for exporters to access markets that require assurances regarding freedom from avian influenza.

Services Trade and Digital Economy

The review highlighted India's growing strength in services exports. Information technology services, business process management, engineering services, financial services, healthcare, and professional services continued to support India's export growth.

The WTO also acknowledged India's rapid digital transformation through initiatives such as:

- Digital public infrastructure;
- Unified Payments Interface (UPI);
- Digital identity systems;
- Expansion of e-governance services;
- Digitalisation of customs and regulatory processes.

These developments were recognised as contributing positively to trade facilitation, financial inclusion, and service-sector competitiveness.

Free Trade Agreements and International Engagement

The WTO noted India's renewed emphasis on bilateral and regional trade agreements during the review period. India concluded or advanced negotiations with several trading partners as part of its strategy to diversify export markets, improve supply chain resilience, and secure greater market access for goods and services.

The review recognised India's increasing engagement in comprehensive trade negotiations while maintaining its active participation in the multilateral trading system.

Transparency and Regulatory Predictability

A recurring theme during the review was the importance of improving regulatory transparency and policy predictability. The WTO Secretariat suggested that India could further strengthen its investment climate by:

- Reducing frequent changes in tariff and trade measures;
- Increasing stakeholder consultations;
- Providing advance notice before introducing regulatory changes;
- Simplifying customs procedures;
- Rationalising import licensing requirements;
- Enhancing transparency in technical regulations and standards.

Such reforms, according to the Secretariat, would reduce compliance costs and increase investor confidence.

India's Response

India highlighted several achievements during the review period, including:

- Sustained high economic growth despite global uncertainties;
- Significant improvement in logistics and trade facilitation;
- Expansion of digital governance;
- Record exports of goods and services;
- Infrastructure development under PM Gati Shakti;

- Continued commitment to WTO rules and the multilateral trading system;
- Greater integration with global markets through trade agreements and investment promotion.

India also emphasised that many of its trade policy measures pursue legitimate public policy objectives such as economic development, consumer protection, environmental sustainability, national security, and supply chain resilience.