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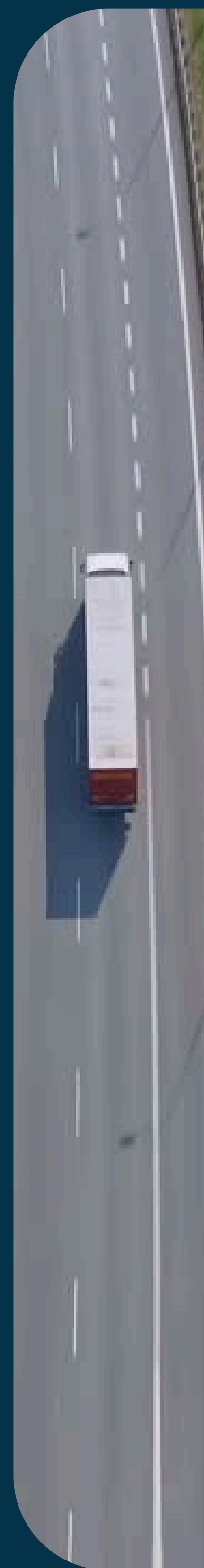
Direct Transport Rule



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What is the Direct Transport Rule?

The rule allows goods to receive preferential treatment when they are exported from one country to another, through a third country, without being processed or released into free circulation. The advantage of this is that goods may qualify for reduced or removed duties. The rule ensures that only items originating from the partner country benefit from the lower tariffs in the trade agreement.

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How do customs authorities ensure compliance?

Customs authorities will ask for evidence such as:

- Transit document
- Bill of lading
- Air waybill
- Rail/road consignment notes
- Certificate of Non-Manipulation

Essentially, customs are looking for a clear and traceable journey, from the exporting country to the destination, without any unauthorised stops or alterations.

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How can Importers and Exporters ensure compliance

- Keep a clear audit trail. That includes all transit documents, proof of origin, customs control records, and necessary certificates.
- Planning the route carefully.
- Working with trusted logistics providers who understand the rules.

Ultimately, it’s about showing that the goods followed a transparent, controlled, and compliant journey.

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Risks of non compliance

The biggest risk is losing the preferential tariff treatment, which means your goods could suddenly be subject to higher import duties. In some cases, customs might also impose penalties or detain or seize the goods if they suspect the rule was breached intentionally. So even small mistakes, like missing documents or unauthorised handling during transit, can have a big impact on cost and compliance.

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Goods split, stored, repacked, or relabeled in a third country

Changing the product during transit can raise doubts about its origin or condition. Unless the specific agreement allows these kinds of changes, they're likely to result in a breach of The Direct Transport Rule. It's safest to keep goods exactly as they were when exported. Splitting/ storing goods in a third country can be allowed but only under customs control, usually in a bonded warehouse.

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Is the Direct Transport Rule the same across all trade agreements?

Most Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) include some form of the Direct Transport Rule but the wording and requirements can vary. So it's important for importers and exporters to check the exact rules in the specific agreement they're using and make sure they're following the correct version of the rule.