

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPORT LICENSING PROCEDURES

SINGAPORE

The following notification has been received from the delegation of Singapore in response to the Questionnaire on Import Licensing Procedures annexed to document L/5106/Rev.2.

Outline of systems

1. Legally, all goods can be imported freely except where a licence is required.

Purposes and coverage of the licensing

2. The licensing system is used to effect quota and other controls of goods. At present, only three products, i.e. refined white sugar, rice and air-conditioners not exceeding 9,000 k.cal./hr. are subject to licensing. These controls are reviewed from time to time.

3. The system applies to goods originating in and coming from which countries?

The system generally applies to specific goods (sugar, rice and air-conditioners not exceeding 9,000 k.cal./hr.) originating in and coming from all countries, and for the time being also to all goods originating or consigned from Albania, Laos, East Germany, Viet Nam and Mongolia.

4. Is the licensing intended to restrict the quantity or value of imports, and if not, what are its purposes? Have alternative methods of accomplishing the purposes been considered and if so which? Why have they not been adopted?

Generally, the purpose is not to restrict the quantity or value of imports, quota restriction being limited to only one product, i.e. air-conditioners. Even in the case of air-conditioners, the quota is liberalized progressively each year. As for rice and sugar, the purpose of licensing is to monitor trade in these commodities to ensure stability in supply and prices. Licensing of all goods originating from the countries mentioned in paragraph 3 is for statistical and research purposes.

5. Cite the law, regulation and/or administrative order under which the licensing is maintained. Is the licensing statutorily required? Does the legislation leave designation for products to be subjected to licensing to administrative discretion? Is it possible for the government (or the executive branch) to abolish the system without legislative approval?

Licensing is done on a legal basis. Goods subject to licensing are gazetted on the Order of the Ministry for Trade and Industry under the principal law known as the Control of Imports and Exports Act.

Goods can be placed on, or taken off, licensing by the Minister. However, the orders are tabled in Parliament, which has the authority to revoke any Order if it deems fit to do so.

Procedure

6. (a) Is information published, and where, concerning allocation of quotas and formalities of filing applications for licences? If not, how is it brought to the attention of possible importers? Of governments and exports promotion bodies of exporting countries and their trade representatives?

Information is published by means of notices issued by the imports and exports office of the trade development board. Copies of the notices are issued to the press, Chambers of Commerce, banks, foreign embassies in Singapore, carriers and traders in general.

Is the overall amount published? The amount allocated to goods from each country? The maximum amount allocated to each importer?

No.

(b) How is the size of the quotas determined: on a yearly, six-monthly or quarterly basis?

On a half-yearly or yearly basis depending on the need.

Are there cases where the size of quota is determined on a yearly basis but licences are issued for imports on a six-monthly or quarterly basis? In the latter case is it necessary for importers to apply for fresh licence on a six-monthly or quarterly basis?

Yes. However, importers would have to apply for fresh licences on a six-monthly basis.

(c) Are licences allotted for certain goods partly or only to domestic producers of like goods?

In practice, import licences are issued to traders, and not to local manufacturers of the same items.

What steps are taken to ensure that licences allocated are actually used for imports?

No one is compelled to use up his allocation.

Are unused allocations added to quotas for a succeeding year?

No.

Are the names of importers to whom licences have been allocated made known to governments and export promotion bodies of exporting countries upon request? If not, for what reason? (Indicate products to which replies relate.)

No requests have been received from foreign governments for such information.

(d) From the time of announcing the opening of quotas, as indicated in (a) above, what is the period of time allowed for the submission of applications for licences?

Traders are required to submit within fourteen days after announcement relevant documents to prove past performance. There is, however, no time-limit to apply for licences as long as it is within the quota period.

(e) What are the minimum and maximum lengths of time for processing applications?

Licences can be processed within a day.

(f) How much time remains, at a minimum, between the granting of licences and the date of opening of the period of importation?

When traders have finalized arrangements with their suppliers, they will submit their applications for licences.

(g) Is consideration of licence applications effected by a single administrative organ? Or must the application be passed on to other organs for visa note or approval? If so, which? Does the importer have to approach more than one administrative organ?

For trade purposes, only the imports and exports office processes the applications.

(h) If the demand for licences cannot be fully satisfied, on what basis is the allocation to applicants made? First come, first served? Past performance? Is there a maximum amount to be allocated per applicant and if so on what basis is it determined?

Past performance.

What provision is made for new importers?

Applications from new importers are given due consideration.

Are applications examined simultaneously or on receipt?

Applications are examined on receipt.

(i) In the case of bilateral quotas or export restraint arrangements, where export permits are issued by exporting countries, are import licences also required? If so, are licences issued automatically?

Not applicable.

(j) In cases where imports are allowed on the basis of export permits only, how is the importing country informed of the effect given by the exporting country to the understanding between the two countries?

Not applicable.

(k) Are there products for which licences are issued on condition that goods should be exported and not sold in the domestic market?

Yes. This applies generally to quota goods, which are imported in excess of the quota permitted.

7. Where there is no quantitative limit on importation of a product or on import from a particular country:

(a) How far in advance of importation must application for a licence be made? Can licences be obtained within a shorter time-limit or for goods arriving at the port without a licence (for example, owing to inadvertency)?

Yes.

(b) Can a licence be granted immediately on request?

Yes.

(c) Are there any limitations as to the period of the year during which application for licence and/or importation may be made? If so explain.

No.

(d) Is consideration of licence applications effected by a single administrative organ? Or must the application be passed on to other organs for visa, note or approval? If so, which? Does the importer have to approach more than one administrative organ?

For trade purposes only one single administrative unit is involved.

8. Under which circumstances may an application for a licence be refused other than failure to meet the ordinary criteria? Are the reasons for any refusal given to the applicant? Have applicants a right of appeal in the event of refusal to issue a licence, and if so to what bodies and under what procedures?

If applications meet with the criteria, they are not turned down unless there is a revision of the criteria itself. They can appeal to the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Eligibility of importers to apply for licence

9. Are all persons, firms and institutions eligible to apply for licences:

(a) Under restrictive licensing systems?

No. Only those who qualify in accordance with the criteria.

(b) Under non-restrictive systems?

Yes.

Documentational and other requirements for application for licence

10. What information is required in applications? Submit a sample form.

Description of goods, quantity, value, from whom ordered and country of origin.

What documents is the importer required to supply with the application?

None.

11. What documents are required upon actual importation?

Invoices, bills of lading and insurance policy for dutiable imports which are purchased on an f.o.b. basis, and certificates of origin in a few cases.

12. Is there any licensing fee or administrative charge? If so, what is the amount of the fee or charge?

S\$10.00.

13. Is there any deposit or advance payment requirement associated with the issue of licences? If so, state the amount or rate, whether it is refundable, the period of retention and the purpose of the requirement.

No deposit is required.

Conditions of licensing

14. What is the period of validity of a licence? Can the validity of a licence be extended? How?

Usually, for six months by submitting a new application for extension with a fee of S\$10.00.

15. Is there any penalty for the non-utilization of a licence or a portion of a licence?

None.

16. Are licences transferable between importers? If so, are any limitations or conditions attached to such transfer?

Licences are not transferable, except for quota licences on proof of transfer of product agency or agreement between the two parties concerned. However, such transfers are rare.

17. Are any conditions attached to the issue of a licence:

(a) For products subject to quantitative restriction?

No.

(b) For products not subject to quantitative restriction?

No.

Other procedural requirements

18. Are there any other administrative procedures, apart from import licensing and similar administrative procedures, required prior to importation.

No.

19. Is foreign exchange automatically provided by the banking authorities for goods to be imported?

Yes.

Is a licence required as a condition to obtaining foreign exchange?

No.

Is foreign exchange always available to cover licences issued?

Yes.

What formalities must be fulfilled for obtaining the foreign exchange?

None.