



TRADE FORWARD
SOUTHERN AFRICA

KNOWLEDGE GUIDE SERIES

Registering as an Exporter in South Africa



What this Knowledge Guide covers

- 1 Who must register as an exporter when exporting from South Africa?
- 2 What are the basic requirements and associated processes involved?
- 3 What paperwork is involved in the registration process?

1 Who must register as an exporter when exporting from South Africa?

Basic exporter requirements

Prior to conducting any activity that is regulated by the Customs and Excise Act, a few administrative steps need to be completed:

1 Obtain a customs client number

2 Obtain an exporter registration number (code)

Where the exporter is a foreign person or juristic entity, they must also register as an exporter and nominate a registered agent located in South Africa before being able to register to export goods from the country.

3 Register as an Electronic Data Interchange user*

* If making use of a licensed Customs Clearing agent or Registered Agent, an importer or exporter would not need to register as an EDI user

The process of registering as an exporter is a layered process: the first involves the basic registration as an exporter, with additional formalities for the optional further registration under preferential trade agreements, such as the *SACUM-UK EPA*, and others.

► Natural and juristic persons are required to register

All natural or juristic persons (businesses) wishing to export from South Africa need to register with the South African Revenue Services (SARS), Customs and Excise division, and fulfil a number of administrative formalities.

► Requirements are applicable to exporters and imports, with certain exceptions

These requirements generally apply to both exporters from South Africa, and importers to South Africa. Only in specific circumstances do formal registration requirements not apply, when undertaken by natural persons. These are when the following applies:

- Where the declared value of exports and imports in a given calendar year is less than R150,000.
- Where a person imports or exports certain goods classified as personal effects and household furniture and other household effects.

South Africa's customs authority is in the process of implementing an electronic **Registration, Licensing and Accreditation (RLA)** system. This is a web-based electronic registration system initiated through **SARS eFiling** that largely does away with paper documents, and involves applications and supporting documents being uploaded to the system electronically.

2 What are the basic requirements and associated processes involved?

Prospective exporters have the choice of applying through the new electronic system, or using the previous paper-based system.

Registration as an exporter using the RLA System

- The trader must be registered with SARS as a legal entity (else must register in person as a legal entity at a SARS/customs branch).
- Applicant must be registered for e-filing (the e-filing profile converted to 'Organisation' for customs purposes, however this does not impact other tax formalities).
- Through e-filing, the applicant can access the Customs Trader Portal (CTP) (online self-service) for access to the RLA System.
- Alternatively, applicant can walk in at a SARS branch, where a customs agent will register the client at the customs client counter on the Customs Operations Portal (COP) in order to access the RLA system.
- SARS completes document inspection and verification processes, and then notifies the client when this process is complete.
- Client obtains access to the RLA portal.

Registration as an exporter using the paper-based manual system

- The process begins with the prospective exporter completing an application form for registration and licensing as an exporter.
- For this purpose, two forms are required:
Form DA185 (Application form: Registration / Licensing of Customs and Excise clients) and *Form DA 185.4A2 (Supporting Annexure)*.
- The prospective exporter must complete both forms and submit same to the relevant Customs offices where a *Customs and Excise code* will be allocated. A copy of the application form may be used in export declarations while awaiting final approval.
- An exporter may register as either a local or foreign exporter. Both complete the required application form and annexure(s); a foreign exporter must also nominate a registered agent located in South Africa to act on its behalf and to take full responsibility.

3 Paperwork: which forms are required for exporter registration?

- DA185 Application form – Registration and licensing of Customs and Excise clients
- DA185.4A2 Registration by client type (exporters) - with Annexures depending on the preferential trade agreement, incl. UK-SACU+M EPA
Section B: Registration for approved exporter status (incl. UK-SACU+M EPA)
- DA 185.D Disclosure of registered agent (when registering as a foreign exporter)
- DA 185 4A7 Form for registration as a producer (incl. for UK-SACU+M EPA)

Customs Forms



Scan code with phone

● How long does it take to obtain approval?

For Customs registrations, within 5 business days where no inspection is required. Else within 21 business days.

● What is the cost of registering as exporter?

There are no costs involved to the prospective exporter.

● For how long is the registration valid?

The registration is valid indefinitely.

● Where must the forms get sent to?

Insofar as the prospective exporter is using the paper-based manual system, all forms need to be submitted to the Customs offices.

► Download link: <https://www.sars.gov.za/customs-and-excise/registration-licensing-and-accreditation/exporters/> or <https://bit.ly/SA-customs-forms>