

[News story: Getting ready for the Customs Declaration Service](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will begin a phased launch of the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) in August 2018. CDS will replace the existing Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system, with all declarations taking place on CDS from early 2019.

CHIEF currently processes declarations to facilitate the international movement of goods between the UK and non-EU countries. CHIEF will continue to run for a time to aid the transition to CDS.

Why CDS is replacing CHIEF

CHIEF is one of the world's largest and most sophisticated electronic services for managing customs declaration processes, but it's nearly 25 years old and can't be easily adapted to new requirements.

The decision to replace CHIEF with CDS was made before the EU referendum, however CDS will be scaled to handle any potential increases in the volume of declarations that may result from the UK's exit from the EU.

How this will affect importers and exporters

If a trader imports or exports goods outside the EU, they or their agent will be currently using CHIEF to:

- process declarations for goods entering and leaving the UK or EU through ports and airports
- calculate and pay the correct duty and taxes
- complete customs information electronically

They will still be able to do these things on CDS, but there will be differences:

- they will need to sign into CDS on GOV.UK through a Government Gateway account
- CDS will offer several new and existing services in one place – for example, traders will be able to view previous import and export data on pre-defined reports, check the tariff, apply for new authorisations and simplifications, and check their duty deferment statement
- online help will include self-service tools, guides and checklists

Some additional information will be required for declarations in order to align with the World Customs Organisation Kyoto Convention, currently being implemented in the UK through the Union Customs Code (UCC):

- an audit trail of previous document IDs
- additional party types, such as the buyer and seller

- possible additional commercial references or tracking numbers
- levelling – change between ‘Header’ and ‘Item’ for some data items

To align UK customs data with international standards, there will also be changes to:

- location of goods identification (based on UNLOCODE)
- the warehouse type code list
- item tax lines, including method of payment codes
- unit of quantity codes (ISO)
- the way customs procedures are quoted
- the number of items on a declaration – CDS will allow a maximum of 999 items on a customs declaration instead of the current 99 items on CHIEF

An updated tariff manual will be available in April 2018.

Alerting importers and exporters about using CDS

HMRC is currently building and testing CDS with industry, software providers and Community System Providers (CSPs). CSPs operate computerised inventory systems that control the physical movement of import and export freight at UK ports and airports.

CDS will be phased in between August and early 2019, with CHIEF continuing to run during this time to aid the transition. Importers, exporters or their agents will be informed by their software provider when they need to provide the additional information in order to start making declarations on CDS.

To keep informed about CDS, please send your name and email address to communications.cds@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk to register for email updates.

The updates will provide regular information on CDS and any preparations you may need to make ahead of CDS going live.

There will also be regular updates about CDS on GOV.UK and through trade associations.