

National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Case study: OMAN

In response to the requirements under Art 23.2 of the WTO Trade facilitation Agreement (TFA), Oman established a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NCTF) in early 2014. The committee comprised of 16 permanent members which includes the 10 Governmental authorities and Private sector listed below, has as its main objective the streamlining of procedures for border measures, which in turn facilitates legitimate trade whilst protecting Omani society through coordinated effective border enforcement measures. As it is in the lead role for border protection, the Oman Customs Directorate of the Royal Oman Police holds the chairperson of the committee.

At an early stage after the formation of the committee the import and export regimes were analyzed and key stakeholders identified. These key stakeholders, both from government and industry now form the core of the facilitation effort of the NCTF. Government representation is maintained through the Ministry of Commerce and Industry who are appointed to coordinate with the NCTF and the Technical Committee on matters related to the TFA.

The private sector also plays an important role in the formation and negotiation of the technical committee. Represented by the Omani Chamber of Commerce, private sector stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss various trade related issues of the TFA with their government counterparts at the quarterly meetings of the committee. In addition to the scheduled quarterly meetings, Ad-Hoc meetings are arranged if and when required. The committee's terms of reference include tasks and responsibilities towards ensuring the facilitation of free movement of goods and people, streamlining import and export procedures, procurement of infrastructure commensurate with full implementation of the TFA, reducing institutional red tape and a public awareness campaign on the benefits of the FTA.

In its early days the committee held self-assessment workshops to identify A, B and C Categories according to the TFA. Notification of category A measures were Notified to the WTO in summer 2014. The NCTF will play a steering role in identifying Category B & C commitments to be notified to the WTO.

Part of this negotiation has required the committee to identify areas of capacity building where World Customs Organization (WCO) experts can facilitate workshops to meet the category C requirements.

To date the WCO has provided three such capacity building workshops; time release study; strategic planning and intellectual property rights (fraud). These workshops are invaluable in Oman's drive to modernize its border services and be in full compliance with the TFA.

Oman stands ready to fully engage in the TFA and realize potential benefits through the NCTF. Both regionally and internationally the NCTF will continue to support the work of the WTO.

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Membership of the NCTF:

1. General Administration of Customs
2. Ministry of Commerce and industry
3. Ministry of Finance
4. Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs
5. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Resources .
6. Ministry of Transport and Communications
7. Ministry of Health
8. Ministry of Legal Affairs
9. General Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development
10. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Oman

Royal Oman Police

Directorate General Of Customs