

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-399](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Monitoring and enforcing trade agreements is a key element of the U.S. government's efforts to boost exports of U.S. goods and services. The vast majority of U.S. exports, which totaled \$2.26 trillion in 2015, are covered by at least one trade agreement to which the United States is a party. These agreements include multilateral World Trade Organization agreements and bilateral or regional FTAs with 20 countries. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and several other federal agencies share responsibility for monitoring and enforcing partner countries' compliance with trade agreements. The U.S. government also provides trade capacity-building assistance, which includes goals to help partner countries meet their obligations under trade agreements.

The Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015, Public Law 114-25, includes a provision for GAO to examine federal agencies' resources to monitor and enforce international trade agreements. This report (1) examines agencies' resources and activities for monitoring and enforcing international trade agreements in fiscal year 2016 and (2) identifies agencies' trade capacity-building projects, active in fiscal year 2016, to assist FTA partner countries in meeting their obligations under these agreements. GAO reviewed agency documents, interviewed agency officials, and analyzed agencies' estimates of resources used to monitor and enforce trade agreements.

GAO is making no recommendations in this report.

View [GAO-17-399](#). For more information, contact Kimberly Gianopoulos at (202) 512-8612 or gianopoulosk@gao.gov.

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TRADE ENFORCEMENT

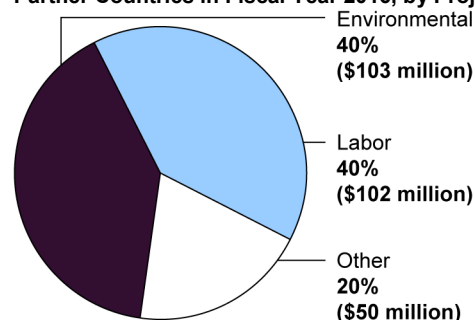
Information on U.S. Agencies' Monitoring and Enforcement Resources for International Trade Agreements

What GAO Found

Eleven U.S. agency offices and bureaus have responsibilities for monitoring and enforcing international trade agreements; however, they do not have information that allows for a definitive count of the staff resources and related funding used to carry out these responsibilities. This is because many of the staff who conduct trade monitoring and enforcement activities at these agencies do so as part of a broader portfolio of activities, and none of the agencies routinely tracks staff time at this level of detail. In response to GAO's request for information, the 11 offices and bureaus used a variety of methods to develop estimates of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff they believe worked on trade monitoring and enforcement activities in 2016 and the approximate costs associated with salaries and benefits for these FTEs. The estimates suggest that in fiscal year 2016, these 11 offices and bureaus dedicated over 700 FTEs at a cost of more than \$100 million to monitor and enforce trade agreements. However, the estimates do not fully include all related costs (such as overhead costs) and, in some cases, may not represent all staff who conducted trade monitoring and enforcement activities.

U.S. agencies provide trade capacity-building assistance to help partner countries meet their obligations under free trade agreements (FTA) with the United States, such as their labor and environmental commitments. In fiscal year 2016, U.S. agencies oversaw 80 trade capacity-building projects intended to help partner countries meet their obligations as parties to FTAs. These projects, many of which spanned multiple years, amounted to about \$256 million in obligated and planned funding. About 80 percent of project funding was related to helping partner countries comply with labor or environmental commitments.

Distribution of Funding for Trade Capacity-Building Projects Active in Free Trade Agreement Partner Countries in Fiscal Year 2016, by Project Objective



Source: GAO analysis of data provided by the Departments of Labor and State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. | GAO-17-399