



# Visualising a Greener HS

*A series of symposia on enhancing the HS to support environmentally sustainable trade*

## *The Concept*

### Background

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its 17 goals (SDG) that cut across disciplines, sectors and institutional mandates, acknowledging the integrated nature of the many challenges that humanity faces.

In the preamble to the 2030 Agenda, world leaders affirmed that they are: “Determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.”

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN General Assembly, Customs Administrations acknowledge the part they play in meeting the challenge of ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for all people across the world.

For the year 2020, the WCO Secretariat chose “sustainability” as its theme for the year, with the slogan “**Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet**”. In announcing this, Dr. Mikuriya remarked that “this theme is more topical than ever before” and “2019 was the year when public debate was dominated by sustainability issues and problems linked to climate change”. Fast forward to 2022 and these statements still apply today.

The inclusion of the SDG perspective in all WCO tools and instruments that focus on issues related to facilitation and Customs procedures may also make it necessary to review the existing strategies to make them more responsive to the SDGs and ensure that they also fully support the accomplishment of the relevant SDGs. It is vital to identify sensitive products at the border, both to combat fraud and to achieve the SDGs. The key tool for the identification and classification of goods at the global level is the **Harmonized System (HS)**.

The 2022 edition of the HS, which entered into force on 1 January 2022, takes account of – among other things – environmental issues and certain goods which are subject to specific controls under various conventions. The task of examining the HS in the light of the SDGs is continuing, with the aim of satisfying international requirements where the trade in goods is concerned; **the 7<sup>th</sup> HS**

**Review Cycle**, which is under discussion in the bodies responsible for managing the HS, constitutes a historic opportunity to make the 2027 edition of the HS increasingly **green**.

Customs plays a pivotal role working with other agencies at the border contributing to the fight against climate change and to ensuring greater environmental sustainability by supporting effective implementation of various **Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)**, whose objectives include among others, addressing the illicit trade in hazardous waste and ozone-depleting substances, combating the illicit trade in endangered species, etc.

The world in facing transformations and production is organized into global value chains trying to produce more sustainable goods not only for today, but for tomorrow. Trade and trade policy can effectively support a circular economy transition extending the product life cycle, repairing, recycling and/or reusing products at different stages of the value chain.

The HS is called to help trade by identifying these environmental goods for statistical purposes, for establishing specific trade policies, to help countries restrict trade in products that can harm the environment or conversely, to facilitate trade in environmentally friendly goods. Given the role of trade in facilitating a circular economy transition, the HS does not actually distinguish used, recycled or refurbished goods.

The HS has been successful in identifying trade in environmentally harmful products, however the Secretariat has not received proposals to identify environmentally friendly goods or sustainably produced products to facilitate trade in them.

### **Future Possibilities**

As the key tool for the identification and classification of goods world-wide, **the HS has a vital role** in the implementation of green policies, including global policies such as under the United Nations Environment Programme. Trade promotes development and economic growth; however indiscriminate trade without effective environmental policies in place may lead to environmental degradation. By facilitating trade in environmental goods, countries and their Customs administrations can contribute to achieving sustainable development.

However, for Customs administrations, identifying the priorities of environmentally focused administrations within their government and converting these into HS proposals is a complex matter.

Involving Customs administrations, HS stakeholders and users in a series of symposia gives another way for the HSC and the WCO Secretariat to engage in the necessary conversations to support this work. The stakes are high as the need for HS support of green policy measures is being increasingly identified by Members and other Intergovernmental Organisations.

Greening the HS, using a carefully framed method for separately identifying goods which are of environmental significance, will make it possible to bring more transparency and predictability to commercial operations involving these types of goods, and support policy measures to **reduce the impact of trade on the environment**. The effective application of environmental regulations protects people, the planet, and everything that lives on it.

Another objective of monitoring such goods would be to **combat threats to sustainable development**, the illicit trade in wild fauna and **flora**, the illicit exploitation of **forestry, fisheries and mining resources**, and **waste which threatens international safety as well as economic growth and development**.

**Format: Hybrid.** The Symposium will be held in person at the WCO Headquarters in Brussels. An online link will also be provided allowing the possibility for participants who are unable to travel to observe the Symposium remotely via an online platform.

**Participants:** The Conference is a multi-stakeholder event that brings together not only Customs administrations but also, representatives of OIs, trade negotiators and environmental policy makers, academia, private sector, civil society, NGOs, and international experts. Free of charge, **open to all.**

**Language:** EN, FR

**Session 1:** Wednesday 5 October 2022 (13:00 – 16:00 CET)

### **Expanding food horizons - recognising agricultural diversity for sustainable global food security**

Climate change and environmental degradation are serious threats to **food security**. The changing climate will increase the risk of major crop failures and makes the current reliance on a very limited range of staple foods a serious risk. However, tracking trade in emerging new crops that are better fitted to changing climate is difficult without HS support. In addition, new foods, such as those produced from micro-organisms, and changing agricultural technology, needs to be considered. HS 2022 introduced separate provisions for oils from micro-organisms and insects, but this is just the beginning of what may need consideration.

## Symposium 1 - Expanding food horizons

### Recognising agricultural diversity for sustainable global food security

Wednesday 5 October

TIME	ACTIVITY
	<b>Opening &amp; Keynote</b>
13:00-13:15	<b>Dr. Kunio Mikuriya</b> Secretary General World Customs Organization (WCO)
13:15-13:35	<i>Keynote speaker :</i> <b>Mr. Gerassimos Thomas</b> Director-General Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG-TAXUD) European Commission
13:35-13:50	<b>Coffee Break</b>
13:50-14:00	Introduction by <b>Mr. Paulo De Lima</b> Liaison Officer to the EU and Belgium Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
14:00-15:50	<b>Panel Discussion</b> <i>Moderator : Ms. Gael Grooby</i> <i>"From idea to HS reality: how to identify where the HS can play a role in meeting environmental needs"</i> Deputy Director Tariff and Trade Affairs World Custom Organization <b>Mr. Marcio Castro de Souza</b> <i>"Recent Major Changes and Trends in the International Trade of Fisheries and Aquaculture Products"</i> Senior Fishery Officer (International Trade) Secretary of FAO Subcommittee on Fish Trade and GLOBEFISH Coordinator Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) <b>Mr. Pär Larshans</b> <i>"A circular transition to supply the world with the food needed - how to abolish linear legislation and barriers of trade"</i> Director of Sustainability at Ragn-Sells and Co-Chair of the ICC Working Group on the Circular Economy <b>Mr. David Kozik</b> <i>"Expanding food horizons – recognizing agricultural diversity for sustainable global food security"</i> Policy Officer - Classification of goods DG Taxation and Customs Union European Commission
15:50-16:00	<b>Closing remarks</b> <b>Mr. Konstantinos Kaiopoulos</b> Director Tariff and Trade Affairs World Customs Organization

**Individual presentations followed by panel discussion and Q&A**