

HMG suspends import tariffs on Covid-19 products to fight virus

- Tariffs suspended on a wide range of goods in the fight against Covid-19
- These build on tariff reliefs in place through 2020, are available to all importers and are automatically applied.
- Suspensions planned to last for a year, subject to regular reviews

Tariffs on medical products used to help fight against coronavirus have been suspended by the Government in the fight against the pandemic, lowering costs on these critical items for organisations across the UK.

The new measures, which ensure no tariffs will be due on imports of goods including face masks, gloves and other protective equipment, will come into effect from 1 January 2021.

In May, the Government announced the UK Global Tariff (UKGT), which will apply to products from countries not covered by alternative trade agreements following the end of the EU transition period. Many medical and pharmaceutical goods, including vaccines, will be made tariff-free under the UKGT, but the Government is now going one step further and ensuring there are no additional costs on any items on the World Health Organisation's latest list of critical goods. This includes items like protective goggles, face masks, hand sanitiser, medical scrubs and face shields.

Since the start of the pandemic, the UK has removed tariffs on critical medical products for the NHS and other public bodies through tariff reliefs. These new suspensions extend to private sector organisations, including care homes, which were previously paying tariffs between 2% and 12% on these goods.

The procurement process will also be more streamlined for the NHS and other front-line public services, which will now automatically get these goods tariff-free rather than having to apply for reliefs. It will keep costs down for care providers across the public and private sector as we continue the fight against the virus.

Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss, said:

Throughout this global pandemic, we have been working tirelessly to protect the public and those bravely working on the front line. The global need for these vital goods in 2021 will be just as great as it has been this year and we continue to work with partners around the world to keep supply chains flowing.

As we emerge as an independent trading nation, we will shape our trade policy to the needs of the UK economy and society and will be

a powerful voice for open markets and free trade.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury Jesse Norman said:

Since the beginning of the crisis the Government has worked to provide those working on the front line the protective equipment they need. Scrapping tariffs and streamlining the procurement of these essential items, such as face masks and gloves, will keep costs down for care providers as we continue the fight against the virus.

This follows the Prime Minister's announcement at the UN General Assembly in September that the UK would suspend tariffs on COVID-critical items, as part of the UK's five-point global plan to deal with the current crisis and prevent future pandemics.

Today's announcement comes as the UK welcomes the Ottawa Group's Trade and Health Initiative which encourages international partners to continue the flow of essential goods in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK will implement some of the measures suggested and the tariff suspensions will come into force for 12 months to the 31 December 2021 and will be subject to ongoing reviews.