

Standards

Afghanistan is currently in the process of developing a national standards regime. The Afghan National Standards Authority (ANSA) is an independent agency under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries and was established in 2005. ANSA is responsible for the establishment, maintenance, dissemination and enforcement of national standards and technical regulations. ANSA can be contacted at:
Telephone: +(93) 799 079 258.

ANSA was originally established based on Presidential Decree 952 in 2004 under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. At that time, it had only a symbolic role within government. In August 2007, the Council of Ministers approved ANSA as an independent entity and the Parliament of Afghanistan ratified this decision in February 2008. Soon after that, ANSA obtained membership in the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers.

ANSA's overall goal is to develop essential national standards and to enhance technical infrastructure for testing. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency helped draft a Standard Law, which was enacted by Presidential Decree 77 dated September 16, 2010. A five year strategy was developed by ANSA and will be expected to be launched at the end of February 2011. ANSA's website at www.ansa.gov.af is currently under construction.

Trade Agreements

In October 2010, one of the most important trade agreements in decades was signed by the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), which enters into force February 2011, will strengthen commercial ties across the region and promote global trade as well as contribute to greater regional security as Afghanistan and Pakistan dismantle trade barriers and work together to reduce the cost and difficulties of trade in transit.

Under APTTA, Afghan trucks will be allowed to carry Afghan exports up to the borders of India and China as well as to the rest of the world through the seaports of Karachi, Port Qasim and Gwador. The new transit regime increases the number of transport routes available to trucks from both countries lowering the cost of imports and making exports of both countries more competitive. Pakistan will benefit from easier trade into Central Asia and beyond and improved access to important raw materials for its industries. Afghanistan will gain from increased speed and efficiency in exporting its goods.

Under APTTA, there will be no customs charges for trucks in transit, and customs procedures will be simplified and harmonized to reduce costs and delays. It will also have a multiplier effect, creating jobs along transit corridors, including lodging, food services, repair shops, and service stations.

Afghanistan is a member of the [Economic Cooperation Organization \(ECO\)](#) and the [Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation \(CAREC\)](#). It became a full member of the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation \(SAARC\)](#) in the spring of 2007.

In January 2011, Afghanistan's President signed the Agreement for the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA), which will go into effect 90 days after official notification to the SAARC Secretariat. At that time, under SAFTA, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka will be required to lower tariffs immediately on many Afghan exports, with the other SAFTA countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Nepal) to follow suit over a five year period. Afghanistan has also signed bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreements with Russia and Turkey, a bilateral Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments Agreement with Turkey, a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement with India and a bilateral Investment Treaty with Germany.

Afghan products enjoy duty free and quota free access under an LDC Market Access Initiative with Canada and a Generalized Preferences Treatment agreement with Japan. Afghan products also enjoy an —Everything But Arms|| (EBA) agreement with the European Union.

As a least-developed country, Afghanistan is eligible for duty-free access to the U.S. market for approximately 5,700 products under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program. Afghanistan has signed a bilateral Investment Incentive Agreement with the United States to encourage and protect investment activities in Afghanistan through the provision of insurance and investment guarantees under the OPIC program.

In 2004, a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) was signed with the United States which institutionalized economic relations between the U.S. and Afghanistan. Since that time, there have been annual meetings of the U.S. – Afghanistan Council on Trade and Investment, established under the auspices of the TIFA, to further the bilateral cooperation needed to achieve Afghanistan’s goals of creating an environment conducive to economic reform, private sector development and trade expansion.

Afghanistan became an observer to the [World Trade Organization](#) (WTO) in December 2004 and established a Working Party (WP) to begin membership negotiations. The WTO Secretariat scheduled the first meeting for Afghanistan’s Working Party for January 31, 2011 as the Afghan Government had replied to all questions submitted by WTO members on the Afghan Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR). This Memorandum, which Afghanistan submitted on March 31, 2009, outlines all aspects of a country’s trade and legal regime, and is among the first steps in the accession process. The U.S. Government, through USAID’s Trade and Accession Facilitation for Afghanistan (TAFA) project, has been providing technical assistance for such trade regime reform. USTR estimates accession negotiations will take a number of years, though should be somewhat less contentious since Afghanistan is a Least Developed Country (LDC), which can limit concession requests during negotiations.

Web Resources

U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) <http://www.bis.doc.gov/>

U.S. Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)

<http://www.treasury.gov/about/organizational-structure/offices/Pages/Office-of-Foreign-Assets-Control.aspx>

Afghan Customs Department (ACD) <http://www.customs.gov.af/>

Afghan Ministry of Finance <http://www.mof.gov.af/>

Afghan National Standards Authority (ANSA) <http://www.ansa.gov.af/>

World Trade Organization (WTO) <http://www.wto.org/>

Afghan Ministry of Finance <http://www.mof.gov.af/>

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) <http://www.ecosecretariat.org/>

Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) <http://www.adb.org/carec/>

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) <http://www.saarc-sec.org/>

Office of the U.S. Trade Representative <http://www.ustr.gov/>

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) <http://www.unctad.org/> [Turkish](#)

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/>

Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mofa.go.jp/>

Gateway to the European Union http://europa.eu/index_en.htm/

Indian Ministry of Commerce <http://www.commerce.nic.in/>