



CAP Guidelines

Factsheet prepared by the Secretariat

✓ What are conformity assessment procedures (CAPs)?



CAPs are used to demonstrate that products meet requirements in technical regulations or standards, such as safety or quality specifications. For example, to ensure consumer safety, a regulator might require that, prior to market placement, a product is tested in a laboratory and certified as meeting a particular specification.

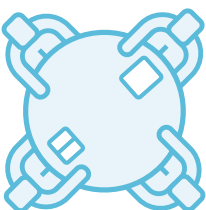
There are different types of CAPs. In some situations, conformity assessment is performed by a product's manufacturer (first-party conformity assessment); in others, this assessment involves accredited testing, inspection or certification bodies (third-party conformity assessment). These types of CAPs offer differing levels of confidence and require appropriate frameworks for their reliable use.

✓ Why do CAPs matter for trade?



1. CAPs build trust among exporters, importers, regulators and consumers, and help to bridge a "knowledge gap" between producers and consumers. This boosts consumer confidence in product safety. In this way, CAPs are an important market access enabler.
2. As supply chains grow more complex and globalized, well-functioning CAPs are becoming increasingly important for supporting international trade.
3. Trade friction may arise when CAPs differ across borders, are duplicative or lack transparency. Imagine a bicycle helmet that has been certified as safe in one economy but has to be tested again in another market to demonstrate compliance with the same requirements, adding time and costs without necessarily making a product safer.
4. In 2024-25, 64% of the specific trade concerns addressed in the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Committee) were related to CAPs.

✓ What is the TBT Committee doing with regard to CAPs?



The TBT Committee serves as a global forum in which WTO members can address trade concerns related to CAPs, exchange experiences and good practices, and develop guidance in this area. Building on its extensive work in this area, the TBT Committee adopted guidelines in March 2024 to support regulators in the choice and design of appropriate and proportionate CAPs.

✓ What are the CAP Guidelines?



1. The Guidelines set out principles and best practices to support governments in choosing and designing CAPs, so that regulators can be confident that products conform to standards and regulations, without unnecessarily hindering international trade.
2. The recommendations in the Guidelines are voluntary. They are flexible and do not favour any specific approach, allowing regulators to innovate and select the procedures most aligned with their needs, circumstances and regulatory objectives.

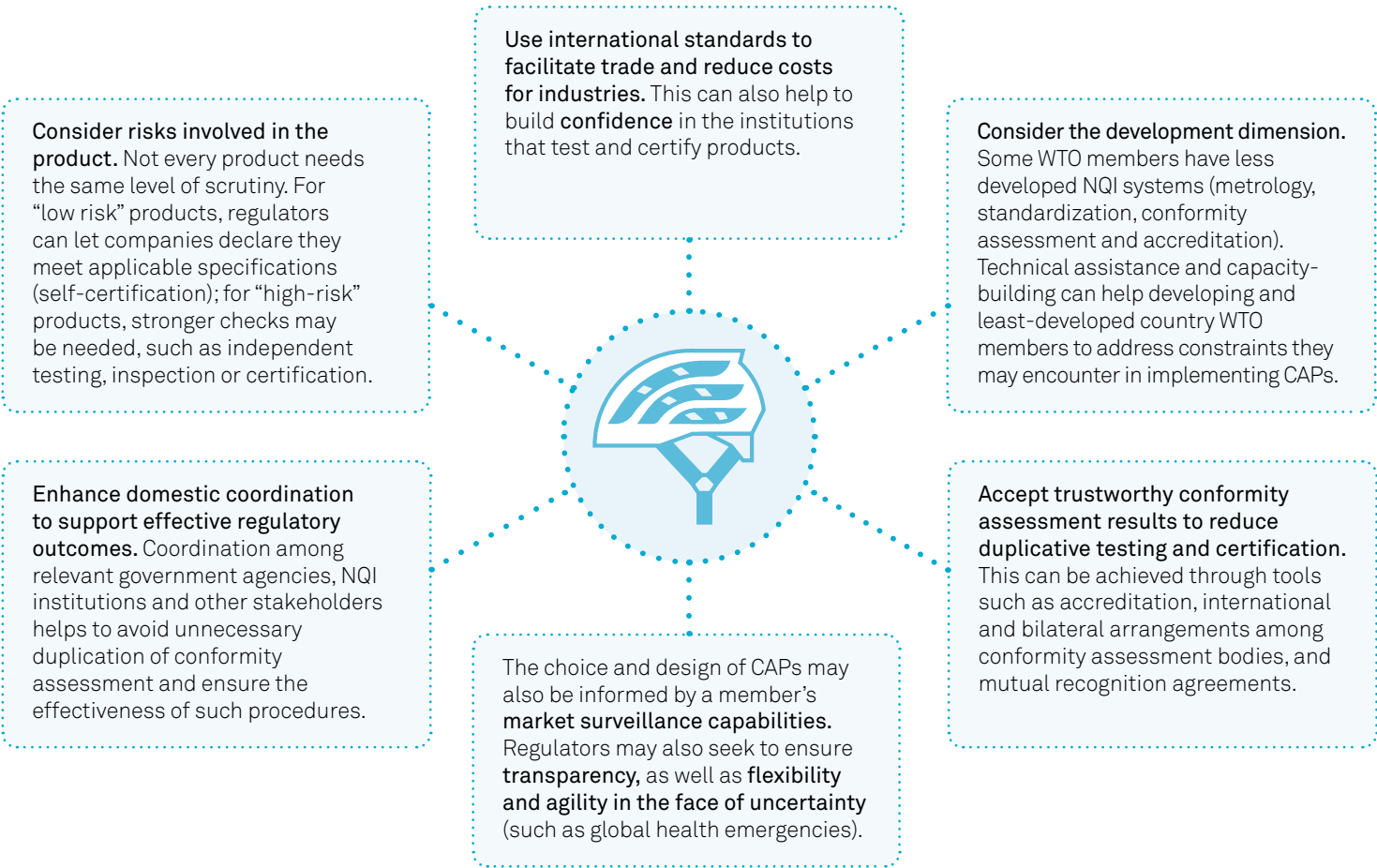
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✓ Why are the CAP Guidelines important?

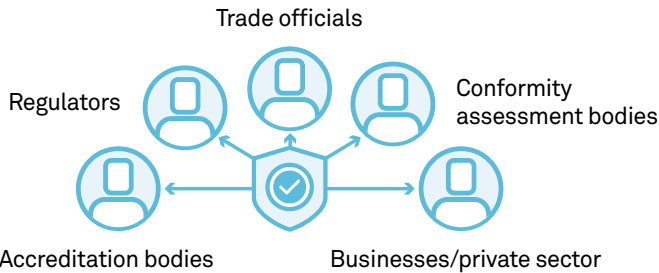


The Guidelines support members in strengthening and connecting their national quality infrastructure (NQI) systems, thereby building trust among exporters, importers, authorities and consumers. They provide trade-facilitating tools for reducing the costs associated with CAPs while maximizing their benefits.

✓ What are the key elements in the CAP Guidelines?



✓ To whom are the CAP Guidelines relevant?



✓ Resources

[WTO | Conformity assessment procedures](#) webpage

