

Cao Bang

Provincial performance in implementing Free Trade Agreements

Average

BAND 5 OF 6

PERFORMANCE TIER

Average

Band 5 of 6 — **26th of 34** assessed provinces and cities.

OVERALL SCORE

17.54

 / 40

The score is **4.12 points** below the national average of 21.66.

WEAKEST PILLAR

33 / 34

Sustainable development — the widest gap of the four pillars (**-2.82**).

FOUR PILLARS AT A GLANCE

A INFORMATION ACCESS

RANK 28 / 34

3.21

 / 10

-1.58 vs avg

B LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION

RANK 23 / 34

4.23

 / 10

-0.98 vs avg

C SUPPORT POLICIES

RANK 4 / 34

6.95

 / 10

+1.13 vs avg

D SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

RANK 33 / 34

3.15

 / 10

-2.82 vs avg

★ KEY RELATIVE STRENGTHS

- #1 C4 — FTA commitments utilised (highest nationally)
- #2 C1 — FTA utilisation
- #7 A2 — Authorities providing FTA information
- #7 B6 — Frequency of enterprise feedback on legal documents related to FTA commitments

CRITICAL AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

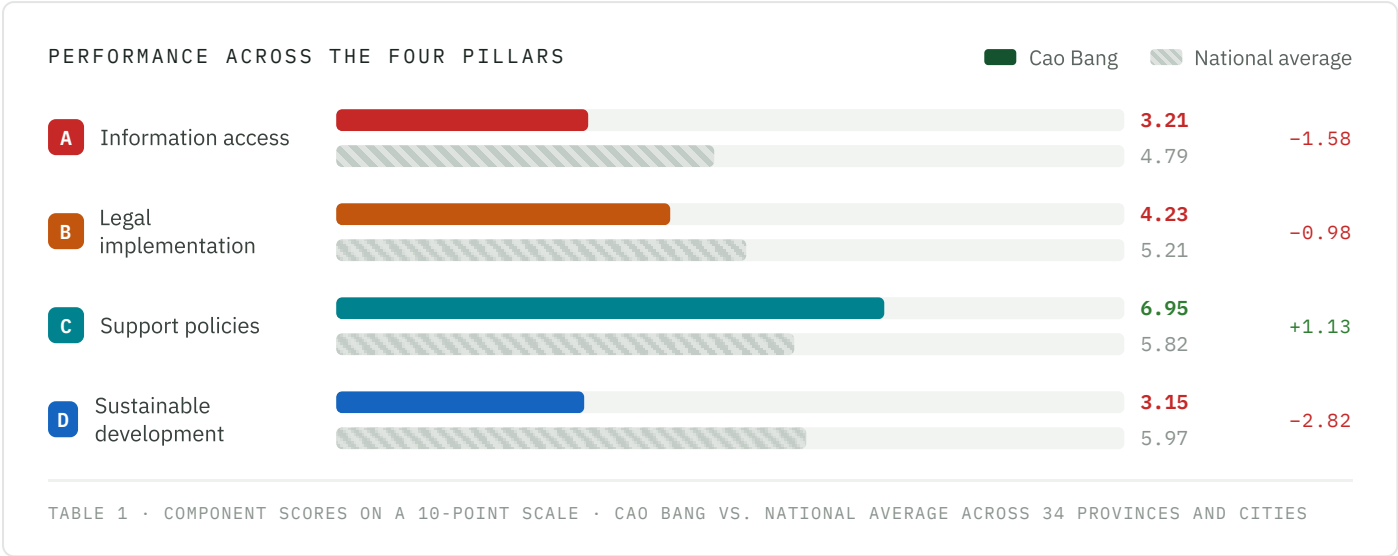
- #33 D1 — Understanding of sustainable development commitments
- #33 A1 — Knowledge of FTAs
- #32 A4 — Quality of FTA information relative to business needs
- #31 B1 — Understanding of legal documents

SOURCE: FTA INDEX 2025, PREPARED BY FOREIGN TRADE UNIVERSITY FOR THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE; SURVEY OF 4,066 IMPORT-EXPORT ENTERPRISES. COMPONENT SCORES ARE REPORTED ON A 10-POINT SCALE AND THE OVERALL SCORE ON A 40-POINT SCALE. RANKINGS COVER 34 PROVINCES AND CITIES.

01 Overview of results

Cao Bang scored **17.54 out of 40**, ranking **26th of 34** and sitting in the “Average” tier, **4.12 points** below the national average of 21.66. The province presents a stark paradox: its firms are **among the most active FTA users in the country** — first nationally on the range of FTA commitments utilised and **2nd** on overall FTA utilisation — yet **the local support system remains thin**. Access to support policy ranks near the bottom of the table, the quality of information supplied does not meet business needs, and capacity to meet sustainable development requirements is weak. That leaves

considerable room for the province to widen and sharpen its support , particularly in meeting the core and most pressing needs of firms.



Key finding

Enterprises utilise FTAs extensively despite receiving limited support. Even modest investment in support and trade promotion could therefore produce substantial gains.

Border-trade advantage

Enterprises make particularly effective use of border-trade opportunities with China under RCEP and ASEAN, supporting Cao Bang's leading national position in FTA commitments utilised.

02 Detailed analysis by component

A

COMPONENT 1

Information access

3.21 /10

RANK 28 / 34 · -1.58

OVERVIEW

Firms reach information mainly through mass channels — press, television and social media (A3, 14th). Other routes — the local government website and Zalo account — barely reach firms at all. Notably, only large and FDI firms use the more specialised channels such as conferences, seminars and training; most small firms are unaware these exist. The Department of Industry and Trade remains the main information provider, with little involvement from sector-specific agencies (A2, 7th).

BY FIRM TYPE

On the quality of FTA communication events, large firms rate them far more positively (100%) than small firms (25%). Most large firms learn of events through state online portals, while small firms must find out through other sources. The quality of the information firms do reach (A8) is generally rated positively.

Cao Bang

3.21

National average

4.79

NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

- #7 Authorities providing FTA information
- #14 Channels through which enterprises access information on FTAs
- #33 Knowledge of FTAs
- #32 Quality of FTA information relative to business needs
- #31 Quality of FTA-related information on the online portal



COMPONENT 2

Implementation of Legal Documents

4.23 /10

RANK 23 / 34 · -0.98

OVERVIEW

Business participation in feedback and consultation on the legal documents (B6) stands out at **7th** nationally; participation in training (B5) ranks **15th**; and local authorities' uptake of enterprise feedback (B7) ranks **18th**. Firms are therefore relatively proactive in taking part in implementing and refining policy.

THE GAP BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Understanding of the legal documents (B1) and the quality of guidance on those documents (B3), however, both rank only **31st**. That is a marked gap between willingness to participate and capacity to implement: firms contribute views actively but still lack the legal knowledge and practical guidance to apply the rules with confidence.

Cao Bang

4.23

National average

5.21

NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

#7 Frequency of enterprise feedback on legal documents related to FTA commitments

#15 Frequency of participation in training on legal documents

#18 Uptake of enterprise feedback by local authorities

#24 Frequency of local-authority guidance on legal documents

#31 Understanding of legal documents

#31 Quality of guidance on legal documents



COMPONENT 3

Policies Supporting Enterprises' FTA Utilisation

6.95 /10

RANK 4 / 34 · +1.13

OVERVIEW

This is the only pillar where Cao Bang beats the national average.

The province ranks first nationally on the range of FTA commitments utilised by firms (C4), **2nd** on self-assessed FTA utilisation (C1) and **3rd** on FTA utilisation activities (C3). Among the commitments utilised (C4), tariff preferences are the most widely used — 75% among small firms and 100% among both medium-sized and large firms. Access to local support policy, however, sits at only **32nd** and trade promotion activity ranks **29th** — the high utilisation comes from firms' own efforts rather than from the public support system.

BY FIRM TYPE

Use of the intellectual property commitments differs sharply: 100% of FDI firms exploit this group, against just 11.1% of private domestic firms. As many as 75% of small and medium-sized firms cite an unclear grasp of the commitments as a major obstacle; small firms also struggle to find partners and reach market information, both at 50%. Among private domestic firms, support on capital, credit and connection with foreign firms each draws 66.7% positive ratings, while training support on FTA-related content reaches only 33.3%.

Cao Bang

6.95

National average

5.82

NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

#1 FTA commitments utilised

#2 FTA utilisation

#3 FTA utilisation activities

#6 Barriers to FTA utilisation

#29 Participation in trade promotion programmes

#32 Access to competitiveness support policies



OVERVIEW

Sustainable development is Cao Bang's greatest weakness across all four pillars, concentrated in awareness and support quality.

Firms' knowledge of the sustainable development commitments in FTAs (D1) ranks **33rd**, perceived impact of those commitments (D2) ranks **32nd**, the effectiveness of support from local authorities (D4) ranks **31st**, and the perceived importance of complying with import-market sustainable development commitments (D5) ranks **29th**. Readiness to comply (D3) and the forms of support (D6) both rank **24th**. Sustainable development is not yet fully integrated into the local trade agenda, even as EVFTA and CPTPP markets keep raising their standards.

BY FIRM TYPE

On knowledge (D1), not one response from small or large firms indicated partial or full understanding of the sustainability commitments. On readiness (D3), 50% of FDI firm responses reported having a plan or already implementing compliance measures, well above the 21.7% among private domestic firms. Most domestic firms still lack both the awareness and the capacity to adapt to rising sustainability requirements.

Cao Bang

3.15

National average

5.97

NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

#24 Readiness to comply with sustainable development commitments

#24 Forms of support for compliance with sustainable development commitments

#29 Perceived importance of compliance with import-market sustainable development commitments

#31 Effectiveness of support from local authorities

#32 Perceived impact of sustainable development commitments

#33 Understanding of sustainable development commitments

03 Conclusions & implications

STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON

- **First nationally on exploiting FTA commitments:** firms are notably effective at exploiting border-trade opportunities under RCEP and ASEAN.
- **Firms engage actively in policy feedback:** **7th** on participation in consultation, **15th** on participation in FTA training.
- **The Department of Industry and Trade is an effective FTA information hub** (**7th**), a role worth sustaining while broadening to sector departments such as Agriculture and Environment, and Science and Technology.

CRITICAL AREAS TO IMPROVE

- **Capacity to meet sustainability requirements is severely limited:** knowledge ranks **33rd**, perceived impact **32nd** and the effectiveness of support from local authorities **31st**.
- **The business support ecosystem is undeveloped:** access to support policy ranks **32nd**, trade promotion **29th** — in stark contrast to the highest FTA utilisation in the country.
- **Information quality and depth do not meet demand:** the quality of information supplied ranks **32nd**, FTA information on the online portal **31st** and forecasting and import-export market-orientation information **25th**.

What to do next

build institutions to match what firms need

NOW • 0–12 MONTHS

NEXT • 1–3 YEARS

1 An FTA point of contact

A provincial focal point with regular guidance, an online portal, Zalo & a bulletin on border-trade rules.

Pillar A • 28th → higher

2 Practical guidance

Turn active business participation into implementation capacity through clear, usable legal guidance material.

Pillar B • 23rd → higher

3 A sustainable development programme

Compliance support on environmental & labour commitments for exporters facing EVFTA/CPTPP standards.

Pillar D • 33rd → higher

4 Higher-value trade

Build greater commercial value from the broad range of commitments already used, especially sustainable development commitments.

Institutional capacity



TARGET

Move from the “Average” tier to “Fair” by building a support ecosystem that matches enterprises’ strong demand.