



ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

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SELF CERTIFICATION FROM ECOWAS PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

- The certification of origin refers to a series of procedures put in place to establish the originating status of goods by presenting a proof of origin.
- Currently products originating in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), are eligible for preferential tariff treatment upon presentation of a certificate of origin as proof of origin issued by the relevant authority of the exporting Member States.
- As part of reforms to facilitate cross border of originating goods in west Africa, ECOWAS member States have decided to authorize eligible economic operators to declare the originating status of their goods on their commercial invoice as proof of origin in place of the regular certificate of origin.
- This self certification is based on the “Approved exporter” scheme.



THE APPROVED EXPORTER

- The approved exporter status is a customs facilitation granted to an exporter provided that he/she offers, to the satisfaction of the Customs authorities, all guarantees to control the originating status of the products and that all the other origin related criteria of the Community are met.
- The Customs authorities shall issue to the Approved Exporter a Customs approval number, which must appear on the declaration of origin or on the Community declaration of origin.
- This number is as follows: ECW + code of the Member State (3 digits) + number assigned by the Customs office (4 digits) + initial of the issuing Member State (ECW+000 /0000+ EM).



THE APPROVED EXPORTER

- The Customs authorities may subject the granting of the Approved Exporter status to any additional conditions they deem appropriate.
- Any economic operator holding the status of Authorized Operator or Authorized Economic Operator under the conditions laid down in Articles 39 to 41 of the ECOWAS Customs Code may benefit from the status of Approved exporter and shall be able to certify the Community origin of his/her products on his/her invoices.
- The processing time of application for approval as an Approved exporter shall not exceed thirty (30) days in accordance with Article 44§3 of the ECOWAS Customs Code.



CONDITIONS FOR GRANTING APPROVED EXPORTER STATUS

- Granting approval for Approved Exporter status is open to all operators who export goods of Community origin and who are based in the Customs territory of the Community
- Customs authorities of the exporting Member State may authorise any grant approval to any exporter who frequently exports products of Community origin to make declaration of origin on an invoice, irrespective of the value of the relevant products.
- To obtain this approval, the applicant, shall submit an application for any category of goods at a single customs office in the Member State.



VALIDITY OF THE APPROVED EXPORTER STATUS

- The approval granted to the Approved exporter shall be valid throughout the entire Customs territory of the Community and therefore allows the export of products of Community origin to all Member States. The Customs authorities of the Member States shall monitor the use of this approval by the Approved exporter;
- The Customs authorities may cancel the approval at any time. They shall do so in the event the Approved exporter no longer offers the guarantees or otherwise abuses the use of the issued approval.
- In the event of cancellation of the approval, the Approved exporter shall be notified.



RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPROVED EXPORTER

- The Approved Exporter shall be responsible for the accuracy of the information provided in the Approved Exporter's application and the information provided on the invoice declaration.
- In the event of any well-founded doubts about the invoice declaration made by the Approved Exporter, the importing Member State may request verification of the information either directly from the Approved Exporter, who shall respond to the request, or from the Customs Administration of the Member State in which the Approved Exporter is located, in which case the Customs Administration of the Member State of export shall respond directly to the verification request.
- The Approved Exporter who makes a declaration of origin on his/her invoice shall be required to keep a copy of the proof of origin and supporting documents for a period of five (5) years in accordance with Article 36 of the ECOWAS Customs Code.



SUPPLIER'S DECLARATION FOR COMMUNITY ORIGIN CERTIFICATION

- Where the Approved exporter is not the manufacturer, he/she will require a supplier declaration to support the origin declaration.
- The exporter must have the supplier's declaration certifying that the supplied products are originating goods.
- The supplier's declaration provides information, which supports the issuance of a proof of origin either the Certificate of Origin issued by the relevant authority or the invoice declaration of origin.



CONCLUSION

- To ensure the smooth implementation of the ECOWAS self-certification program, 5 countries in West Africa have been selected as pilot countries after which, this will be extended to all 15 member states;
- The EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Program is supporting ECOWAS Commission on this program.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION