

Guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable terms for the description of goods

1 Introduction

Robust risk analysis requires that all items in the supply chain are accurately described. Where the textual description of the goods is concerned, general terms (i.e. “consolidated”, “general cargo” or “parts”) cannot be accepted. This reality has already been recognized by some WCO members that have issued to the public indications of what is acceptable and what is not. In the context of the global economy and in order to provide the trading community with comprehensive rules which are as aligned as possible, as well as to ensure that data quality is improved in this crucially important part of security-related data requirements, an harmonisation work should be carried out by WCO to define a list of such general terms that could constitute a source to which WCO members could refer to define the rules they wish to apply.

These rules stem from the need for customs administrations to be able to base their risk-analysis on adequate descriptions of goods where a commodity code is not provided by the person that lodges the declaration. In those cases, too vague a description would not provide Customs administrations with the means to identify consignments which might represent risks for their country / region and their citizens; this might lead to unnecessary and costly hiccups in the supply chain, such as physical examinations of the goods concerned, in order to ascertain their real nature.

The list of generic, unacceptable terms and the suggested alternatives that would be acceptable by customs, hereafter referred to as "the list", is contained in the Annex to this document.

2 Principles

- 2.1 The list concerns descriptions provided in declarations such as pre-arrival or pre-departure declarations.¹ It is not meant to be used for tariff classification purposes.
- 2.2 The list is not of an exhaustive nature, and aims at providing examples of unacceptable and acceptable wordings that are meant as a guide.
- 2.3 The list is by nature dynamic; Everyday practice will show that new unacceptable terms will be identified and will need therefore to be added to the list as time goes by. This dynamic aspect of the list will require a certain level of maintenance by WCO secretariat in coordination with Member administrations.
- 2.4 Initially, it is suggested to have a standing point in each DMPT meeting to discuss this matter. Experience will show whether those discussions can be more interspersed in the future.

3 Publication

Given its dynamic nature, and the importance to provide quick updates, the list needs to be published on the internet, in any respect on WCO website, for the benefit of all potential interested parties.

¹ For the purposes of the advance screening of pre loading air cargo information, raw data terms for the description of goods (as received by the shipper) may continue to be submitted.

ANNEX

List of examples of acceptable and unacceptable descriptions of goods

Unacceptable	Acceptable²	
Alcoholic drinks	Wine, whisky, brandy, beer, vermouth, sparkling wine, Champagne	
Agricultural products	Oranges, Fish, Rice, Bread	
Aid consignments	Blankets, Medications	
Animals	Horse, Poultry, Bovine	
Apparel	Men's Shirts, Lingerie, Girls' Vests, Boys' Jackets Shoes Footwear Jewellery Watches	
Appliances	Refrigerator, Stove, Microwave Oven, Coffee Machines Industrial Appliances Heat Pump	
Auto Parts	Automobile Brakes, Windshield Glass for Automobiles	
Beverages	Fruit juice Vegetable juice Energy drink Lemonade (See also specific examples for "Alcoholic drinks")	
Caps	Baseball Caps Blasting Caps Bottle Caps Hub Caps	
Chemicals, hazardous	Actual Chemical Name (not brand name) An internationally recognized Code Identifier # such as U.N. HAZMAT, CAS code	
Chemicals, non-hazardous	Actual Chemical Name (not brand name) An internationally recognized Code Identifier # such as CAS code	
Cleaning products	Alcohol, Detergents	

² For declaration purposes further detailed description will be required

Unacceptable	Acceptable ²	
Clothing	Leather clothing Textile clothing Woven shirts Knitted pullovers Hats (See also specific examples for "Apparel")	
Consolidated	(See other specific examples in the table)	
Didactic articles	Pencils, Smart boards, Books	
Drinks	(See specific examples for "beverages" and "Alcoholic drinks")	
Electronics	Computers, televisions, CD Players, Walkmans, Tape Recorders, Mobile phones, Monitors, Printers Electronic Toys (can include Game boys, Game Cubes, Dancing Elmo Doll etc.)	
Equipment	Oil Well Equipment, Poultry Equipment Industrial Equipment, Automotive Equipment	
FAK Freight All Kinds	(See other specific examples in the table)	
Foodstuffs	Oranges Fish Packaged Rice, Packaged Grain, Bulk Grain (See other examples for "Agricultural products")	
General Cargo	(See other specific examples in the table)	
Gifts	Dolls, Remote Control Cars	
Household goods	Plates, Dishes, Tableware (See also examples for "appliances")	
Industrial products	(See examples for "Electronics")	
Iron and Steel	Iron Pipes, Steel Pipes, Iron Building Material, Steel Building Material	
I.T. goods	(See examples for "Electronics")	
Leather articles	Saddles, Leather Handbags, Leather Jackets, Shoes	
Liquor	(See specific examples for "Alcoholic drinks")	
Machine parts	Pumps, Seals, Engines	

Unacceptable	Acceptable ²	
Machinery	Metal Working Machinery, Cigarette Making Machinery	
Machines	(See examples for "Machinery"), Sewing Machines, Printing Machines	
Miscellaneous	Paint brushes, cigarette lighters, worked ivory, original painting (See also other specific examples in the table)	
NESI (Not elsewhere specified or included)	(See specific examples in the table)	
Oil	Mineral oil, Plant oil	
Ore	Iron ore, Copper ore	
Parts	(See examples for "Machine parts")	
Personal effects	(See other specific examples in the table)	
Pipes	Plastic Pipes, Steel Pipes, Copper Pipes, PVC Pipes	
Plants	Tulips	
Plastic Goods	Plastic Kitchenware, Plastic House ware Industrial Plastics Toys, New/Used Auto Parts	
Polyurethane	Polyurethane Threads, Polyurethane Medical Gloves	
Propellant	(See examples for "chemicals")	
Rubber articles	Rubber Hoses, Rubber Conveyor Belts, Tires, Toys	
Rod	Welding Rod, Fuel rod, Copper rod Rebar Aluminum Rods Reactor Rods	
Said to Contain	(See other specific examples in the table)	
Sanitary goods	Towels, Buckets, Detergents, Tooth brushes	
Scrap	Plastic Scrap, Foam Scrap, Iron Scrap	
Spare parts	(See examples for "Machine parts")	
Textiles	Linen fabric, T-shirts, (See also examples for "Apparel")	
Tobacco	Cigarettes, cigars, smoking tobacco, snus	

Unacceptable	Acceptable ²	
Tools	Hand tools, Electric tools Power Tools Industrial Tools	
Toys	(See examples for "gifts")	
Various products	(See other specific examples in the table)	
Vehicles	Boats, Cars, Bicycles	
Weapons	Daggers, Machine guns	
Wires	Iron and Steel Wire, Copper Wires Electric Wires Auto Harness Coiled Wire (Industrial)	
Wooden articles	Wooden furniture, Wooden kitchen utensils	
