Turkmenistan’s WTO Accession

Session 1: What will WTO accession mean for Turkmen businesses?

Understand	Assess	Act

How WTO rules translate into business conditions, decisions, and engagement with government

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What this session should help you do

1
Understand the channels through which WTO accession can affect companies

2
Distinguish WTO rules and commitments from actual business effects

3
Identify the information needed before judging whether a change is an opportunity or a risk

Core perspective for today: “What does this mean for my business?”

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Three common assumptions to test

“WTO accession means tariffs go to zero.”

“WTO rules prevent governments from regulating.”

“WTO accession mostly matters for exporters.”

Quick interaction: true, false, or “it depends”?

The answer will often be: it depends on the specific commitment, the sector, and the firm.

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Accession is a negotiated process



Business implication: final effects depend on the commitments Turkmenistan negotiates, not on WTO Membership in the abstract.

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What WTO accession changes - and what it does not

Likely changes


More predictable trade policy



Commitments on tariffs and trade measures


Greater transparency and publication of rules


Disciplines on licensing, customs and standards


Rules governing State support and services

Common misconceptions


No automatic duty-free access


No ban on legitimate regulation


No automatic export success


No identical impact on all firms


No end to all government support

WTO disciplines the way trade policy is designed and administered.

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What does the international evidence suggest?

Campos et al. (2025) summarize 71 empirical studies and estimate that WTO Membership is associated with higher trade. Use this as context for Turkmenistan, not as a mechanical forecast.

+23 %

WTO Members trade more

Average increase when both partners are WTO Members; +14% when only one partner is a member.

38–54 %

Effects beyond tariffs

Structural-gravity estimates capture tariff and non-tariff channels associated with Membership.

2–3x

Sectors differ

Estimated effects are larger for agriculture and manufacturing than for services.

Implications for Turkmenistan

The findings support the idea that WTO accession can matter through predictability, transparency, non-tariff disciplines and market integration, not only through tariff reductions.
But the size and distribution of benefits depend on Turkmenistan's negotiated commitments, domestic reforms, sector structure and firm readiness.

Source: Campos, Larch, Timini, Vidal and Yotov (2025),
Does the WTO Promote Trade? A Meta-analysis. International evidence, not a country-specific prediction.

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How does a WTO commitment reach my company?



This is the analytical chain for the whole workshop.

We will use it first with hypothetical cases, then with real Turkmen sector and product cases.

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Tariffs: binding is not the same as reduction

Applied tariff What is charged today at the border	Bound tariff Maximum ceiling committed in the WTO	Business question Does the commitment change the applied rate?

Illustration

Applied: 10%	Bound: 15%	Immediate tariff cut? No

A WTO tariff commitment may create future predictability without changing the tariff paid today.

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Schedule of Tariff Concessions

Each WTO Member has a Schedule of Tariff Concessions, which can be accessed via the *WTO Documents Online* database (https://docs.wto.org/).

The following is an example of the EU's Schedule of Tariff Concessions for "*Cotton yarn (other than sewing thread), containing less than 85% by weight of cotton, not up for retail sale*":

Tariff item number	Description of products	Bound rate of duty	Special safeguard	Initial negotiating right	Comments
1	2	3	4	5	6
5206	Cotton yarn (other than sewing thread), containing less than 85 % by weight of cotton, not put up for retail sale:				
	-Single yarn, of uncombed fibres:				
5206 11 00	--Measuring 714,29 decitex or more (not exceeding 14 metric number)	4			
5206 12 00	--Measuring less than 714,29 decitex but not less than 232,56 decitex (exceeding 14 metric number but not exceeding 43 metric number)	4			
5206 13 00	--Measuring less than 232,56 decitex but not less than 192,31 decitex (exceeding 43 metric number but not exceeding 52 metric number)	4			
5206 14 00	--Measuring less than 192,31 decitex but not less than 125 decitex (exceeding 52 metric number but not exceeding 80 metric number)	4			
5206 15 00	--Measuring less than 125 decitex (exceeding 80 metric number)	4			
	-Single yarn, of combed fibres:				
5206 21 00	--Measuring 714,29 decitex or more (not exceeding 14 metric number)	4			

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Market access conditions

The Schedule of Tariff Concessions does not provide all the information that businesses may need to determine the actual conditions applicable to imports of their products into WTO Members' markets, including the applied MFN rates and the applicable regulatory requirements.

Such information may instead be accessed through the *International Trade Centre*'s *Market Access Map* database (https://www.intracen.org/resources/tools/market-access-map) and/or other databases.

For instance, the EU's *Access2Markets* portal provides information and guidance to businesses seeking to access the EU market.



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Market access conditions

The following is an example of the market access conditions in Italy (EU) for "*Cotton yarn (other than sewing thread), containing less than 85% by weight of cotton, not up for retail sale*" originating in Turkmenistan:

Customs tariffs

Customs tariffs are charges levied by the importing country on foreign goods crossing its border.

TARIFF YEAR

2026 (HS Rev.2022)

Tariff regime	Applied Tariff	AVE	Note
MFN duties (Applied)	4%	4%	

190. Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan is listed as one of the countries eligible for this tariff regime in 2026

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Market access conditions

Trade remedies ⓘ

Italy does not apply any trade remedy on the selected product.

Regulatory requirements ⓘ

NTM YEAR ⓘ

2026

Import requirements applied to this product	Total measures 3
B220 - Restricted use of certain substances ⓘ	1
B310 - Labelling requirements ⓘ	1
B820 - Testing requirement ⓘ	1

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Market access conditions

B310 - Labelling requirements ⓘ 1 ▲

Labelling requirements

Legislation title : Labelling for textiles

Legislation summary : "Labelling for textiles: Textile products may only be placed on the European Union (EU) market provided that they are labelled, marked or accompanied with commercial documents in compliance with Regulation (EU) No 1007/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L-272 18/10/2011) (CELEX 32011R1007). The main purpose of the Regulation is to ensure that consumers, when purchasing textile products, are given an accurate indication of their fibre composition. Labelling and marking requirements: General requirements When placing a textile product on the market, the manufacturer, distributor or importer must ensure the supply of the label or marking indicating the fibre composition of the product. The information must be accurate, not misleading and easily understandable. The label or mark shall be durable, easily legible, visible, accessible and, in the case of a label, securely attached. Besides, it shall be provided in the official language or languages of the Member State where the product is offered to the consumer unless otherwise is provided by the Member State concerned. The information provided on the labels should not contain abbreviations, with the exception of mechanised processing codes, or where the abbreviations are defined in international standards. For textile products listed in Annex V, labelling or marking bearing the fibre name or composition is not mandatory. Specific requirements Only textile products exclusively composed of the same fibre may be labelled or marked as ""100 %"", ""pure"" or ""all"". Multi-fibre textile products shall be labelled or marked with the name and percentage by weight of all constituent fibres in descending order. Fibres not yet listed in Annex I or fibres accounting for less than 5% of the total weight, may be designated as “Other fibres”, immediately preceded or followed by their total percentage by weight. Textile product containing two or more textile components which have different textile fibre contents shall"

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The same tariff change can affect firms differently

Domestic producer May face lower-priced imports	Importer / distributor May face lower landed cost	Exporter using imported inputs May become more competitive

Do not ask only: “Will imports increase?”

Also ask: “Which inputs do I use? What happens to my costs? Can I upgrade or export?”

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Licensing and restrictions: uncertainty is a business cost

Before reform

Discretionary approval
Unclear timing
Higher inventories



After reform

Objective criteria
Defined deadlines
More predictable sourcing

Business effects may come from lower uncertainty, not only from lower tariffs.

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Customs and trade facilitation: days at the border matter

Documentation	Valuation	Release time	Predictability

For an SME, delays can mean:

- Higher working-capital needs;
- Late delivery to customers;
- Lost contracts or penalties;
- Larger inventories; and/or
- Higher final prices.

Trade facilitation is a competitiveness issue.

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Technical regulations, standards, TBT and SPS: market access is not just tariffs

WTO rules do not abolish legitimate regulation.

Technical regulations / standards (TBT)
Product characteristics, labeling, marking, testing, and certification through conformity assessment procedures

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements
Food safety, animal health, and plant protection

Business implication: compliance capability can be as important as tariff treatment.

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State support: the design matters

Not the right question

“Will WTO accession ban all subsidies?”

Better questions

What is the support?
Who receives it?
What conditions are attached?
Is it linked to exports or local content?

Some support can continue;
prohibited or problematic measures may need redesign.

Firms should know which public measures they rely on and how those measures are structured.

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Services matter to goods producers too

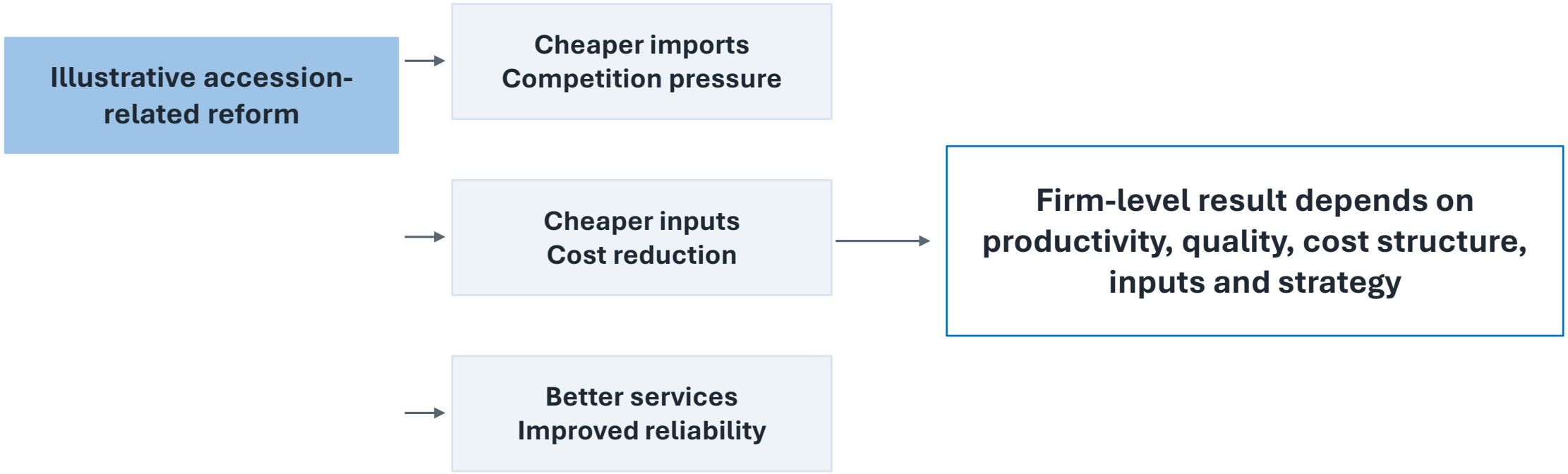
Logistics	**Finance**	**Telecoms / digital**	**Distribution**	**Professional services**

Services are inputs into export competitiveness.

Customs tariffs do not apply to services; effects arise through cost, quality, availability and regulation.
Lower cost or better quality services can help firms compete internationally.

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One change can create pressure and opportunity at the same time



There is rarely a simple WTO "winner" or "loser".

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Five questions every business should ask

1. What could change?
2. Which competitors are affected?
3. Which inputs and services are affected?
4. What new market opportunities arise?
5. What can we do to respond?

This is a business diagnostic, not a legal checklist.

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Why private-sector input matters during accession

Government negotiators need evidence

Businesses know operational constraints

Dialogue helps identify priorities

Useful inputs from firms include:

- Sensitive products and why they are sensitive;
- Imported inputs and services affecting competitiveness;
- Export-market barriers and compliance problems; and
- Standards, licensing or Customs bottlenecks.

The aim is evidence-based dialogue, not only requests for protection.

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Kazakhstan experience: structured business dialogue

Suggested discussion points for Amb. Zhanar Aitzhan

What information was requested from firms?

Which private-sector inputs were useful?

What mistakes should be avoided?

How can consultation continue after the training?

What lessons are relevant for Turkmenistan?

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Exercise 1: From WTO rule to business impact

Step 1
What changes?

Step 2
What does NOT change?

Step 3
Which business channel?

Step 4
Who benefits / who faces pressure?

Step 5
What information is missing?

Step 6
What could the company do?

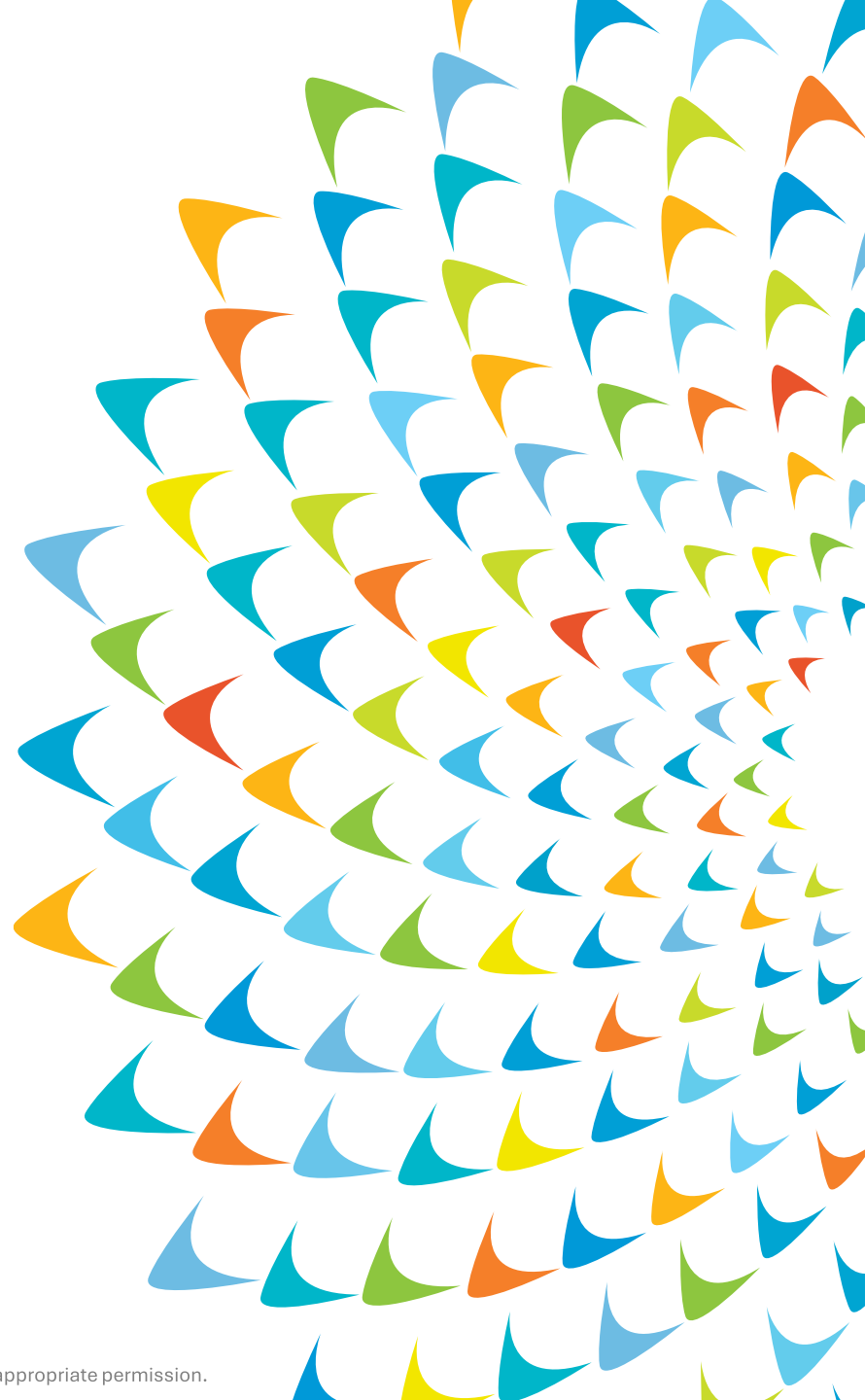
Step 7
Government issue? Domestic reform or accession?

Your task: do not jump from a WTO rule to a conclusion.
Trace what changes, what does not change, and how the business effect arises.

Report back in 3 minutes: change + what does not change → main business effect → missing information → firm response → government issue.

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Thank you!



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