APEC Business Advisory Council

REIWG II 2026

Non-Tariff Barriers affecting Food Trade:

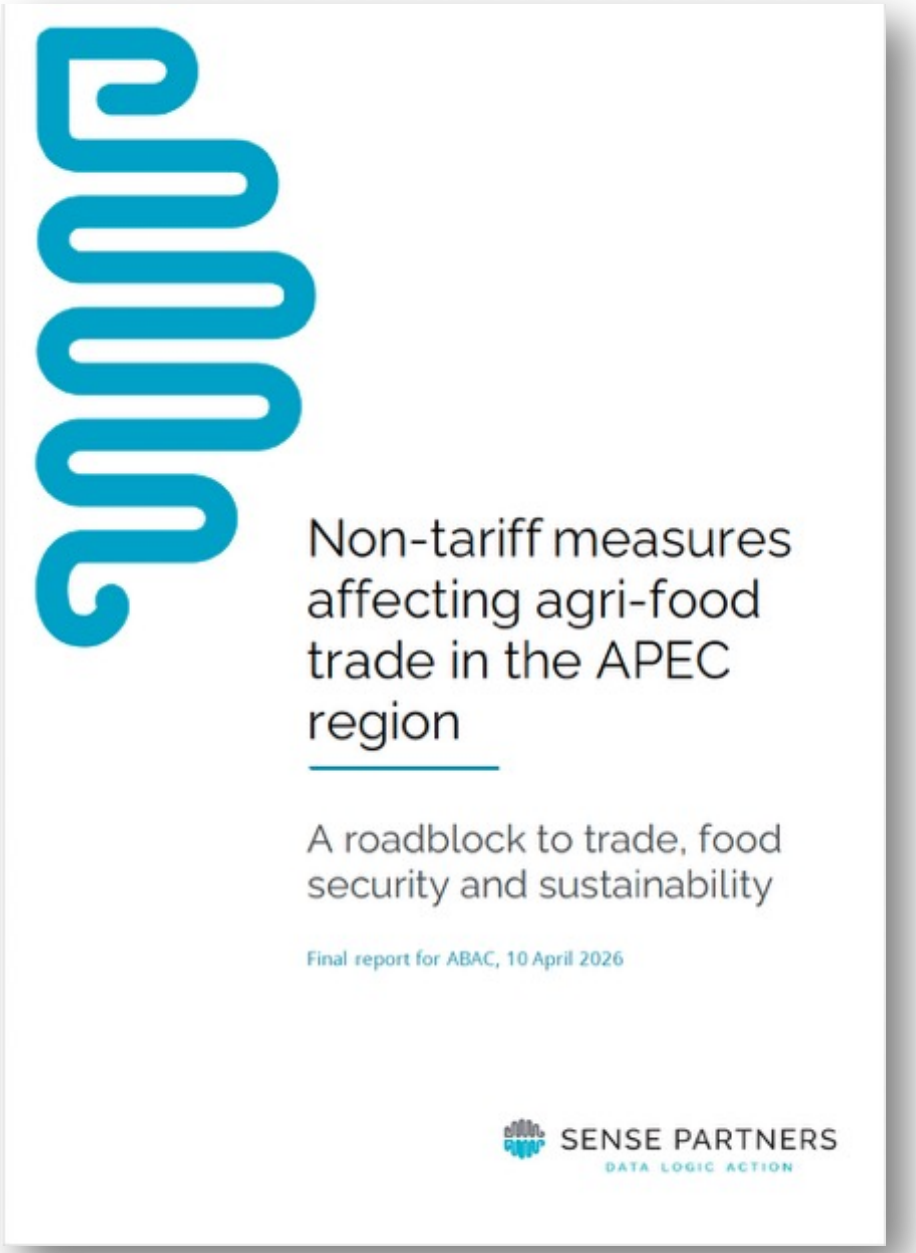
A roadblock to trade, food security and sustainability

Presentation by Sarah Ottrey, ABAC New Zealand

Mexico City, Thursday 23 April 2026

2026 NTB Research project

Consultant John Ballingal, Sense Partners



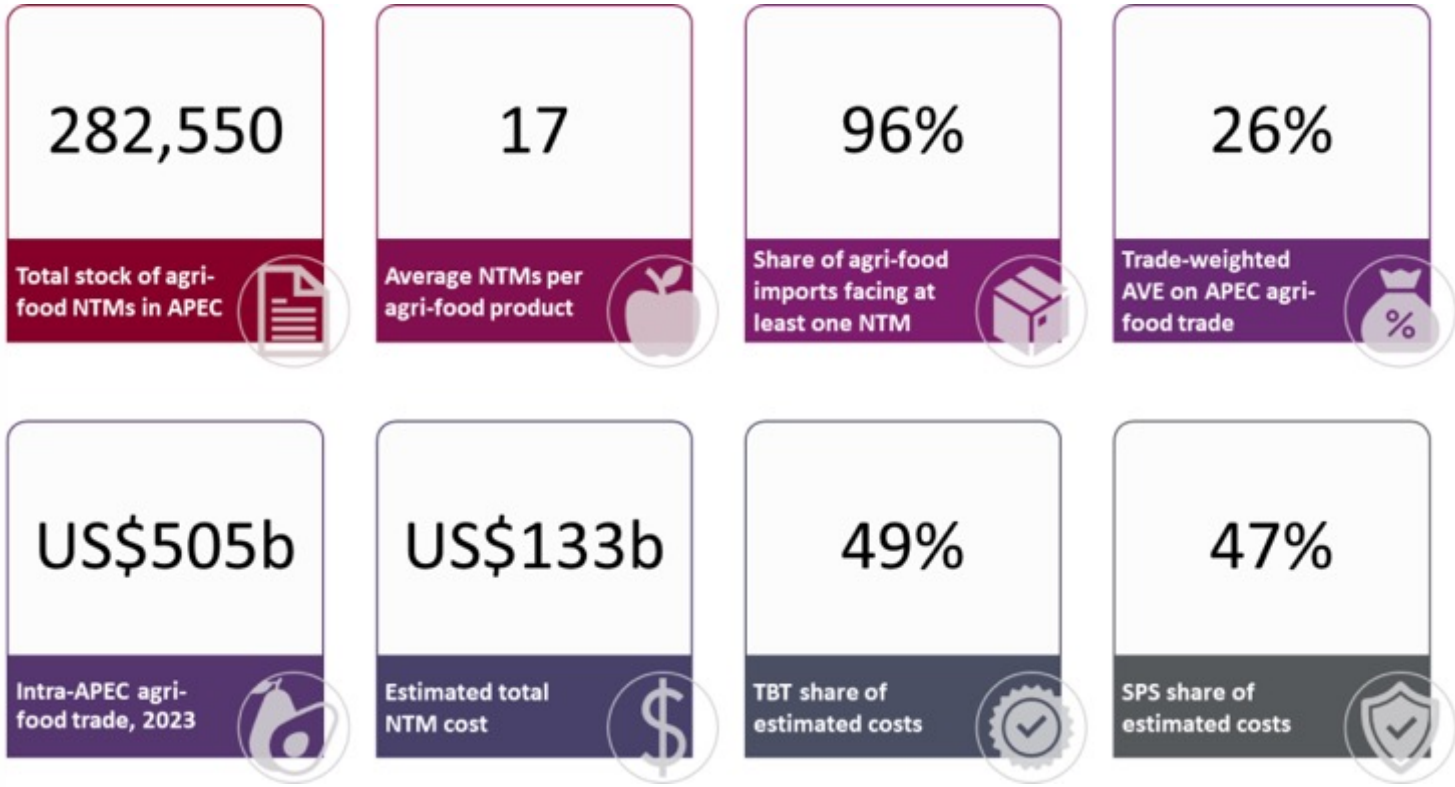



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Key takeaways

- The study proves that **NTBs are a costly, and growing, problem**
- NTBs can be found **across economies, sectors and products**
  - **Caveat 1: NTMs ≠ NTBs; some are legitimate**
    - a high NTM count/cost might represent valid policy settings e.g. science-based biosecurity measures
  - **Caveat 2: figures are probably an under-estimate:**
    - Only include TBT, SPS (2016 Marshall School study found lots of other procedural obstacles);
    - Foods that are highly protected with tariffs or for which NTBs are prohibitive (so low trade) do not score highly on NTM counts
    - Newer “sustainability” measures are not included
- Even where legitimate, the **overall regulatory burden** is high
- Dealing with NTMs requires good **information**, **capability** and **capacity** to respond – MSMEs find this hardest
- Stubborn **NTBs work against fair food trade, food security**, and **sustainability**

Strategies to tackle NTBs

1. **Stop NTBs at source:**
    - **APEC Cross-Cutting Principles on NTMs**, and the Best Practice Guidelines, help to mitigate and avoid NTBs
2. **Support businesses, especially MSMEs, to meet requirements**
    - Greater visibility via a **food NTM transparency mechanism**, building on the existing APEC Trade Repository (e.g. creating a single up-to-date contact point on SPS and TBT requirements)
    - Convene a **public-private dialogue on best practices for dealing with technical barriers affecting food trade** (e.g. labelling, packaging, standards, conformity assessment, import licensing) – and where useful, develop MSME capacity-building programmes
3. **Ensure that the environment is enabling for businesses**
    - Accelerate universal adoption of paperless trade including electronic SPS certification via **ACCEPT**
    - Promote **risk-based border procedures** for trusted/low-risk food traders, e.g. **APEC-wide Authorised Economic Operator programme for food businesses**


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Next steps on food NTBs

- We need to urge action from our Trade Ministers (in MRT Letter/Report and FTAAP Statement), to give direction and impetus to officials
- Exploring the possibility of a PPD on Food NTBs
- Planning to build on the report findings with a further series of presentations on case studies, including on sustainability-related NTMs
- Welcome participation and connections from members on case studies

Recommendations

- Members to endorse the research report.
- Members to encourage APEC economies to:
  - **Prioritise the application of the APEC Cross-Cutting Principles on NTMs to food trade**, through the use of the Best Practice Guidelines, with a particular focus on regulatory impact assessments
  - Establish a food **NTM transparency mechanism**, building on the existing APEC Trade Repository to create single up-to-date contact points on SPS and TBT requirements affecting food trade
  - Convene a **public-private dialogue on best practices for dealing with technical barriers affecting food trade** (e.g. labelling, packaging, standards, conformity assessment, import licensing)
  - Promote **Authorised Economic Operator programmes** to low-risk food traders
  - Accelerate universal adoption of paperless trade (including electronic SPS certification), by supporting the **APEC Centre of Excellence for Paperless Trade (ACCEPT)**