14.3 per cent, with African countries and least-developed countries (LDCs) forecast to enjoy the biggest average reduction in trade costs. Full implementation could also reduce the average time needed to import by 47 per cent and cut export time by more than 90 per cent (WTO, 2015c). For every dollar of assistance provided to support trade facilitation reform in developing countries, the World Bank estimates that there is a return of up to US$ 70 in economic benefits.[11]

A number of governmental, regional and inter-governmental organizations are actively working on the implementation of paperless trade measures. For example, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (UNESCAP) Framework Arrangement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, adopted in June 2016, aims to facilitate cross-border paperless trade among willing ESCAP member states by enabling cross-border mutual recognition of trade-related data and documents in electronic form and providing a dedicated intergovernmental framework to develop legal and technical solutions. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) developed a series of some 40 recommendations (UNECE, 2017) to simplify, standardize and harmonize trade procedures and information flows, some of which are directly related to the use of electronic means and electronic data structure standards for information exchange. UN/CEFACT also develops base semantics to help enable electronic exchange of information. Parties to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), a multilateral agreement deposited with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that aims to protect plant health by preventing the introduction and spread of plant pests, adopted a standard that describes principles and guidelines for the preparation and issue of electronic phytosanitary certificates. The IPPC, with support from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), recently launched a Global ePhyto Hub to facilitate exchanges of ePhyto certificates, in particular among developing countries: an exporting national plant protection organization can transfer an ePhyto certificate via a secure system to the hub, which will then transfer it to the importing country's "mailbox".[12]

A growing number of economies are also moving beyond simple customs automation systems, pioneered by ASYCUDA (i.e. Automated System for Customs Data), the computerized customs management system developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), towards more integrated and sophisticated platforms: the single window, i.e. a "facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export and transit related regulatory requirements."[13] Such initiatives are increasingly integrating electronic certificates, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Single Window, which has agreed a protocol for the exchange of electronic certificates of origin among some of its member states and is exploring the establishment of an electronic