Introduction to Rules of Origin
- General aspects -

WCO Knowledge Academy

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Definition of rules of origin

Rules that determine the “economic nationality” of goods in international trade.

This is done by dictating the sufficient level of processing that must take place in a given country in order for the product to be considered as having its origin in that country.
There are two kinds of Rules of Origin

1. Non-Preferential
2. Preferential
   - The focus of this training
Legal framework:
**MFN versus Preferential trade**

**Multilateral Trade Liberalization**
- Protection through tariffs only
  - GATT 1994, Art. XI
  - GATT 1994, Art. XII
- Tariff Reduction and Tariff Binding
  - GATT 1994, Preamble, Art. XXVIII bis, GATT 1994, Art. II:1(b)
- Most Favoured Nation Clause (MFN)
  - GATT 1994, Art. I
- National treatment
  - GATT 1994, Art. III

**Bilateral Trade Liberalization**
- Preferential Trade Arrangements
  - Enabling Clause (GSP etc)
  - Waivers
- GATT 1994, Art. XXIV
  - Reciprocal Tariff dismantling on substantially all the trade
- Decision of 1979
  - Differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries

**Multilateralism versus Regionalism**
Non-preferential rules of origin

- Used for determining the economic nationality of products subject to commercial policy measures
  - anti-dumping
  - tariff quotas etc.
- For statistical purposes
- For government procurement
- For application of ”Made in”-labelling in some countries
Preferential rules of origin

- Determine the nationality of a product subject to preferential tariff rates within an FTA/PTA

- “Except as otherwise provided in this Agreement, each Party shall eliminate its customs duties on originating goods of the other Party”

- Each FTA/PTA has its own sets of rules of origin
Rules of origin in Free Trade Agreements

- define the conditions under which a product is deemed as originating and therefore suitable for preferential treatment

- prevent deflection of trade and transhipment in an effort to (falsely) obtain origin and therefore preferential treatment
Prevention of trade deflection

Trade deflection

Country C
- Tariff = 10%

Country B
- Tariff = 0%
- Free trade agreement/Preferential access

Country A
- Rest of the world
  - Tariff = 20%

Rest of the world
- Rest of the world
  - Tariff = 20%
Problems of rules of origin?

- Two apparent problems…
  - ”The spaghetti bowl” of overlapping FTAs
  - Restrictive rules of origin distort trade
INCREASING NUMBER OF PREFERENTIAL AGREEMENTS

RTAs notified to the GATT/WTO (1948-2017) by year of entry into force

Evolution of Regional Trade Agreements in the world, 1948-2017

Note: Notifications of RTAs: goods, services & accessions to an RTA are counted separately. Physical RTAs: goods, services & accessions to an RTA are counted together. The cumulative lines show the number of notifications/physical RTAs that were in force for a given year.

Source: RTA Section, WTO Secretariat, 20 June 2017
THE SPAGHETTI BOWL OF COMPLEX AND OVERLAPPING RULES OF ORIGIN LEGISLATIONS
How can RoO distort trade?

- Sourcing from third countries is fundamental in a fragmented world economy

- RoO are seen by exporters as a cost
  - Production-related costs
  - Administrative costs

These costs have to be balanced against the benefit from fulfilling the RoO – which is tariff preference

Strict RoO often lead to lower utilization of trade preferences

The purpose of rules of origin – to prevent trade deflection – has to be balanced against this fact
Costs and advantages for business

• Costs:
  • Issuance fee for certificates in some countries
  • Internal costs (administration, staff, internal and external audits)
  • Longer processing times at the border in some countries

• Advantages:
  • Preferential treatment (lower duty rates)
Issues discussed at a global level

• African Continental Free Trade Area

• EU - Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), etc.

• Revised Kyoto Convention

• Preferential market access for Least Developed Countries
Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC)

Body of the Convention

General Annex

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapters 4 - 10

Specific Annex A
Specific Annex B - H
Specific Annex J
Specific Annex K

Chapters
Chapters
Chapters
Chapters

Each Annex to be accompanied by non-binding Guidelines
Rules of Origin in RKC

- Specific Annex K not part of the revision of the Kyoto Convention in the 1990’s
  - The Harmonization Work Programme (HWP) in the WTO Agreement on Rules of Origin (ARO) had just started
  - WCO Members decided to update the Specific Annex K after the finalization of the HWP

- Specific Annex K has remained (more or less) unchanged since the 1970’s
  - Need modernization to match modern Customs and trade practices
  - Modernization might lead to increased acceptance
International standards for Origin

- **WCO**
  - RKC = Only international agreement dealing with origin procedures

- **WTO (ARO)**
  - Disciplines on non-preferential rules of origin
  - Common declaration on preferential rules of origin

  **no agreed detailed international standards**

  **WCO to take lead in relation to rule making**

  **Customs procedures to be governed by Customs**
Spaghetti bowl effect

- No Harmonization of Rules of Origin foreseen

- Need for enforceable, binding provisions in relation to origin procedures, especially certification and verification
  - Facilitating for Customs - streamlined, enforceable rules
  - Facilitating for Trade – gives transparency and predictability

- WCO Members and Secretariat have developed guidelines on origin procedures. Principles to be included in RKC as approved by Council
Rules of Origin in RKC

- Comprehensive modernization of Specific Annex K

- Comprehensive update of the text regarding Binding Rulings to be compatible with WTO TFA

- Need effectively enforceable and binding provisions

- Modern provisions will lead to increase in acceptance of Specific Annex K
REVENUE PACKAGE - BACKGROUND

• A response to Members’ concerns regarding falling revenue returns in context of global financial crisis and declining duty rates

WCO Council Resolution – June 2009:

“The WCO Secretariat and Members should enhance even further the delivery of effective capacity building, especially as a response to declining revenue collection and obstacles to trade facilitation caused by the global economic downturn”
TOOLS DEVELOPED UNDER THE REVENUE PACKAGE PHASES I AND II

- **Origin Verification**
  - World Trends in Preferential Origin Certification and Verification (November 2011)

- **Origin Certification**
  - Comparative Study on Certification of Origin (February 2014)

- **Origin Irregularities**
  - Origin Irregularity Typology Study (July 2013)
  - Guide to Counter Origin Irregularities (excluding fraud)* (June 2015, updated in June 2018)

* Available for WCO Members only
TOOLS DEVELOPED UNDER THE REVENUE PACKAGE PHASES I, II AND III

- **Advance Rulings & Origin Infrastructure**
  - Technical Guidelines on Advance Rulings for Classification, Origin and Valuation (June 2015, updated in June 2018)
  - Diagnostic Tool on Tariff Classification, Valuation and Origin Work and Related Infrastructure* (June 2015)
  - Guidelines on Customs Infrastructure for Tariff Classification, Valuation and Origin* (June 2015)

- **Relation between HS and Rules of Origin**
  - Study on the use of "Change of Tariff Classification (CTC)-based rules" in Preferential Rules of Origin (February 2015)
  - Guide for Technical Update of Preferential Rules of Origin (December 2015) [Revenue Package Phase III]

- **Preferential Rules of Origin for LDCs**
  - Practical Guide to the Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Rules of Origin for LDCs (June 2018) [Revenue Package Phase III]

* Available for WCO Members only
Preferential market access for Least Developed Countries

- Decision encourages preference-granting WTO Members to
  - reform their rules of origin to make them simpler and more transparent, including
    - allowing for the use of up to 75% of non-originating materials,
    - eliminating exceptions or restrictions to tariff classification rules,
    - adopting simple transformation rules when based on specific manufacturing requirements,
    - expanding cumulation possibilities,
    - simplifying origin-related documentary requirements such as avoiding non-manipulation certificates and introducing self-certification.
Practical Guide to the Nairobi Decision on Rules of Origin for LDCs

• Objectives: Assist Members in facilitating preferential market access for LDCs

• Provide practical information on how to qualify for preferential treatment and detailed explanations of the elements in the Decision, and include guidance material from a Customs perspective

• For the use of Customs administrations which play the role of “competent issuing authority” in exporting LDCs and of exporters or producers in LDCs
Practical Guide to the Nairobi Decision on Rules of Origin for LDCs

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• Annex I : List of LDCs
• Annex II : Current Application of the Nairobi Decision in Preference-Granting Countries
Reference to the HS

Product Specific Rules
Product specific rules of origin are listed according to the HS.

Change in Tariff Classification (CTC) Rules
CTC rules require that the good is classified in a Chapter, heading or subheading (depending on the exact rule) different from all non-originating materials used.

Input materials from outside of the preferential zone
- Clay
  Heading 25.08
- Pigments
  Heading 32.07

Final product
- Heading 69.11
  *Originating good!*
Findings from the study

Proportion of “CTC-based rules”

In the 20 largest FTAs selected according to trade volume, the average proportion is **73.41%**. Moreover, it **exceeds 95%** in more than half of them.

**HS is extremely important for origin determination**

WCO website Top > Topics > Origin > Instruments and Tools > Comparative Study on Preferential Rules of Origin
Need for an Update of Rules of Origin


*If different editions of the HS are used for purposes of HS classification and origin determination, respectively…*

*Determinations of the origin becomes complicated and time-consuming*
Guide for Technical Update of Preferential Rules of Origin

- **Objectives**: Assist Members in the technical update of their existing Rules of Origin
- Provide practical information on **how to conduct a technical update of Rules of Origin** in relation to changes in the HS
- Technically updated Rules of Origin **may replace the existing ones or be used as a basis for reviewing and amending the former**, according to the procedures of applicable FTA
Guide for Technical Update of Preferential Rules of Origin (cont.)

• May also be used as training material to explain the mechanism for updating the Rules of Origin

• It is recommended that technical update be carried out at the same time as preparations for implementation of the new edition of the HS, preferably with assistance from officials responsible for the HS

• Non-binding

WCO website Top > Topics > Origin > Instruments and Tools > Guidelines
E-learning module

http://clikc.wcoomd.org/
Thank you.

Questions?

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