Trade Barriers in India

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Any restriction imposed on the free flow of trade is a trade barrier. Trade barriers can either be tariff barriers (the levy of ordinary negotiated customs duties in accordance with Article II of the GATT) or non-tariff barriers, which are any trade barriers other than tariff barriers.

**Import Licensing:** One of the most common non-tariff barriers is the prohibition or restrictions on imports maintained through import licensing requirements. Though India has eliminated its import licensing requirements for most consumer goods, certain products face licensing related trade barriers. For example, the Indian government requires a special import license for motorcycles and vehicles that is very restrictive. Import licenses for motorcycles are provided to only foreign nationals permanently residing in India, working in India for foreign firms that hold greater than 30 percent equity or to foreign nations working at embassies and foreign missions. Some domestic importers are allowed to import vehicles without a license provided the imports are counterbalanced by exports attributable to the same importer.

**Standards, testing, labeling & certification:** The Indian government has identified 109 commodities that must be certified by its National Standards body, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). The idea behind these certifications is to ensure the quality of goods seeking access into the market, but many countries use them as protectionist measures. For more on how this relates to labeling requirements, please see the section on Labeling and Marking Requirements in this chapter.

**Anti-dumping and countervailing measures:** Anti-dumping and countervailing measures are permitted by the WTO Agreements in specified situations to protect the domestic industry from serious injury arising from dumped or subsidized imports. India imposes these from time-to-time to protect domestic manufacturers from dumping. India's implementation of its antidumping policy has, in some cases, raised concerns regarding transparency and due process. In recent years, India
seems to have aggressively increased its application of the antidumping law. In the first half of the calendar year 2006 India topped the list of countries initiating new anti-dumping investigations with 20 new initiations.

**Export subsidies and domestic support:** Several export subsidies and other domestic support is provided to several industries to make them competitive internationally. Export earnings are exempt from taxes and exporters are not subject to local manufacturing tax. While export subsidies tend to displace exports from other countries into third country markets, the domestic support acts as a direct barrier against access to the domestic market.

**Procurement:** The Indian government allows a price preference for local suppliers in government contracts and generally discriminates against foreign suppliers. In international purchases and International Competitive Bids (ICB's) domestic companies gets a price preference in government contract and purchases.

**Service barriers:** Services in which there are restrictions include: insurance, banking, securities, motion pictures, accounting, construction, architecture and engineering, retailing, legal services, express delivery services and telecommunication.

**Other barriers:** Equity restrictions and other trade-related investment measures are in place to give an unfair advantage to domestic companies. The GOI continues to limit or prohibit FDI in sensitive sectors such as retail trade and agriculture. Additionally there is an unpublished policy that favors counter trade. Several Indian companies, both government-owned and private, conduct a small amount of counter trade.

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