Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding Systems (HS)

The Harmonized System is an international nomenclature for the classification of products. It allows participating countries to classify traded goods on a common basis for customs purposes. At the international level, the Harmonized System (HS) for classifying goods is a six-digit code system.  
  
The HS comprises approximately 5,300 article/product descriptions that appear as headings and subheadings, arranged in 99 chapters, grouped in 21 sections. The six digits can be broken down into three parts. The first two digits (HS-2) identify the chapter the goods are classified in, e.g. 09 = Coffee, Tea, Maté and Spices. The next two digits (HS-4) identify groupings within that chapter, e.g. 09.02 = Tea, whether or not flavoured. The next two digits (HS-6) are even more specific, e.g. 09.02.10 Green tea (not fermented)... Up to the HS-6 digit level, all countries classify products in the same way (a few exceptions exist where some countries apply old versions of the HS).

The amendments (split, merge, change in scope) between the latest HS edition and its previous edition are maintained by WCO. UNSD then harmonizes those relationships in to 1-to-1, 1-to-n, n-to-1 and n-to-1 and extends the correspondences to earlier HS editions, SITC and BEC.