

Trade Tariff moves on-line

If you are importing or exporting goods, you'll need to classify your goods for the purposes of Customs declarations and paying the correct amount of duty, VAT and excise.

From this month, www.businesslink.gov.uk will launch a free online version of the UK Trade Tariff. Covering volume two within a user-friendly interface, the site will give access to the 64,000 commodity codes that cover every product imported and exported from the UK.

Features will include a browse and search facility that will allow users to classify goods and quickly find detailed information such as commodity descriptions, duty rates, antidumping duties, quotas, VAT and excise rates, preferential agreements, government controls and explanatory notes for any commodity in the UK Tariff. There will be daily data updates from the European Union's TARIC database and the HMRC Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system.

Additional information such as guides, helplines and links to other websites will be included in appropriate sections, chapters and headings within the UK Trade Tariff. This will provide a wide range of information and guidance, not available in other tariff products. The ability to download information in PDF files will make management and storage of relevant information easier.

Traders will be able to create their own secure profile, including a bookmarking function so they can easily gain repeated access to chapters, headings and commodities they are interested in. Users will also be able to add their own personalised notes to chapters, headings and commodities in the tariff.

The UK Trade Tariff will also have context sensitive help to aid the user in the classification process, as well as a tool to enable users to identify the Meursing code for milk and sugar products and quickly see the related measures and duty rates.

Planned enhancements for the UK Trade Tariff include:

- an email alerts service so that users can be updated when anything changes within the Tariff that they've registered an interest in;
- a tool to highlight relevant documents, licences and permits that apply to each commodity code;
- a tool to identify the relevant Customs Procedure Code (CPC), which states the nature of the movement of goods for declaration purposes.

All the information is written in plain English with traders in mind. It answers problems that they have or are facing and the content is drawn together from government departments and trade associations. The guidance is kept up-to-date using a network of government and trade experts.

Information on the site is grouped into a logical sequence covers the following subjects:

- the basics around import, export and paperwork
- how to sell and promote your business in overseas markets
- practical ways of complying with rules and regulations affecting importing and exporting
- specific regulations that cover specific industry sectors
- how to classify your goods, including difficult to classify products and what you'll need to pay in terms of duty, VAT and excise
- getting paid and managing risk and duty reliefs
- how to make declarations and submissions to government departments
- how to plan and prepare your goods for transportation
- overviews of trading with different countries around the world.

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A transaction service will allow UK businesses to complete and send international trade government submissions safely and securely via the Government Gateway.

As part of the International Trade Single Window project, the international trade theme on www.businesslink.gov.uk will be one place that businesses can visit to understand what they need to comply with to import and export. Over the next three years, many of the transactions international traders have with government will be made available on the site with the aim of re-using data from previous transactions to cut down the amount of time traders have to spend carrying out these tasks.

The project is backed by HM Revenue and Customs the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform; Sitpro; UK Trade & Investment and other government departments involved in international trade.