

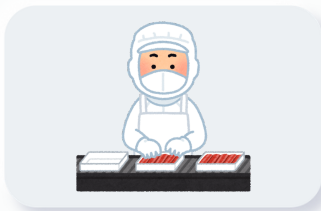
A GUIDE TO EXPORTING YOUR FOOD PRODUCTS

Singapore food manufacturers are increasingly exploring opportunities beyond the domestic market through distributors, retailers, e-commerce platforms and international trade shows. However, successful exporting requires more than finding buyers. Businesses must also understand market requirements, product compliance obligations, trade regulations and the commercial viability of each opportunity.

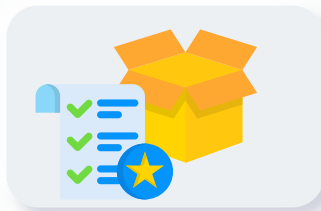
About this guide: A consolidation of practical insights from food manufacturers and industry experts. It includes common challenges and recommendations to help businesses embark on their food export journey.

The Food Export Journey

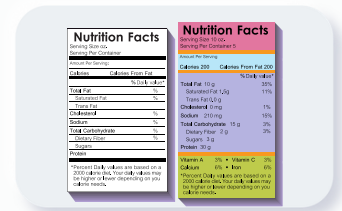
Product & Factory Readiness



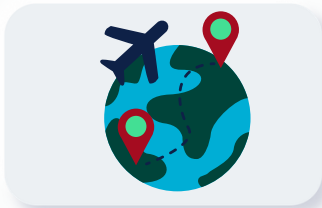
Product Qualification



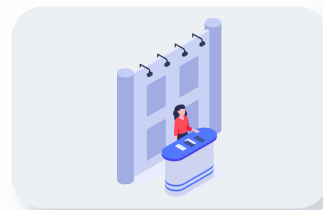
Regulatory & Labelling Compliance



Overseas Growth



Trade Shows & Distributors



Trade Compliance & Market Access



QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT

- ☒ Do I know my target market?
- ☒ Do I know my Harmonised System (HS) Code?
- ☒ Do I have the required product documentation?
- ☒ Have I researched the market requirements?
- ☒ Do I understand what duties, taxes and logistical costs are involved?

Export readiness involves more than identifying potential buyers. Preparing the necessary documentation, understanding market requirements and assessing commercial viability can help businesses make more informed export decisions.



Common Challenges for Exporting Food Products

What Food Manufacturers Told Us

Some of the most common challenges they face when exploring overseas markets include:



"We're a Singapore brand, but our products are manufactured overseas. Can we still benefit from Singapore FTAs?"

Review where the product is manufactured and whether it meets the applicable Rules of Origin requirements.

"How do I know if an export opportunity is worth pursuing?"

Consider the duties, taxes, logistical costs and regulatory requirements involved before committing resources.



"How do I know whether my product is allowed in another country?"

- Several companies shared concerns about restrictions imposed on ingredients only after receiving buyer enquiries (e.g. additional approvals required).
- Research the target market's food regulations, ingredient restrictions and import requirements before approaching buyers.

"I don't know where to start with export documentation."

Many first-time exporters are unfamiliar with:

- HS Codes
- Rules of Origin
- Product registration
- Customs documentation



Start With Your HS Code

One of the most important steps in export planning is determining your product's HS Code. Your HS Code forms the foundation for understanding the requirements that apply to your product in different markets.

What is a HS Code?

The Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) is an international goods classification system developed by the World Customs Organisation (WCO). It provides a standardised 6-digit nomenclature used globally for the classification of goods.

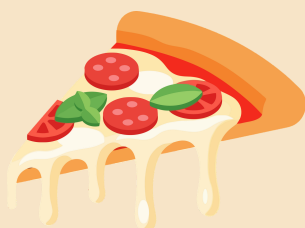
(Source: www.customs.gov.sg)

Why HS Codes Matter

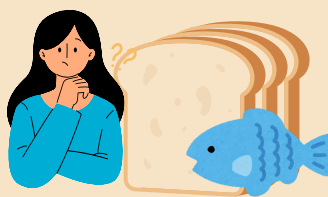
Your HS Code determines:

- ✓ Import duties
- ✓ Taxes
- ✓ Regulatory requirements
- ✓ Import permits
- ✓ Required documentation
- ✓ FTA eligibility

Typical Examples



A pizza containing meat may be classified differently from a pizza without meat.



A bread product containing fish may be classified as a fish product and require different approvals.



Even small formulation changes can affect classification and import requirements

Suggested Next Steps

Step 1: Identify your product composition and ingredients.

Step 2: Use [Singapore Customs' HS Classification resources](#) to determine your product's HS Code.

Step 3: Confirm your HS Code before exploring duties, FTAs or market entry requirements.

Concerns from Food Manufacturers

"We were trying to understand the import duty, but didn't know where to begin."

Practical Tip

Many trade-related requirements stem from a product's HS Code. Confirming the HS Code early can help you better understand duties, taxes and import requirements.

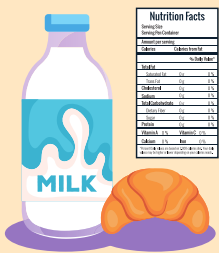
Understand Market Requirements

Food regulations differ from one market to another.

A product that can be sold in Singapore may require changes before it can be exported to another country.

Common Challenges in Fulfilling Market Requirements

Labelling Requirements



Different countries may require different:

- Nutrition panels
- Ingredient declarations
- Languages
- Health claims

Ingredient Restrictions



Ingredients accepted in Singapore may require additional approvals or declarations overseas.

Allergen Requirements



- Different countries recognise different allergens.
- Failure to declare allergens correctly may result in product recalls or rejected shipments.



Packaging Requirements

Common challenges for packaging include:

- High Minimum Order Quantity (MOQs)
- Packaging redesign costs
- Long lead times
- Different country requirements

Confirm these requirements before investing in packaging.

Concerns from Food Manufacturers

"Can one packaging design work across multiple countries?"

Practical Tip

Different markets often have different labelling and packaging requirements. Consider validating requirements for the target market before investing in packaging redesigns or large print runs.



Prepare for Buyer Questions

Buyers often evaluate both the company and the product before considering an order.

Information Buyers May Request

- ✓ Company Information
- ✓ Manufacturing Licence
- ✓ GMP
- ✓ HACCP
- ✓ ISO22000 / FSSC22000
- ✓ Halal Certification (if applicable)

Product Information

- ✓ Product Specification Sheet
- ✓ Ingredients List
- ✓ Nutrition Information
- ✓ Allergen Information
- ✓ Shelf Life Information
- ✓ Storage Conditions
- ✓ Laboratory Reports

Suggested Next Steps

Prepare a Product Information Sheet

Think of it as a summary document that helps buyers quickly understand your product.
Include:

Product Photo



Ingredients



Nutrition Information



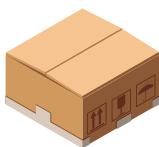
Allergen Information



Certification



Packaging Format



Storage Conditions



Shelf Life



Concerns from Food Manufacturers

"What information do buyers usually ask for?"

Practical Tip

Preparing product information and supporting documents in advance can help facilitate discussions with potential buyers and distributors.

Use FTAs Strategically

Singapore has one of the world's most extensive networks of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), covering more than 67 trading partners worldwide.

FTAs can help exporters reduce costs and improve competitiveness by lowering or eliminating import duties in participating markets.

What Is An FTA?

A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is an agreement between countries that provides preferential treatment for eligible products.

Potential benefits include:



Reduced or zero
import duties



Improved price
competitiveness



Easier market access



Greater certainty
for cross-border
trade

Understanding Rules of Origin (ROO)

ROO determines whether a product qualifies for FTA benefits.

A product's eligibility is based on the product itself, rather than the nationality of the company.

ROO may take into account:

- ✓ Manufacturing location
- ✓ Ingredient sourcing
- ✓ Product value content
- ✓ Product classification
- ✓ Processing activities undertaken



"We're a Singapore company, so do we automatically qualify for FTA benefits?"

Practical Tip

FTA eligibility depends on factors such as manufacturing location, product composition and the applicable ROO requirements.

Suggested Next Steps

- 1 Confirm your product's HS Code.
- 2 Identify the destination market.
- 3 Use [Tariff Finder](#) to review applicable FTAs.
- 4 Review ROO requirements.
- 5 Assess whether the potential tariff savings justify the compliance effort.

Points To Note

FTA benefits are subject to eligibility requirements. Businesses should review the applicable ROO and supporting documentation requirements before claiming preferential tariff treatment.

Resources & Support for Exporters

Key tools and references to support your food export journey



Singapore Food Manufacturers' Association (SFMA)

SFMA Advisory Services supports food manufacturers with export readiness, compliance, logistics, sustainability, training and partner matching.



Global Connect @SBF

Land your business overseas with tailored support from SBF's internalisation services!



Tariff Finder

Look up applied tariff rates for your product in target markets using HS codes. Includes Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) and preferential FTA rates.



HS Classification Resources

Tools and references to help identify the correct Harmonised System (HS) code for your food product.



SFA Export Library

Official export guides, forms, and requirements published by the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) for food exporters.



Singapore Food Regulations

Reference materials on Singapore's food safety standards, labelling rules, and permitted ingredients.

Export Readiness Self-Check

Assess your readiness across three key areas before engaging the export markets.

Product Readiness

- ☐ Product specification sheet prepared
- ☐ Ingredients information available
- ☐ Nutrition information available
- ☐ Allergen information available
- ☐ Shelf life information available
- ☐ Product certifications identified (if applicable)

Market Readiness

- ☐ HS Code confirmed
- ☐ Target market identified
- ☐ Market requirements reviewed
- ☐ Packaging requirements reviewed
- ☐ Import requirements understood

Commercial Readiness

- ☐ Duties and taxes assessed
- ☐ Logistical costs estimated
- ☐ Potential pricing reviewed
- ☐ FTA opportunities assessed
- ☐ Buyer requirements understood

Need more information and support?

Contact Singapore Food Manufacturers' Association (SFMA):
enquiries@sfma.org.sg, or
SBF's Centre for the Future of Trade and Investment (CFOTI):
cfoti@sbf.org.sg

