

## NEWS – ECIPE PRESS RELEASE – NEW POLICY BRIEF

# Seeing the Forest and the Trees: Recent Developments in the US Tariff Landscape

By **Lucian Cernat**, Head of Global Regulatory Cooperation and Public Procurement Negotiations, DG TRADE

**Brussels, 18 September 2025** - A [new ECIPE Policy Brief](#) sheds light on the increasingly complex landscape of US tariffs, revealing that recent increases in tariff rates have resulted in a system that is far more difficult to navigate than intended. While tariffs are often viewed by policymakers as the simplest trade policy tool, the brief shows that their cumulative implementation has created an intricate web of duties that disproportionately burdens small and medium-sized businesses.

The combination of thousands of products and hundreds of origin countries has generated a matrix of more than 3 million tariff data points. This vast array of tariff data makes it nearly impossible for analysts to gain a clear overview without relying on simplification methods.

To address this, the brief adopts a commonly used method, using average sectoral and national tariff rates, rather than the myriads of tariffs faced by individual products. While this approach does not capture every nuance, it allows policymakers and stakeholders to observe broader trends and the growing intricacies in trade policy.

***"Compared with other trade policy instruments, tariffs are generally considered as one of the simplest tools to influence trade flows,"*** the brief notes. ***"In reality, the vast number of traded products and the varying tariff rules by product and country make the system so complex that even tariff experts struggle to obtain a full and accurate picture,"*** argues Lucian Cernat, the author of the study.

The study emphasises that small and medium-sized importers and exporters are hit hardest by the new US tariffs. Without the resources to hire specialised trade

compliance teams to deal with the unexpected tariff complexity, these businesses face significant disadvantages and potential trade losses. The brief calls for greater advocacy in favour of existing trade facilitation tools like the European Commission's "Access2Markets" portal, a tool that greatly simplifies the issues surrounding tariffs and other applicable trade rules (e.g., rules of origin, non-tariff measures such as SPS, TBT and customs formalities).

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**Media inquiries:** [info@ecipe.org](mailto:info@ecipe.org) or +32 2 289 13 50

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