



What are Quantitative Restrictions?

Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) are measures (**excluding duties, taxes or other charges**) that prohibit or restrict the import, export or sale for export of goods. They can take the form of **outright bans or prohibitions, quotas, non-automatic licensing requirements or other measures** that have a limiting effects of trade among WTO Members.



Are all QRs prohibited by the WTO?

No. While **Article XI:1** of the GATT 1994 prohibits all QRs in general, there are other WTO provisions that allow Members to introduce them. These include carve-outs in **Article XI:2**, as well as the general (**Article XX**), and national security exceptions (**Article XXI**), among others. There are, in addition, exceptions provided for in **other WTO agreements**, such as the Agreement on Safeguards, the Agreement on Balance of Payments, and the Agreement on Agriculture. In practice, WTO Members also maintain QRs to implement obligations under **international agreements concluded outside the WTO framework**, but these also need to be justified by the WTO carve-outs and exceptions.

QRs MUST be administered fairly:

If QRs are applied by a Member, they must comply with the provisions of **Article XIII** of the GATT 1994 (non discriminatory administration of QRs).



What is the QR Decision?

Adopted in **June 2012**, the **Decision on notification procedures for quantitative restrictions (QR Decision)** establishes procedures for WTO Members to **notify** all QRs they apply.

The QR Decision:

- Enhances transparency about QRs applied by Members;
- Requires biennial “complete” notifications of all QRs in force and notification of any changes or new measures that are implemented in between the two yearly intervals;
- Allows notifications by any Member, including about QRs imposed by others;
- QR notifications are reviewed in the Committee on Market Access and can be accessed in the **WTO QR Database**.



Why does this matter?

When used, QRs can significantly affect trade flows and access into a market. The notification of all QRs promotes transparency as it:

- Enhances trust and facilitates dialogue among Members;
- Improves predictability and helps to prevent trade disputes;
- Supports policy analysis and economic forecasting.



Learn More

[WTO QR Database](#) / [WTO | Market access - Quantitative Restrictions](#) / [Quantitative Restrictions eLearning course](#)

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QR NOTIFICATIONS in practice

Currently:

- **54% of WTO Members** have notified their QRs at least once;
- More than **2,300 measures** are recorded, mostly taking the form of prohibitions or licenses;
- Most notified restrictions aim to protect **human, animal or plant life or health, the environment, and national security**.

Members have often linked these measures to other **international obligations**, such as:

- The **Montreal Protocol**;
- **UN Conventions on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances**;
- The **Chemical Weapons Convention**;
- The **CITES Convention**.



EXPLORE the QR Database

The **QR Database** is a public tool that compiles all Member notifications.

It offers:

- Searchable records by Member, product, measure type, WTO justification;
- Direct links to official documents;
- Exportable reports for analysis.