



HM Revenue
& Customs

Customs Declaration Service

HMRC will begin a phased launch of the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) in August 2018. CDS will replace the existing Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system, with all declarations taking place on CDS from early 2019. CHIEF currently processes declarations to facilitate the international movement of goods between the UK and non-EU countries. CHIEF will continue to run for a time to aid the transition to CDS.

Why is CDS replacing CHIEF?

CHIEF is one of the world's largest and most sophisticated electronic services for managing customs declaration processes, but it is nearly 25 years old and can't be easily adapted to new requirements. CDS will align with international trade standards, as set out in the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Kyoto Convention and currently being implemented in the UK through the Union Customs Code (UCC).

The decision to replace CHIEF with CDS was made before the EU referendum, however CDS will be scaled to handle any potential increases in the volume of declarations that may result from the UK's exit from the EU.

How will CDS be different?

The CHIEF system will already be familiar to you or your agent if you currently import or export goods outside the EU.

The CHIEF system:

- Processes declarations for goods entering and leaving the UK/EU through ports and airports.
- Calculates and pays the correct duty and taxes.
- Completes customs information electronically.

This functionality will still be available on CDS, but there will be a number of differences, including:

- Accessing CDS through a Government Gateway account on GOV.UK
- CDS will offer a range of new and existing services in one place, including viewing your previous import and export data on pre-defined reports, checking the tariff, applying for new authorisations and simplifications and checking your duty deferment statement
- Enhanced online help features, including digital self-service tools, how-to guides and checklists of useful information
- Some additional information will be required for declarations in order to align with the WCO/UCC, as shown below.

Main changes or additional data needed:

- An audit trail of previous document IDs
- Additional party types, such as buyer and seller
- Possible additional commercial references or tracking numbers
- Levelling – change between ‘header’ and ‘item’ for some data items

To align UK customs data with international standards, there will be changes to:

- Location of goods identification (based on UNLOCODE)
- The warehouse type code list
- Item tax lines, including method of payment codes
- Unit of quantity codes (ISO)
- The way customs procedure codes are quoted
- The number of items on a declaration – CDS will allow a maximum of 999 items on a customs declaration instead of the current 99 items on CHIEF

When will I need to start using CDS?

HMRC is currently building and testing CDS with software providers and Community System Providers (CSPs).

CDS will be phased in between August and early 2019, with CHIEF continuing to run during this time to aid the transition. If you use a software provider, they will inform you or your agent when you need to start making declarations on CDS.

You can also send your name and email address to communications.cds@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk to register for email updates from HMRC. The updates will provide regular information on CDS and any preparations you may need to make ahead of CDS going live. There will also be regular updates about CDS on GOV.UK.

You can also get further information from your trade association.