



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

Advancing Free Trade
for Asia-Pacific **Prosperity**

Trade Facilitation Measures to Mitigate Trade Disruptions: COVID-19 Lessons and Response Toolkit

APEC Subcommittee on Customs Procedures

November 2021



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1. CHAPTER ONE: REPORT ON STUDY FINDINGS

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak significantly disrupted global supply chains and trade flows. From the closing of borders to the application of strict social distancing measures, economies introduced a range of measures to protect and secure their supply links. During these unprecedented challenges, Customs administrations have played a vital role in facilitating the movement of goods across borders. They have done so while contending with social distancing, ensuring import and export compliance, and prioritizing the expedited movement of essential goods. With the guidance of key intergovernmental bodies such as the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Customs administrations made several adjustments to their business-as-usual settings.

In an effort to better prepare border agencies for any future global supply chain disruption, the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) conducted a study on the 'lessons learnt' from the COVID-19 pandemic. This study found the key measures adopted by APEC's SCCP members to facilitate trade amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The lessons learnt project also involved discussions with the private industry and international organizations the effectiveness of these measures. This work culminated in the development of this document - "Trade Facilitation Measures to Mitigate Trade Disruptions: COVID-19 Lessons and Response Toolkit". The project provides a comprehensive set of best practices that can be adopted by Customs administrations to facilitate trade and expedite cargo.

The wider initiative seeks two project outcomes:

1. To develop a framework of trade facilitation measures that could be permanently adopted. The measures outlined have been founded on collective experience, as being adopted and proven successful during the pandemic.
2. To develop a SCCP Toolkit in which economies can find trade Facilitation Measures to help minimize any future disruptions in the supply chain. The toolkit is based on research that identified the trade facilitation measures that were adopted by Customs administrations in response to COVID-19.

Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, APEC economies adopted a range of immediate and unprecedented measures in order to stop the COVID-19 virus from spreading to communities. These measures include closing their borders, requiring the use of masks and social distancing. While necessary, these extraordinary measures significantly impacted global supply chains and trade flows. Preliminary research indicates businesses of all sizes were affected, from ports getting congested due to measures focused only on facilitating essential cargo to logistic businesses trying to move non-essential cargo out of their warehouses. In particular, airfreight services were affected due to capacity being dramatically restricted with border closures as online sales volumes continued to increase. This generated logistical challenges on fast freight services. In this environment, customs administrations have played a vital role in facilitating the movement of all goods across borders while at the same time dealing with the border closures, social distancing, prioritizing the expedited movement of essential goods, and ensuring import and export compliance requirements.

Customs administrations in the APEC region responded to changes by quickly introducing a range of new import and export measures that have not been adopted in normal border clearance processes in order to streamline the importation and exportation of goods, in particular of medical supplies and food. These measures included accepting electronic versions of trade documents/paperless trading, accepting electronic payments, expedited clearance of essential goods via pre-clearance of shipments, deferral of customs fees and taxes, introducing new ways of risk managing cargoes, among others. These were timely and practical responses with the aim of helping businesses and facilitating the flow of essential goods. Many of these measures are also trade facilitation

measures under the WTO Agreement of Trade Facilitation (TFA)¹ that economies are signatory to, while some areas are covered in the APEC Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan II (SCFAP II).²

This stresses that while legitimate international trade is an essential driver for economic prosperity, the global trading system is vulnerable to a range of disruptions that can severely damage the entire global economy. As government organizations that control and administer the international movement of goods, Customs administrations are in a unique position to provide increased resilience to the global supply chain and to contribute to socio-economic development through revenue collection and trade facilitation.

How the Lessons Learnt has been developed

Lessons Learnt has been developed by drawing from the experiences of Customs authorities and the findings from the *COVID-19 Lessons Learnt and for Customs and Trade Facilitation* workshop. The project has been guided by the Statement on COVID-19 by APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade³, the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA) and the Putrajaya vision. The project also takes into consideration the SCCP's Terms of Reference and Strategic Plan, which aligns with the new vision.

The pandemic has had immense effects globally and has shown a need to be better prepared for future disruptions. Hence, the inspiration to this project has been to learn from our experiences and develop measures that will make customs agencies more resilient and responsive to a range of possible trade disruptions.

Statement on COVID-19 by APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade⁴

In 2020, the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade issued a statement recognising the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The statement offered that APEC members will work to facilitate the flow of essential goods and services to fight the pandemic including medicines, medical supplies and equipment, agriculture and food products and other supplies across borders, and minimise disruptions to the global supply chains.

The Ministers encouraged economies to pursue facilitative measures that will expedite our economic rebound. The statement directed coordinated approach to collecting and sharing information on policies and measures, including stimulus packages for the immediate responses to the economic crisis and long-term recovery packages, which could help respond to the economic challenges brought on by the pandemic.

This project draws on this statement, by considering the measures adopted by economies throughout the Pandemic and offering guidelines toward a healthy, resilient and inclusive Asia-Pacific community. The project aims to ensure that the strength and learning of one economy may translate into best practices for the region as a whole. Through these measures, APEC economies can effectively work towards mitigating the health and economic impact caused by COVID-19, fast-track the revitalisation of the region's economy and foster its secure growth moving forward.

APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040

This project supports APEC's vision of an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040, for the prosperity of all our people and future generations. It does this by taking as guidance the three economic drivers which underpin the pursuing of the vision and promoting measures of good governance and stakeholder engagements to assist with the continuous improvement of APEC. The project advances measures

¹ WTO. (n.d.). *Trade Facilitation*. https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/tradfa_e.htm

² APEC. (2016, November 14-15). *Suggested Framework for Phase Two of the Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan 2017- 2020 (SCFAP Phase II)*. Concluding Senior Officials' Meeting, Lima, Peru. http://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2016/SOM/CSOM/16_csom_012app15.pdf

³ APEC. (2021, June 5). *APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting Joint Statement 2021*. Wellington, New Zealand. https://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Sectoral-Ministerial-Meetings/Trade/2021_MRT

⁴ Ibid.

that will maintain APEC's unique position as the premier forum for regional economic cooperation as well as a modern, efficient and effective incubator of ideas.

The APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 aims to achieve this vision by pursuing the three economic drivers, of which we have taken as guidance for this toolkit:

Trade and Investment: To ensure that the Asia-Pacific remains the world's most dynamic and interconnected regional economy, we acknowledge the importance of, and will continue to work together to deliver, a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable trade and investment environment. We reaffirm our support for agreed upon rules of the WTO in delivering a well-functioning multilateral trading system and promoting the stability and predictability of international trade flows. We will further advance the Bogor Goals and economic integration in the region in a manner that is market-driven, including through the work on the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda which contributes to high standard and comprehensive regional undertakings. We will promote seamless connectivity, resilient supply chains and responsible business conduct.

Innovation and Digitalisation: To empower all our people and businesses to participate and grow in an interconnected global economy, we will foster an enabling environment that is, among others, market-driven and supported by digital economy and innovation. We will pursue structural reforms and sound economic policies to promote innovation as well as improve productivity and dynamism. We will strengthen digital infrastructure, accelerate digital transformation, narrow the digital divide, as well as cooperate on facilitating the flow of data and strengthening consumer and business trust in digital transactions.

Strong, Balanced, Secure, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth: To ensure that the Asia-Pacific region is resilient to shocks, crises, pandemics and other emergencies, we will foster quality growth that brings palpable benefits and greater health and wellbeing to all, including MSMEs, women and others with untapped economic potential. We will intensify inclusive human resource development as well as economic and technical cooperation to better equip our people with the skills and knowledge for the future. We will promote economic policies, cooperation and growth which support global efforts to comprehensively address all environmental challenges, including climate change, extreme weather and natural disasters, for a sustainable planet.

WORKSHOP: COVID-19 Lessons Learnt and for Customs and Trade Facilitation

The *COVID-19 Lessons Learnt for Customs and Trade Facilitation workshop* was held on 11 June 2021 by the New Zealand Customs Service. The main objective of the workshop was to learn from customs administrations and the private sector about their experiences, and trade facilitation practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The workshop was broken down into segments where panel speakers shared their experiences, lessons learnt, ideas, projects, policy papers and studies. About eighty-four participants from 14 member economies attended the three-hour virtual workshop. This included APEC official delegates, delegates from APEC secretariat, official observers, non-member guests from the private industry, intergovernmental organisations and academia. Attendees were able to learn about the responses of customs administrations and the private industry to the COVID-19 situation. A post-workshop participant survey was sent virtually to all confirmed attendees. The survey had a 13% response rate, and overall, the attendees found the workshop useful.

The first session, *CUSTOMS RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC*, started with a panel of experts from the WCO and Customs administrations from Japan, Peru and the United States. Representatives shared information on how they responded to the pandemic, their experiences and lessons learnt. This session helped to learn some of the responses that Customs administrations practiced during the course of the pandemic. From adopting innovative ways for physical examination of cargo to making the most of digital technologies to streamline goods. This session also informed participants on the various challenges that Customs administrations faced.

Leading executives from private businesses and industry bodies participated in the second session, *TALK – COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CUSTOMS TRADE FACILITATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES*. In this session, manufacturers, logistics businesses and industry bodies had an interactive discussion on their experiences and

perspectives on trade facilitation, as well as, providing some opportunities and ideas for change. This session covered a wide range of policy challenges for global supply chains. Many of these challenges were related to supply chain resiliency. Not all had a negative connotation for the private industry; and the pandemic generated an increased need to digitalize. Cross-border e-commerce, an area that was already booming, saw an exponential increase in sales of low value goods. This has increased the ability of small and medium businesses to participate in international trade. The private industry gave some ideas on how to better expedite the payment of duties and taxes to facilitate trade flows.

Lastly, the third session, *OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER INTEGRATION – STUDIES AND INITIATIVES FOR TRADE FACILITATION*, gathered researchers and policy makers, who discussed and presented the most recent updates on policy, research and projects. This session provided an understanding of the work that is currently taking place. We now know that advocating bodies and intergovernmental organisations are closely monitoring the impact of the pandemic on global supply chains. We also know that not only Customs administrations had to reallocate resources, but other government organisations also had to work towards helping the private industry with other aspects of trade facilitation. We expect that more research and policy papers will give us a better understating of the work carried out by policy makers and scholars.

The workshop provided a valuable platform for SCCP members and its stakeholders to discuss and share their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, SCCP members were able to understand the difficulties that the private industry faced with trade facilitation, and the studies that are taking place. This workshop was a crucial platform for the development of this toolkit. The toolkit were informed by the experiences and challenges shared throughout the sessions.

Key takeaways generated from the workshop discussions include the importance of:

1. International collaboration between customs agencies (C2C);
2. Inter-agency collaboration of border agencies at domestic level;
3. Accelerating the use of current tools and emerging resources, such as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) and the WTO TFA;
4. Readiness and responsiveness; putting in place contingency plans, prioritization/re-allocation of resources/staff and other measures that can be quickly adopted in times of crisis; and
5. Digitalization and modernization of Customs procedures.

Responding to Trade Disruptions

This is intended to be a project for Customs administrations to respond to a range of trade disruptions. Disaster recovery and emergency planning are not something new for Customs. However, it is the first time that all customs agencies have had to respond to the same disruption, at the same time. COVID-19 has thus provided us with an opportunity to draw on a wide range practical and real-time measure that have been introduced and “road tested” by Customs administrations.

Trade disruptions

The trade facilitation measures discussed in this document are largely based on the experience of APEC Customs administrations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, whose affects continue to be felt. The measures have, however, been organized and described in a way that can be applied to any trade disruption. While we have been focused on the pandemic situation there are several causes of trade disruptions. These can include:

- Pandemics (including Different variants & vectors)
- Terrorist or security incidents (e.g., cyber-attacks, human error, bombings)
- Natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, floods)
- Financial shocks

- Staff shortages and Industrial action
- Supply chain/ logistics failures (e.g., the Suez Canal incident)

One of the important takeaways is that no two situations are the same. We must be creative and flexible in developing (and adjusting) border responses to any trade disruption. And while all traders are going to be affected by supply chain disruptions, some will have greater resilience than others.

What happens during a trade disruption?

There are a range of impacts that can emerge from any form of trade disruption, and many of these have been on full display during the COVID-19 situation. Highly interrelated supply chains and hubbing arrangements, combined with just-in-time inventories mean that some localized delays can quickly escalate into major disruptions that can take a considerable time to clear. For example, the 6-day blockage of the Suez Canal in March 2021 caused by a container vessel becoming wedged across the canal led to global supply chain disruption.

Developing responses to trade disruptions at the border will depend on assessing several factors that need to be considered:

Scope

Encompasses the different areas that could be affected by the trade disruption. Often, a wide range of disruptions may emerge from a single incident. For example, industrial action at a port may start off localized, but over a period of weeks then spread, and over a period have impact in the movement of containers to other ports. On the other hand, some incidents only have one, direct area of impact.

Sequencing

Understanding how events may escalate, and what the future may look like. The current pandemic started slowly but spread relatively quickly. The immediate threat of the virus itself was then followed by long term impacts on flight, shipping and trade patterns. In contrast, a major earthquake would need an immediate and rapid response, followed by a long recovery period.

Severity

The extremity of trade disruption impacts, accounting both direct and indirect impacts. Some slower moving disruptions such as pandemics can be planned for and handled, but sudden shocks, such as a major computer virus causing outages would have an almost immediate impact. In both these cases initial supply chain delays would be followed by financial pressure on traders and logistics companies that will worsen as the disruption extends.

Timeframe

Some of the impacts of trade disruptions will have immediate observable consequences but others may emerge or manifest in the medium to long term. Disruptions may be temporary, with visibility of when it will come to an end; others may have unforeseen consequences that continue to come up years after the initial situation.

Indirect impacts

Looking beyond the direct impacts of a trade disruption into other areas that may be affected. Supply chain disruptions are not always linear. In some cases, the consequences may be unexpected. In the case of COVID-19 the disease slows down movement of people which meant shortages of skilled labor at ports of entry reducing the ability to move cargo efficiently.

Some of the impacts that trade disruptions can cause are listed below. While these are mostly based around the COVID-19 pandemic, they are likely to also be relevant in other situations.

- Changes in an economies' trade patterns
 - Strong/immediate demand for certain essential goods e.g., aid, rescue equipment, food, medical supplies, and components

- Traditional suppliers may be unavailable
- Substitution in trade may occur with the types of goods imported and exported changing
- Offshore suppliers and shipping routes can change
- Pathways may change (e.g., a shift from air freight to sea freight)
- Access to certain ports may be limited or halted
- Transport and logistics costs may increase
- Port congestion and delays can occur
- Staff shortages, especially of skilled workers, can occur at all points of the supply chains
- Importers and exporters face financial hardship as turnover falls in some areas
- Public, Government and industry have increased expectations for rapid movement of goods
- There may be a need to physically separate people wherever possible or manage processes with elevated sanitation requirements
- New trade restriction measures may be introduced in other economies impacting trade

It is important for border agencies to be aware of the drivers of each of these impacts, and to understand whether there may be any significant downstream consequences. This can help to inform the customs response. In most cases we will only be able to try and mitigate the consequences of the trade disruption, but it is always helpful to understand the wider context and drivers.

Building our resilience going forward

The main purpose of this report and toolkit is to offer measures that can be adopted to respond to supply chain disruptions. Some of the measures adopted by Customs agencies were specific responses COVID-19 and clearly only sustainable in the short term. However, there are also measures that could be made permanent and measures that require preparation to be deployed.

Measures that could be adopted permanently

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted clear problems in many of our old processes. Some measures economies were forced to adopt have proven effective for facilitating trade, decreasing delays for moving goods across borders, and simplifying, modernizing, and harmonising export and import processes. These measures also stand against several criteria, including (1) Alignment with APEC mission and priorities, (2) Consideration to WCO Trade Recovery Guidelines⁵, (3) Consideration of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards⁶, (4) Alignment with the WTO TFA, (5) Enabling a more inclusive trading environment (6) Promoting modern and secure customs procedures within the APEC region, (7) Already proven effectiveness in handling the pandemic, and (8) Offering long term benefits to APEC economies.

Some of these measures include:

- Paperless Trade
- Single Window portals
- Pre-clearance of shipments
- 24-hour contact teams and support centres to address border delays
- Plan of action
- Enhanced communications with traders
- Improved Interagency coordination at the border

Taking into consideration our experiences throughout the pandemic, as well as other implementation processes such as consultation with key stakeholders, we can ensure that these measures are adopted to the

⁵ World Customs Organization. (2010). *WCO Trade Recovery Guidelines*. <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/trade-recovery-guidelines.pdf?la=en>

⁶ WCO. (2021). *WCO SAFE Framework of Standards*. <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/safe-framework-of-standards.pdf?la=en>

highest of standards. The permanent adoption of these measures will stimulate economic recovery and create more connected, secure, and resilient global supply chains across the APEC region. This offers a chance to turn unprecedented global crisis into an opportunity to build better and more resilient customs processes.

Preparatory Measures

We note that not all the measures in the toolkit can be quickly deployed. Especially in relation to measures which require IT and/or legislation changes, some preparation and flexibility is required. By implementing preparatory measures, we can ensure that our processes are more readily able to respond to the next major disruption.

Some of the measures we recommend economies explore include:

- Recognition of e-versions of documents in legislation
- Allowing for adjustment of risk management approaches
- Establishing better communication channels with the private sector
- Ensuring suitable workforce flexibility, so staff are able and ready to be redeployed
- Moving towards IT changes, especially those that enable online submission of documents, contactless trading and preclearance
- Instituting regulatory discretion over timeframes, documentary requirements and application of penalties.

It is imperative that customs administrations also continue sharing their experiences so that customs can learn from each other. Similarly, customs administrations should continue enhancing communication with the private industry to better understand the challenges and the policy issues that need to be addressed by all. customs administrations should also continue collaborating with the WCO and the WTO.

Implementing the WTO TFA

One of the most consistent findings from reviews and analysis of the responses to COVID-19 at the border, was that many of the measures that were most effective in addressing trade disruption were those aligned to the WTO TFA. It was also clear that economies that already had WTO TFA measures in place were better able to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The drivers for adopting and aligning with the TFA at the border are primarily around opportunities to improve economic efficiency (and it is an objective of the Subcommittee on Customs Procedures to align with the TFA), but it is also apparent that many of these same measures help to improve the resilience of economies to trade disruptions.

The TFA contains a range of provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, measures to encourage paperless trading and steps to encourage effective cooperation between customs and other border agencies. Elements of the TFA are especially important in facilitating the import and clearance of vaccines and other critical supplies and minimizing contacts between people.

Several key elements of the TFA are considered particularly relevant to responding to trade disruptions and recovery. These include:

- Making information available through the Internet (Article 1)
- Pre-arrival processing (Article 7.1)
- Electronic payments (Article 7.2)
- Release and clearance of goods ahead of final determination of Customs duties (Article 7.3)
- Risk management (Import and Export controls) (Article 7.4)

- Use of Post Clearance Audit (Article 7.5)
- Expedited shipments (Article 7.8)
- Perishable goods (Article 7.9)
- Border Agency Cooperation (Article 8)
- Simplified import, export, and transit formalities (Article 10.1)
- Acceptance of Copies (Article 10.2)
- Single window systems (Article 10.3)

These elements of the TFA both strengthen border systems and help to enable temporary responses to be introduced. The decision to adopt and align with the TFA is a significant one for economies, as it can involve significant investment, as well as significant shifts in processes and behaviors. Not only should this decision be considered by economies on its own merits as a standalone measure, but the COVID-19 pandemic has now also made clear that it is also worthwhile considering the benefits of the TFA in preparing for, and responding to, supply chain disruptions.

More information is available through the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility, which provides assistance to WTO Members to help reap the full benefits of the TFA:

<https://www.tfafacility.org/trade-facilitation-agreement-facility>

2. CHAPTER TWO: TOOLKIT ON TRADE FACILITATION MEASURES TO MITIGATE TRADE DISRUPTIONS

How to use the toolkit

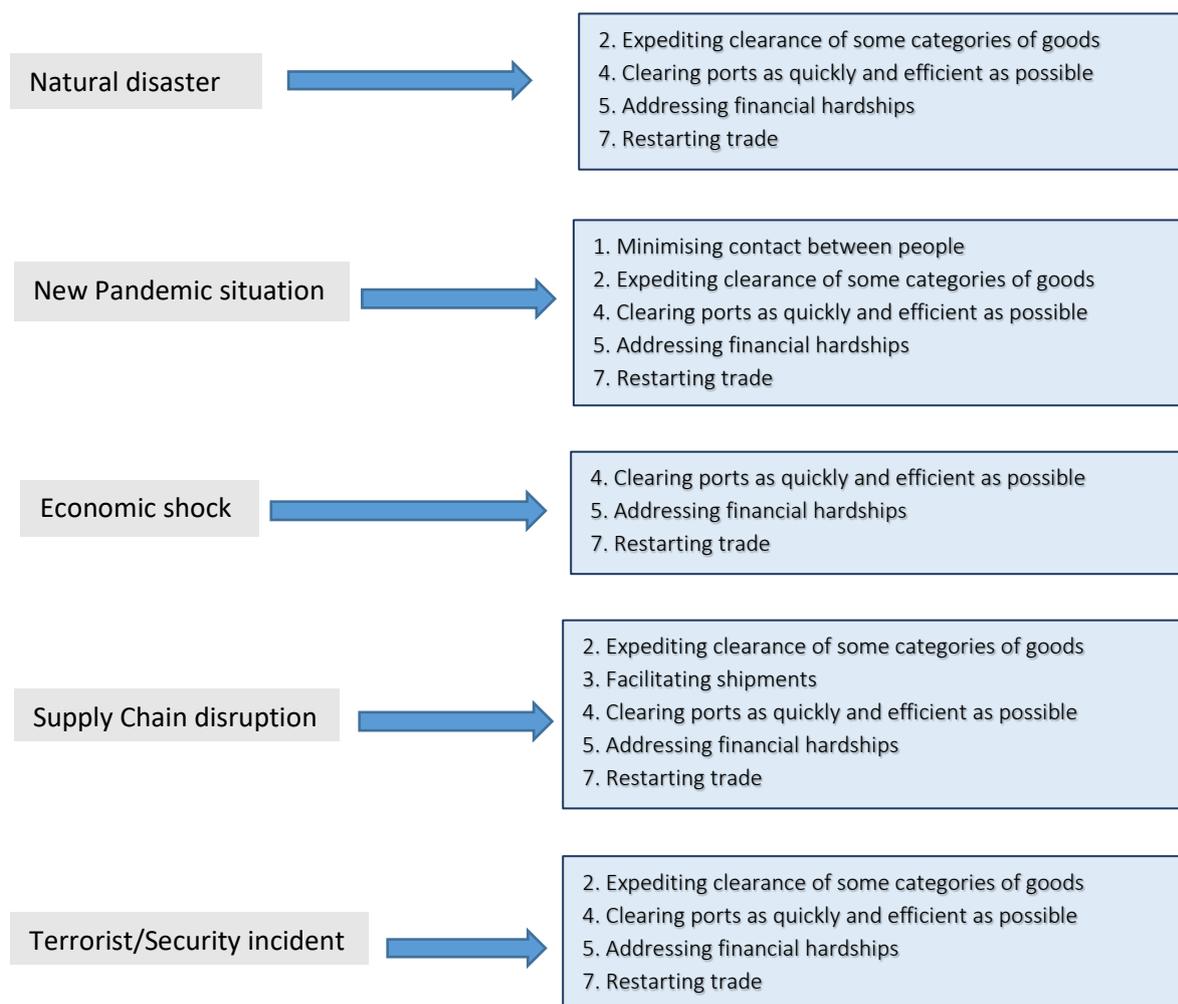
The Toolkit will firstly discuss the various elements of the customs response throughout APEC. Figure 1 below shows the various responses taken by customs administrations during the pandemic. These responses were listed into eight categories, namely, (1) minimizing contact between people; (2) expediting clearance of some categories of goods; (3) facilitating shipments; (4) clearing ports as quickly and efficiently as possible; (5) addressing financial hardships; (6) risk management; (7) restarting trade; and (8) organizing customs.

Figure 1: Responses to tackle the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic



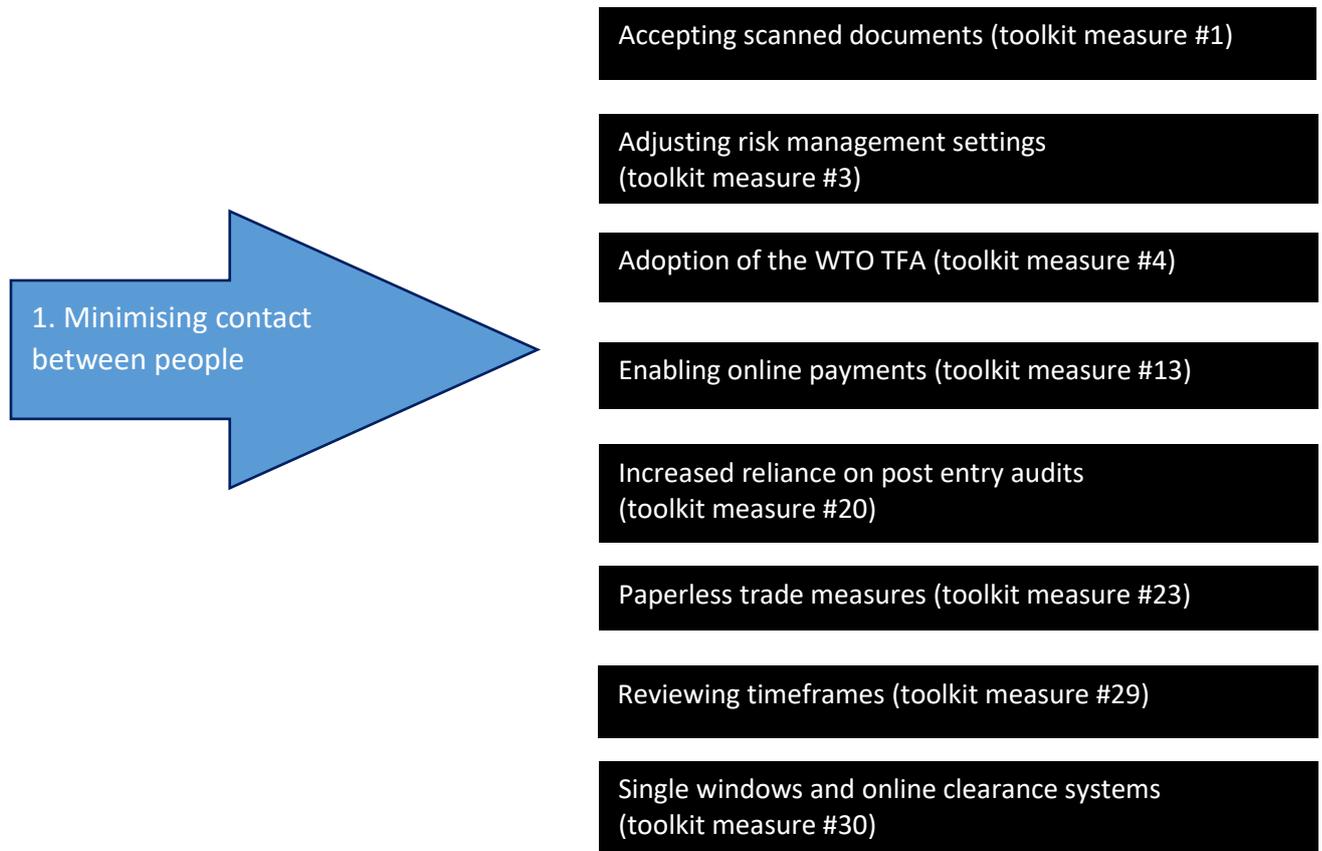
The responses listed above can be applied to different crisis scenarios. Figure 2 below shows the range of crises and the responses that were applied by customs agencies. For example, in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, minimizing contact between customs staff and clients was important to protect both staff and the public. Another main focus during the pandemic has been expediting the clearance of some categories of goods, such as personal protective equipment, test kits, vaccines and vaccines related goods. In a natural disaster scenario, the main focus would instead likely be prioritizing certain goods, such as rescue equipment and relief goods.

Figure 2: Responses to crisis scenarios



There are a range of measures that can be adopted to assist with each response (see Figure 3 below). For example, in the COVID-19 pandemic, minimizing contact between people has been a standard; however customs administrations needed to continue operating to facilitate goods crossing borders. In this regard, customs administrations used a range of measures to facilitate trade, such as accepting scanned documents, enabling online payments and adjusting physical inspections of imported cargo.

Figure 3: Sample of measures adopted



Lastly, each measure will be thoroughly explained, and guidance will be provided on adopting such measure as depicted in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Sample guide on adoption of measures

# Measure	
1. Description	<i>What does this look like?</i>
2. Objective	<i>What will this achieve?</i>
3. Variations	<i>Are there different ways this measure can operate?</i>
4. Implementation	<i>What are the steps and complexities involved in implementing this measure?</i>
5. Risk and benefits	<i>What are the trade-offs that must be considered?</i>
6. Examples	<i>What other economies have adopted this? What are the experiences from these changes?</i>
7. Resources	<i>What are the resources to take into account?</i>

The Customs Response

Customs administrations have important powers that exist nowhere else in government - the authority to inspect cargo and goods shipped into, through and out of an economy. Customs also have the authority to refuse entry or exit and the authority to expedite entry of goods. Customs administrations require information about goods being imported, and often require information about goods exported. They can, with appropriate legislation, require that information to be provided in advance and electronically. Given the unique authorities and expertise, customs played a central role in responding to the challenges of the pandemic.

The response of customs administrations has been organized into eight broad areas, which are briefly explained in this section. Some of these responses were more difficult to carry out than others, depending on systems that were already in place and the level of capacity needed for implementation. To achieve each of these responses, a number of measures needed to be adopted. Some of these measures have been noted under each category. While there is some obvious duplication between the seven areas identified, each is applicable in different situations to various extents.

1. Minimising contact between people

Social distancing in the workplace has been a key element of the response to COVID-19. In the customs trade environment, this has meant setting up arrangements that limit or remove the need for face-to-face contact between Customs Officers and traders.

COVID-19, and the measures set in place to limit its spread, has meant a dramatic shift in the number of people working remotely and connecting with family and friends online. Besides impacting the way people work, it has dramatically affected consumer consumption. We see this in the number of goods and services that are purchased online, many of which are transported across borders and arrive at people's doorsteps.

These accelerated trends are reflected in a July 2020 report published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It showed that the pandemic had led to a 50 per cent increase in e-commerce orders in Europe, 70 per cent in Asia-Pacific and a 120 per cent increase in the United States year-on year.⁷ Even when the global economy emerges from COVID-19, more people and organisations can be expected to continue relying on digital solutions.

To ensure the movement for essential medical and food supplies, members have implemented a range of electronic measures aimed at streamlining processes and documentary requirements at the border. Examples include establishing specific COVID-19 online information portals, as well as the acceptance of digital trade-related documents in place of hard copies.

The application of such measures, which many members have taken already, align with Article 7.2 of the TFA, which recommends allowing the electronic payment of duties, taxes, fees, and charge. Meanwhile, Article 10.4 stipulates that members are called to establish or maintain a Single Window to allow traders to submit documents and data requirements through a single-entry point and just one time. For many members, allowing traders to electronically submit documents is a straightforward process. In fact, many do so already. It was also clear during the pandemic that economies which already have digital processes in place, were better placed to adopt measures that minimise the contact between people.

The acceptance of digital copies is not as straight forward for other economies, which goes to show the significant divides that remain. Deficiencies range from Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, payments solutions to broadband connectivity. The scale of this divide is further underlined when you consider that, for some developing countries, less than five per cent of the

⁷ OECD. (2020). *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Leveraging digital trade to fight the consequences of COVID-19*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/leveraging-digital-trade-to-fight-the-consequences-of-covid-19-f712f404/>

population buy goods and services online.⁸ During any crisis or major shock, such gaps simply exacerbate existing inequalities. In this space, the pandemic has exasperated the need for capacity building to ensure that the APEC region are able to have a coordinated approach to minimising the contact between people.

Measures to support minimizing the contact between people include:

- Accepting scanned documents (toolkit measure #1)
- Adjusting risk management settings (toolkit measure #3)
- Adoption of the WTO TFA (toolkit measure #4)
- Enabling online payments (toolkit measure #13)
- Increased reliance on post entry audits (toolkit measure #20)
- Paperless trade measures (toolkit measure #23)
 - Electronic certificates of origin
 - Exempt stamping requirements
 - Electronic delivery orders
- Reviewing timeframes (toolkit measure #29)
- Single windows and online clearance systems (toolkit measure #30)

2. Expediting clearance of some categories of goods

All economies found that there was a requirement to take measures to speed up the clearance of certain urgent supplies, including medical equipment, medicines, personal protective equipment, and disinfectants. In any major crisis scenario, customs administrations are responsible for expediting the clearance of certain categories of goods. In the past year, administrations have had to contend with COVID-19 related restrictions, while at the same time ensuring the provision of medical supplies, such as protective gear, medicines, and vaccines.

In April 2020, the WCO and the WHO came together to update the HS (Harmonized System) Classification Reference for COVID-19 Medical Supplies.⁹ As a result, customs authorities were able to fast-track clearance of these goods.

On 25 July 2020, APEC Ministers issued a joint statement declaring that each APEC economy, consistent with its obligations under the TFA (Article 7.8 in this context), should expedite and facilitate the flow essential goods. This includes waiving/reducing fees and charges in respect of transit during the COVID-19 crisis; establishing simplified transit procedures, reducing documentation requirements, opening priority lanes, expediting procedures to check the health conditions of drivers, expediting disinfection procedures.

These measures, which seek to ensure that aid reaches those who need it promptly, are in line with the criteria laid down in Article 7.8 of the WTO TFA. In the current context, member economies have taken a series of actions to that end. To name a few, this includes establishing priority clearance channels, temporarily eliminating import tariffs on critical goods, and simplifying documentary requirements.¹⁰ With the sentiment for change there, it is increasingly important that members look again at the relevant the procedures contained in WTO-TFA.

⁸ UNCTAD. (2020). *Digital Economy Update: The COVID-19 Crisis: Accentuating the Need to Bridge Digital Divides*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlinf2020d1_en.pdf

⁹ WCO. (2020). *Joint WCO/WHO HS classification list for COVID-19 medical supplies issued*. <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/april/joint-wco-who-hs-classification-list-for-covid-19-medical-supplies-issued.aspx>

¹⁰ UNCTAD. (2020). *COVID-19: A Ten Point Action Plan to Strengthen International Trade and Transport Facilitation in Times of Pandemic*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/presspb2020d3_en.pdf

Measures to support expediting clearance of some categories of goods include:

- Additional resources to clear urgent shipments (toolkit measure #2)
 - Temporarily re-deploying staff to clear urgent shipments
- Advance clearance of shipments (toolkit measure #5)
- Disaster relief pathways (toolkit measure #10)
- Flexible regulations (toolkit measure #18)
 - Have clear definitions of what “essential supplies” are
- Help desks & 24-hour assistance (toolkit measure #19)
- Prioritizing clearance for relief/emergency supplies (toolkit measure #24)
 - New processes to expedite clearance of essential supplies
- Proactive communication with stakeholders (toolkit measure #25)
 - Proactive analysis of supply chains for critical goods
- Removing/ reducing duty on critical supplies (toolkit measure #27)
- Removing/reducing or deferring duty, taxes and fees on certain supplies (toolkit measure #28)

3. Facilitating shipments

Beyond the clearance of urgent supplies there is need to further facilitate the movement of goods across borders. Despite strong calls for cooperation, the response of each member to COVID-19 has been unilateral, driven by domestic considerations and impacts at the domestic level. We have seen this in the uncoordinated closure of borders, unilateral export restrictions on certain goods, advanced shipment notifications and requisitions.¹¹ Many economies have used measures, such as banning the export of agricultural products and other medical supplies, citing the need to prevent shortages in their own economies. While Article XI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 allows members to temporarily apply export bans to relieve critical shortages, the strategy is costly.

Export bans tend to restrict supply to world markets and inflate prices. The export restrictions of one economy are also restrictions on imports of another, especially in developing and low-income economies which rely on trade for access to those supplies. For economies that are net importers, such restrictions also undermine their manufacturing capacity. This is because their operations are contingent on sourcing enough parts, components, and raw materials from global supply chains. As a result, border posts are crowded, controls have multiplied, and truck queues are getting longer. All of this contributes to trade proceeding at a slower pace, in times where agility and efficiency should be the highest priority to ensure an adequate response to the pandemic.¹²

Discussions on digital trade are more important than ever, not just to ensure that economies can respond to the immediate issues raised by the COVID-19 crisis, but also to enable an inclusive recovery.

For those economies that are landlocked, the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention 1975) is a trade facilitation tool worth considering.¹³ The convention ensures that goods may travel across borders, with minimum interference enroute, all the while offering a set of safeguards to avoid smuggling. Specific requirements include the construction of the load compartments to strict Customs control and secure sealing at the point of departure.

Measures to support the facilitation of shipments include:

¹¹ OECD. (2020). *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): No policy maker is an island: The international regulatory co-operation response to the COVID-19 crisis*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/no-policy-maker-is-an-island-the-international-regulatory-co-operation-response-to-the-covid-19-crisis-3011ccd0/#endnotea0z11>

¹² Ugaz, P. & Sun, S. (2020). How Countries can Leverage Trade Facilitation to Defeat the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Trade Facilitation Section, UNCTAD*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlinf2020d2_en.pdf

¹³ UNNExT. (2014). *Towards an Enabling Paperless Trade and Transport Environment: Towards Electronic TIR Customs Transit System (eTIR)*. <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/brief12.pdf>

- Accepting scanned documents (toolkit measure #1)
- Adoption of the WTO TFA (toolkit measure #4)
- Advance clearance of shipments (toolkit measure #5)
- Crisis teams to act as circuit breakers for delays (toolkit measure #9)
 - Temporarily re-deploying staff to clear goods
- Disaster relief pathways (Green lanes) (toolkit measure #10)
- Disruption planning (toolkit measure #11)
- Early warning system for trade delays and blockages (toolkit measure #12)
- Enabling online payments (toolkit measure #13)
- Expanding deferred and delayed payment arrangements (toolkit measure #14)
- Extending time limits for payments and financial obligations (toolkit measure #16)
- Flexibility of temporary entry and carnet requirements (toolkit measure #17)
- Help desks & 24-Hour Assistance (toolkit measure #19)
- Increased reliance on post entry audits (toolkit measure #20)
- Leverage off existing trusted trader arrangements to clear shipments (toolkit measure #21)
- Reviewing timeframes (toolkit measure #29)
- Waiving penalties for errors (toolkit measure #32)

4. Clearing ports as quickly and efficiently as possible

An increasing number of governments have issued general guidance regarding social distancing and the re-organising of day-to-day operations. With the transport and mobility sector essential to ensuring economic continuity, collective and coordinated action is indispensable.

The experiences of members this far show that emergency transport services must be prioritised within the overall transport system. While the pandemic has affected members differently, thereby leading to some differences in the severity of the public health measures enacted, members' interests have coalesced as far as clearing port congestion is concerned. This is because members, in the interests of their own health system and broader economic wellbeing, understand the need to keep essential goods moving.

Implementing risk management, which prioritizes border activities for imports and exports, allows low-risk, critical supplies to bypass clearance controls. These measures should be combined with reasonable random audit procedures to confirm compliance with requirements. This could apply to critical products subject to pre-shipment inspection.¹⁴

Inspections and release of relief consignment can take place outside customs controlled areas and business hours. To speed up the process, members have allowed inspections to be carried out at the importer's premises provided it is done with the appropriate equipment.¹⁵

With the disruption of trade-related workplaces, members have issued general guidance regarding ways customs administrations can support business continuity. Some of the more common measures have included staggered schedules for workers, reducing the presence of non-essential personnel, and increased use of automation.

¹⁴ World Bank Group. (n.d.). *Trade and COVID-19 Guidance Note: Managing Risk and Facilitating Trade in the COVID-19 Pandemic*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/751981585606039541/pdf/Trade-and-COVID-19-Guidance-Note-Managing-Risk-and-Facilitating-Trade-in-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

¹⁵ Ibid.

Several members, such as the US and China, implemented 24/7 service at ports and airports to prioritise the clearance of essential goods. Reducing the operating hours at borders, so they are not coordinated with their neighbours, creates difficulties for shipments transiting multiple economies.¹⁶

Measures to support clearing ports as quickly and efficiently as possible include:

- Advance clearance of shipments (toolkit measure #5)
- Alternative ways to inspect cargo (toolkit measure #6)
 - Off-site delivery and storage
- Crisis teams to act as circuit breakers for delays (toolkit measure #9)
- Leveraging off existing trusted trader arrangements to clear shipments (toolkit measure #21)
- Regular teleconferences with brokers and traders (toolkit measure #26)
 - “One-stop-shops” at the border between Government agencies

5. Addressing Financial hardships

COVID-19 lockdowns have resulted in trade delays, shortages of staff and disrupted usually reliable supply chains. This has resulted in significant financial pressures for business.

With close to 80 per cent of global trade transported by commercial shipping, transnational shocks stand to have major consequences.¹⁷ Delays in clearing consignments are detrimental to those businesses who rely on just in time delivery. In order not to further worsen the lack of liquidity, border agencies should show flexibilities regarding tariff payment, interest and guarantees. This also extends to periods after any crisis, as due to pent up demand, there are likely to be delays in receiving intermediate goods, which can often lead to delays in deliveries and final payments.

Experiences of the past year have shown us that there are practical things members can do to keep trade going, such as pre-arrival processing (WTO TFA Article 7.1) and separation of release of the imported goods from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees, and charges (WTO TFA Article 7.3). Speeding up border checks, and reducing the need for physical interactions, gives traders more time to conduct their actual business operations. It also means less money spent on storage costs at ports, which is particularly important when transport and travel costs already account for an estimated of 15 per cent to 31 per cent.¹⁸

Uncertainty surrounding costs and whether their goods will reach the intended destination in time, reduce the appetite of firms to invest in new trading relationships. Another way to reduce this burden on business is to extend the time allowed for the payment of customs duties, taxes and fees – something that many members have done.¹⁹ In some cases, actions have been accompanied by cuts in VAT directed at specific groups. This helps alleviate the financial burden and gives them a chance reduce their costs, pivot, and build back better.

Measures to support this addressing financial hardships include:

- Assisting traders with business continuity planning (toolkit measure #7)

¹⁶ World Bank Group. (n.d.). *Trade and COVID-19 Guidance: Trade Facilitation Best Practices Implemented in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/824081587487261551/pdf/Trade-and-COVID-19-Guidance-Note-Trade-Facilitation-Best-Practices-Implemented-in-Response-to-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

¹⁷ UNCTAD. (n.d.). *Port Responsiveness in the fight against the “invisible” threat: COVID-19*. <https://tft.unctad.org/ports-covid-19/>

¹⁸ Reuters. (2020). COVID-19 crisis may push up trade costs, WTO report finds. <https://www.reuters.com/supplychain/supply-chain/covid-19-crisis-may-push-trade-costs-wto-report-finds>

¹⁹ International Chamber of Commerce. (2020). *Ten ways for governments to use trade to Save our SMEs*. <https://iccwbo.org/content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/2020-10ways-governments-sos.pdf>

- Expanding deferred and delayed payment plans (toolkit measure #14)
- Broadly extending time limits for payments and financial obligations (toolkit measure #16)
- Flexibility with temporary entry and carnet requirements (toolkit measure #17)
- Removing/reducing or deferring duty, taxes, and fees on certain supplies (toolkit measure #29)
- Reviewing timeframes (toolkit measure #30)
- Waiving penalties for errors (toolkit measure #33)

6. Risk management

In times of crisis, handling goods against the clock requires customs and other border agencies to prioritise certain border activities. The WCO's 2011 Resolution on the role of Customs in natural disaster relief is a useful reference point in this respect.²⁰ As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded last year, most, if not all economies, adopted measures that either sped up and/or streamlined existing border systems. This includes minimising documentation to speed up the release of expedited shipments, flexibility regarding inspections, and extending or expanding of timeframes.

An increasing number of governments and multilateral organisations have issued best practice guidance to facilitate the free flow of goods. Implementing risk management, to allow low-risk critical supplies to quickly pass clearance controls, is one often cited measure. Another highly cited measure is the establishment and/or working with, accredited importers or exporters to fast-track the movement of essential products. However, it is recognised that these should be combined with reasonable random audit procedures to confirm compliance with requirements. This could apply to critical products subject to pre-shipment inspection.

Authorised Operator Programmes (AEOs) are a win-win partnership between customs and business. For companies, competitive advantages are provided. This includes prompt customs clearance and lower transactions costs, thereby opening more opportunities for business. However, as is well known, operators must meet specific conditions and hold an appropriate record of compliance with customs requirements. A good starting point for these criteria is WTO-TFA Article 7.7. For the sharing of best practices, the 2020 edition of the WCO's Compendium of Authorised Economic Operator Programmes is also a useful reference point.²¹ The advantage for customs is that AEOs allow for limited resources to be used more efficiently.

Authorities are encouraged to apply risk management and perform inspections on relief goods only if deemed high risk. Inspections by other government agencies and inspections by customs should be coordinated and, if possible, carried out at the same time.

Measures to support risk management include:

- Adjusting risk management settings (toolkit measure #3)
 - Reviewing and readjusting targeting and risk management criteria to minimum standards avoid unnecessary interventions
- Adoption of the WTO TFA (toolkit measure #4)
- Advance clearance of shipments (toolkit measure #5)
- Disruption planning (toolkit measure #11)
- Early warning system for trade delays and blockages (toolkit measure #12)
- Increased reliance on post entry audits (toolkit measure #20)
- Reviewing timeframes (toolkit measure #29)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ World Customs Organization. (2020). *Compendium of Authorized Economic Operator Programmes*. <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/aeo-compendium.pdf?la=en>

- Utilizing economies trade facilitation committees (toolkit measure #31)

7. Restarting trade

The world is currently navigating towards a post-COVID recovery, but it not without significant frictions. For economies with the capacity and means to rapidly roll-out vaccines, this has improved public confidence and their economic outlook. However, the inequitable distribution of vaccines means that the risk of new variants and further uncertainty remains. For business, their confidence in the future stands to be seriously eroded by additional lockdowns. With many smaller firms taking on higher debt than before the pandemic, another year of stop and-go economic activities could push many to the brink.

In July 2020, global consulting firm McKinsey, surveyed the thoughts of 60 senior supply chain executives. Of those respondents, 73 percent said they had encountered problems in their supplier base; and 75 percent faced problems with production and distribution. In the food and consumer-goods industries, over 90 percent of respondents said they had experienced production and distribution problems, not to mention those with suppliers.²²

Commodity prices, shipping rates and the cost of containers have all soared in the face of booming consumer demand caused by lockdowns.²³ Against this backdrop, much-debated discussions linger about the possibility of higher inflation. Suppliers will adjust, and shortages will eventually dissipate. However, the big question facing economies is how long this post-pandemic transition will take.

Considering the above pressures, it is not surprising to see that many economies have begun to take steps to address these vulnerabilities. Looking ahead, firms are likely to adopt mechanisms that insulate their operations from future challenges. Such measures include the dual sourcing of raw materials, increasing inventories of critical supplies, and a transferring of operations closer to home. As businesses look to shorten supply chains, and travel restrictions continue to affect tourism and education, the question is whether practises like these become entrenched.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown us that a single economy responses are not sufficient, especially when it comes to handling disruptions and delays in real time. By adopting common protocols and information exchange systems, customs administrations can limit the impact of supply chain blockages before they hit. For ports experiencing congestion issues, this could include early warning systems that allow containers to be directed to another point of entry. According to research by the OECD, small efforts to reduce gaps in transparency, automation or border agency co-operation can lead to increased trade in agri-food, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing goods by between 1 per cent and 4 per cent.²⁴ To capitalise on these uplifts, and support businesses in getting their goods across borders, regional and international co-operation is key.

Measures to support restarting trade include:

- Assisting traders with business continuity planning (toolkit measure #7)
- Deferred and delayed payment plans (toolkit measure #14)
- Mechanisms for engagement with industry (toolkit measure #22)
- Proactive communication with stakeholders (toolkit measure #25)

²² Aliche, K., Gupta, R. & Trautwein, V. (2020). Resetting supply chains for the next normal. *McKinsey & Company*.

²³ Guilloux-Nefussi, S. & Rusticelli, E. (2021). How will rising shipping cost affect inflation in OECD countries?. *ECOSCOPE*. <https://oecdoscope.blog/2021/06/19/how-will-rising-shipping-cost-affect-inflation-in-oecd-countries/>

²⁴ OECD. (2020). *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Getting goods across borders in times of COVID-19*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/getting-goods-across-borders-in-times-of-covid-19-972ada7a/>

- Regular teleconferences with traders and brokers (toolkit measure #26)
- Utilizing Economies Trade Facilitation Committees (toolkit measure #31)

8. Organising customs

As well as changes to processes, it is also important to consider how customs administrations can adapt in their response to a trade disruption. In some cases, existing arrangements will be perfectly adequate to enable a response, but in other circumstances, depending on the scale, nature and trajectory of a trade disruption, customs may need to temporarily change its structure, organisation priorities or operational practices. For example, staff may need to be temporarily redeployed, new teams be set up or project accelerated or slowed down.

We do need to acknowledge that during the COVID-19 pandemic, customs officers were impacted by the same pressures as the rest of the community, including falling ill, having office/workplace closed, social distancing, staff shortages and absence of household items. This should be taken into account when organising customs, to ensure that not only is the response adequate, but our people will be safe.

Measures to support organizing Customs include:

- Business continuity planning (toolkit measure #7)
- Coordinated Border management (toolkit measure #8)
 - “One-stop-shops” at the border between Government agencies
- Crisis teams to act as circuit breakers for delay (toolkit measure #9)
- Regular teleconferences with brokers and traders (toolkit measure #26)
- Leverage off existing trusted trader arrangements to clear shipments (toolkit measure #20)
- Utilizing Economies Trade Facilitation Committees (toolkit measure #31)

The response measures in detail

The pandemic demonstrated the key role customs authorities play in building the resilience of global trade and responding to disruptions. However, a holistic approach is required to optimize the securing of the international trade supply chain while ensuring continued improvements in trade facilitation. Customs should, therefore, be encouraged to develop co-operative arrangements with other government agencies and customs authorities regionally and globally.²⁵

The following section provides a description of the measures outlined in the earlier sections. These are based on the experience of customs administrations during the COVID-19 pandemic. By their nature these cannot be too prescriptive. Every economy will have its own particular circumstances and enabling environment. In addition, every trade disruption will have a unique set of drivers and characteristics.

1. Accepting scanned documents
2. Additional resources to clear urgent shipments
3. Adjusting risk management settings
4. Adoption of the WTO TFA
5. Advance clearance of shipments
6. Alternative ways to inspect cargo
7. Assisting traders with business continuity planning
8. Coordinated border management
9. Crisis teams to act as circuit breakers for delays

²⁵ Ibid.

10. Disaster relief pathways (Green lanes)
11. Disruption planning
12. Early warning system for trade delays and blockages
13. Enabling online payments
14. Expanding deferred and delayed payment arrangements
15. Expediting clearance of certain goods
16. Extending time limits for payments and financial obligations
17. Flexibility of temporary entry and carnet requirements
18. Flexible regulations
19. Help desks & 24-hour assistance
20. Increased reliance on post entry audits
21. Leveraging of trusted trader arrangements to clear shipments
22. Mechanisms for engagement with industry
23. Paperless trade measures
24. Prioritizing clearance or relief/emergency supplies
25. Proactive communication with stakeholders
26. Regular teleconferences with traders and brokers
27. Removing/ reducing duty on critical supplies
28. Removing/reducing or deferring duty, taxes and fees on certain supplies
29. Reviewing timeframes
30. Single windows and online clearance systems
31. Utilizing economies trade facilitation committees
32. Waiving penalties for errors

1. Accepting scanned documents	
1. Description	Enabling the submission of scanned copies of supporting documents for import entries.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed up cross border transactions • Minimise contact between officials and traders • Reduce costs for traders • Decrease delays
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be confined to selected key documents or for range of goods • May be deployed as a more focussed, short-term measure or as a permanent measure to support a wider shift towards paperless trading • Can be mandatory or voluntary
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need legislative/regulatory changes to ensure that scanned documents are recognised as the legal equivalent of paper versions • Needs clear communication and guidance to both Customs officers and to the trading community • May require coordination with other agencies
5. Risk and benefits / Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a comparatively simple change to make • Adoption should be relatively quick and economical • There may be a small risk of increased non-compliance and fraud, which should be monitored • Not all documents may be suitable for scanning
6. Examples	<p>The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) <u>adopted temporary electronic procedures</u>, including the acceptance of scanned documents.</p> <p>Japan's Customs lessens the requirements for seal, original copies, and submission of certificates of origin.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with WTO FTA Article 10, Section 2 • UNNexT: Towards an Enabling Paperless Trade and Transport Environment: Towards Electronic TIR Customs Transit System • UNCTAD: How Countries can Leverage Trade Facilitation to Defeat the COVID-19 Pandemic

2. Additional resources to clear urgent shipments

1. Description	Temporary allocation of additional staff to ensure that essential goods and shipments are cleared as quickly as possible, including clearance outside designated business hours, and any border processing requirements are dealt with in real time.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that there are no clearance delays due to the absence of staff • Ensure that normal border processes are followed, and any interventions are quickly resolved
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional teams deployed to key entry ports or work areas on-demand • Targeted outreach to known importers and shipments • May include 24-hour contact centres • New processes to expedite clearance of essential supplies
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be for fixed time periods or for as long as necessary • Can be adopted relatively quickly • May be challenging accessing additional staff with the right skills • Does not require legislative/regulatory changes • It is not likely to be as relevant for economies with online and digital clearance systems
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates options for redeployment of staff affected in other parts of the organisation • It is dependent on appropriate skills sets, location of staff and conditions of service • May be less sustainable over a longer period
6. Examples	<p>This was a response that was commonly applied by customs administrations during COVID-19.</p> <p>In The U.S., CBP allocated an Occupational Safety and Health Specialist to each field and sector office to help operational components fulfil CBP's mission while ensuring that CBP employees remain safe.</p> <p>In New Zealand, Customs deployed staff to respond to changes in various aspects of Customs throughout the pandemic; staff that were usually located in passenger travel were deployed to clear urgent shipments.</p>
7. Resources	

3. Adjusting Risk Management settings

1. Description	Reviewing and readjusting customs Risk Management criteria and targeting settings temporarily, which involves the fine tuning of risk and border targeting settings.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the level of physical inspections • Avoid unnecessary interventions • Clear ports of entry more efficiently • More readily identify critical goods so that their clearance can be facilitated
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be applied for a specific time period or until necessary • Can be scaled up or down depending on the circumstances • Could be staggered across a range of pathways • Can include avoiding or limiting the numbers of random inspections • Can involve deferring or reducing any assurance related inspections • Can involve readjusting risk selection criteria • May be simple refocussing to addressing just the highest risk
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, will not require legislative or regulatory changes • Detailed publicity should be avoided • Introduction can be quick and at minimal cost • If not signalled or scheduled, any elevated risk may be minimised • This is likely to be a temporary measure and would need to be regularly assessed
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be an elevated risk of smuggling and noncompliance • Can enable the redeployment of staff to other priority areas during emergency situations
6. Examples	Based on risk management, Russian Customs authorities did not apply additional forms of Customs control where a Customs inspection is not obligatory or necessary.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with WTO TFA – Article 7 Section 4 • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • WCO - Customs in the 21st Century: Enhancing Growth and Development through Trade Facilitation and Border Security • The Revised Kyoto Convention (Chapter 6 of the General Annex)

4. Adoption and implementation of the WTO TFA

1. Description	Accelerating implementation of customs elements of the WTO TFA, particularly articles relating to the accelerated use of digitalisation for border processes; pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations; electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments; expedited shipments; and border agency cooperation.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating cross-border trade • Promoting economic recovery • Strengthening border systems • Simplification of customs procedures
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different measures aim to achieve different objectives, such as encouraging effective cooperation between customs and other border agencies or expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods • Some measures are more pressing than others • Variation in difficulty and method of implementation
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May involve prioritizing certain measures to be implemented first • Could include a long-term adoption plan • May require capacity building and staff training • Some measures may require legislative changes • Can involve significant investment • May need significant shifts in processes and behaviors
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will decrease operating costs for customs agencies and businesses • Will enable temporary responses to be introduced • Will increase assurance and enable facilitation in the long run • Will facilitate the import and clearance of critical supplies
6. Examples	Throughout the Pandemic, many of these measures were adopted by APEC economies, both temporarily and permanently.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information is available through the WTO TFA Facility: https://www.tfafacility.org/trade-facilitation-agreement-facility • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs

5. Advance entry and pre-clearance of goods

1. Description	A process in place to ensure that shipments, correctly processed, can be approved for delivery prior to arriving in a port – and therefore immediately be taken off the wharf or airport.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed up the clearance of goods at ports • Avoid blockages • Ensure that urgent and critical supplies are cleared as quickly as possible • Mitigate pressure on customs staff • Enable redeployment to other priority areas
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a temporary or permanent measure • May only be applied to certain classes of goods, to certain ports of entry, to certain pathways or to selected trusted traders • In advance entry systems, customs checks the documents required to import the goods but actual clearance is to happen when the goods physically arrive. • In pre-clearance systems, goods are cleared before arrival.
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative/regulatory changes likely to be required to permit this to occur • May be most effective as part of an online clearance system - i.e., may be harder to introduce this measure if the process is very manual • Will need collaboration with other agencies at the border, as it will be most effective with other border agencies also providing pre-clearance goods.
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be able to be introduced quickly • Does not compromise normal scrutiny and processing requirements • May be some systems changes required • Can be an opportunity to test a proposal for more permanent adoption
6. Examples	<p>Malaysia has an advance entry system; New Zealand has a pre-clearance system; Thailand has a pre-arrival processing which allows importers to submit import declarations and pay taxes and duties prior to the arrival of goods; and Japan has a pre-arrival examination system with which importers can submit import documents to Customs prior to the arrival of cargos and before the confirmation of the import certificate processes, and the importers can receive feedback from customs on whether customs examination is necessary or not before the arrival of the cargos.</p> <p>In the <i>COVID-19 Lessons Learnt for Customs and Trade Facilitation</i> workshop, 11 June 2021, New Zealand company Mainfreight mentioned in that these were key trade facilitating measures.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with WTO TFA, Article 7 • UNCTAD – Pre-arrival Customs processing • The Revised Kyoto Convention • WCO Guidelines for the Immediate Release of Consignments by Customs • WCO Self Assessment Checklist or similar • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org)

6. Alternative ways to inspect cargo

1. Description	Implementing innovative ways to examine cargo quickly and efficiently during trade disruptions, whilst maintaining border security standards.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to clear shipments off wharves, and warehouses at ports of entry to ease port congestion and avoid delays in getting goods cleared • Can help to minimise the need for contact between customs officers and port workers • Help customs in better managing limited resources
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be off-site inspections, non-intrusive inspections, etc • May be linked to an existing trusted trader scheme • Can be confined to specific classes and types of goods and shipments • May be linked to wider trust release and only require those shipments identified for further inspection to be held
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can involve deployment of x-ray, scanning and other screening technologies to undertake examinations • May also involve video and other data feeds to help undertake remote inspections • Typically, this does not involve legislative or regulatory change, but this should be confirmed • Should be something that can be quickly rolled out • Can be developed and rolled out in conjunction with other border agencies • May require some investment in technology if it is not already available • Can be a temporary or permanent measure
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be some elevated level of risk of diversion of goods either en-route or onsite • May not be applicable for managing all risks
6. Examples	<p>Chile authorizes physical inspections of merchandise without the presence of the employees or auxiliaries of the Customs Agents upon electronic request. The removal of goods in Customs warehouses may be carried out by employees of a Customs agency other than the one responsible for their dispatch, who must issue a pure power of attorney and adopt the necessary control measures. The validity of the Customs cards that expire during the period of special measures established by the Customs resolution is also extended.</p> <p>In China, as an alternative to on-site audits, customs are conducting off-site audits via video or electronic data transmission or are basing the audit on the inventory data provided by enterprises.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Customs Organisation Guidelines for the Procurement and Deployment of Scanning/NII Equipment • WTO TFA Article 10, section 5 • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org)

7. Assisting traders with Business Continuity planning

1. Description	Working alongside traders in planning for their responses to trade disruptions.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push a single message out • Stimulate trade flows
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a proactive/preventative measure, or as a response as a crisis unfolds • Can include planning for short, medium and long term • Can be progressed through contributing to a cross Government effort as business as usual • Can be scaled up and down – for example this could be a series of clinics, or visits to traders seeking assistance • Level of assistance will depend on support needed by individual businesses as well as severity of crisis
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch-ups can be scheduled as a regular meeting (e.g. daily, weekly etc) • Can invite traders and logistics companies to customs trade recovery planning sessions • Providing a package of guidance material, contacts, case studies etc.
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be resource intensive and require significant customs input – depending on demand
6. Examples	<p>The ABF has been working with maritime and aviation stakeholders, including ports, airports, airlines, cruise ship operators and the offshore oil and gas industry on the operational and workforce impacts of the COVID-19 response measures.</p> <p>Papua New Guinea developed and activated a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for operation of essential staff to ensure flow of business in compliance with World Health Organization (Department of Health) health safety requirements.</p> <p>In the US, CBP continues to interact with CDC and Industry stakeholders to continue the flow of commerce and travel within and outside of the United States.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCO Customs-Business Partnership guidance • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • WCO's SAFE (SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade.)

8. Coordinated border management

1. Description	The cooperation and coordination between authorities and agencies responsible for border controls and procedures dealing with the importation, exportation, and transit of goods.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease the duplication of controls between border agencies • Reducing the costs and effort for traders trying to pass their goods through borders • Provides a mechanism for border agencies to see the full picture
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be planned meetings or as needed • Can include a range of different border agencies • Can be domestically, regionally or globally
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative/regulatory changes likely not required • May require the use of platforms for cooperation (eg. Virtual communication or single window systems) • Should be able to be introduced quickly
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy concerns due to sharing of information • Does not compromise normal scrutiny and processing requirements • Allows for sharing of ideas to better mitigate challenges
6. Examples	<p>Australia established a Transport and Freight Taskforce involving a number of Australian Government agencies to facilitate the expedited clearance of essential air cargo.</p> <p>Malaysia coordinated inspections / examinations by Customs and other government agencies.</p> <p>In Mexico, permanent communication channels are maintained with CBP (USA), as well as with other authorities that act at the border. Constant communication is maintained with the Health authorities of the Region, the State and Municipal Government, Ministry of Defence (SEDENA), the National Guard and those authorities that are intervening in the actions of control and mitigation of the spread of the virus, in order to be aware of actions and development of the pandemic and in order to anticipate any decision-making that jeopardizes the operational continuity of Customs.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with WTO TFA Article 8 • WCO - Coordinated Border Management • WCO - Customs in the 21st Century: Enhancing Growth and Development through Trade Facilitation and Border Security • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org)

9. Crisis teams to act as circuit breakers for delays

1. Description	Dedicated team of contact points and trouble shooters within customs (and/or across border agencies) which can be contacted by traders when shipments are stopped or delayed.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure delays and stoppages of shipments can be identified and addressed as quickly and efficiently as possible • Demonstrate commitment to resolving issues
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a responsive team, or one that proactively engages with traders and identifies problems • Can be permanently deployed, or temporarily scaled up • Can be rolled out as a multi- agency initiative • May be focussed on smaller range of goods or targeted to a vulnerable group of importers and exporters
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should include appropriately skilled staff with the mandate to <i>help overcome</i> • This is something that can be planned for, so that it can be quickly deployed • As appropriate this team should be publicised and promoted amongst traders
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams can be assembled relatively quickly • May be challenges in maintaining over a longer period of time
6. Examples	Chinese Taipei Customs Designated “Contact Points for Instant Clearance Service” and expedited cargo inspection and release procedures and providing 24/7 service upon request.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs</u>

10. Disaster relief pathways (Green lanes)

1. Description	Setting up new and specific pathways and channels for clearing disaster relief shipments. These are sometimes referred to as “Green lanes”.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate disaster relief shipments • Avoid any border delays
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can build on simple facilitation measures by designating new dedicated pathways to speed up clearance • This can be confined to particular ranges of goods • Can be introduced in conjunction with other interventions • Can be related to the deployment of dedicated teams
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely be introduced for fixed time periods • Unlikely to involve legislative/regulatory change • This measure should be prepared and planned for, and ready to roll out when necessary
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good optics – and easy to communicate and promote • Will need to be supported and resourced to make sure it works – may have resources implications • Enables good feedback from traders
6. Examples	<p>For imported supplies, all China local customs authorities were required to open exclusive counters and green lanes 24/7 to ensure fast clearance; imported pharmaceuticals, disinfection supplies, protective suits, treatment equipment and other supplies will be released without delay.</p> <p>The Federal Customs Service of Russia established green lanes to ensure fast clearance of food, relief goods and essential supplies. Extra priority is provided to the processing of goods related to the fight against the COVID-19 spread and pandemic. For imported relief consignments and essential supplies, green lanes provide minimized clearance time.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation of the customs co-operation council to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters (1970) • Revised Kyoto Convention, Guidelines to Specific Annex J, Chapter 5 • Convention on Temporary Admission, Istanbul, 1990 • Istanbul Convention Handbook • Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the role of customs in natural disaster relief, June 2011 • The key principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards for further facilitating clearing relief consignments • Guidelines for Customs administrations on humanitarian assistance and emergency measures [es] • Customs commitment highlighted at the World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May 2016 • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org)

11. Disruption planning

1. Description	Preparing a plan to respond to various phases of different trade disruptions.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an immediate response plan to increase the effectiveness of a crisis response • Increase resilience to future disruptions • Enables economies to put in proactively put place the longer term steps necessary for certain interventions
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be both short term response and long-term plan • Can be done as a new joint group with the private sector and other Government agencies, or it can be set up leveraging off an existing forum
4. Implementation	<p>The toolkit provided creates a high-level plan with different responses to scenarios. Economies should assess what these tools mean to them and how to implement them during trade disruptions.</p> <p>There are different stages and appropriate ways of implementation. Some of these include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the disruptive situation and speculating it's consequences • Creating a response strategy that aims to mitigate current and possible future challenges • Assessing the response and adapting
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some trade disruptions are unforeseen and unprecedented, therefore may be impossible to plan for • However, many measures, such as trade facilitation measures, will likely still apply
6. Examples	New Zealand Customs established an Incident Management Team (IMT) to support the All of Government response, and to coordinate and control the COVID-19 response to the pandemic. The activation of the IMT enabled Customs to have centralized coordination and decision-making point, which was able to respond to the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCO – SAFE Framework

12. Early warning system for trade delays and blockages

1. Description	Proactive monitoring of supply chains with a view to identifying and reporting any emerging issues that will impact on trade flows.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist traders in their planning • Help inform the customs response by identifying potential issues
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be done as a new joint group with the private sector and other Government agencies, or it can be set up leveraging off an existing forum • The scope and mandate can be adjusted depending on what information is available • Should be a standing measure, with added resources when necessary
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires proactive, careful and systematic monitoring of supply chains • Requires close coordination with private sector, logistics industry and overseas partners • May be best adopted by a group of Government agencies interested in logistics • Can identify both positive and negative – i.e. by identifying holdups in clearance and times as well locations where there may be available
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may not be an area that customs necessarily has the best picture of alone - the private sector traders and logistics companies will both be able to contribute • Can be a relatively simple and low cost change to introduce.
6. Examples	In Papua New Guinea, an Incident Management Centre (IMC) was established to monitor and report daily activities and situations at the borders. The IMC enabled centralization of situational reports from Customs regional ports nationwide. This allowed Management to identify and provide appropriate response to issues that arose.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • WCO – SAFE Framework

13. Enabling online payments

1. Description	Enabling the online payment of customs duty, taxes, fees and other charges for import and export transactions.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise contact between officials and traders at the border • Speed up cross border transactions, • Potentially reduce costs for traders • Enable and support other digital transactions • Simplification of customs procedures
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be based on a scale up of existing online payments facilities • Could leverage off facilities offered by other border agencies • Can be a voluntary or compulsory arrangement • While a new bespoke online payment system means significant upfront development and costs, there may well be temporary and ad-hoc arrangements that could be established
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely require setup investment, development and a lead in time • May need legislative or regulatory changes • Requires relevant software and technology to support the acceptance of e-payments • May need new skills sets and appropriate supporting staff to operate • Ideally, should be applied for all border agency fees • Processes will need to be very clearly documented and communicated to traders
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be challenges in adoption for some smaller traders and individuals • Will mean changes to the risk profile for non-compliance and fraud • Online payment systems are well placed to deal with trade volume increases and more complex payments
6. Examples	Customs Notice 20-37 - Temporary Electronic Procedures for Canada Border Services Agency's Trade Programs (COVID-19) – GTA Pilot (cbsa-asfc.gc.ca)
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 7 Section 2 WTO TFA • United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs

14. Expanding deferred and delayed payment arrangements

1. Description	This involves measures which enable traders to delay or defer their duty and tax payments.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing more time and leeway for importers and traders who are experiencing cash flow issues and financial hardship due to the trade disruption
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferred payments can be introduced as either a temporary or permanent measure • It could involve the expansion of an existing deferred payments scheme • This measure can also be applied either generally or targeted to smaller traders • Could be linked to an existing trusted trader scheme • Could include allowing payment in instalments
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is likely to require some recognition in legislation or regulations • Good monitoring and supporting arrangements need to be put in place (technical staff/technology etc.) • Good communication and guidance are especially important so that there is clarity about the scope • May involve outreach to traders • Application for deferred payments can involve robust processes, but should still be accessible • If discretion exists, this is a simple move that can be introduced relatively quickly
5. Risk and benefits	<p>Trade-offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will need to be some leeway to address defaulters – depending on the impact of the trade disruption. • Temporary measures might be able to be locked into place permanently
6. Examples	<p>Chile extended the regulation that allows importing companies to defer VAT. MSMEs are eligible to access this benefit, provided their operations had decreased by at least 30 per cent compared to the same period (April May, June) of 2019.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs

15. Expediting clearance of certain goods

1. Description	Facilitating the import of certain products, such as agri-foods, medical supplies, certain commercial vehicles and any materials that may be needed for disrupted domestic supply or to help deal with an emergency situation.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that goods that are needed domestically are not unnecessarily held up at the border • Can also help with the redeployment for customs staff to higher priority areas
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods that qualify will depend on the domestic needs of each economy at the time • May be for a specified period of time or until necessary • Expedited clearance could be granted only for approved importers, or for all importers • Can be linked to trusted trader arrangements
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative/regulatory change likely required • May involve a range of sub-measures, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shorter quarantine approval process ○ Green lanes on a reservation basis ○ Prioritization of test for products suspected to contain pests or disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expedite administrative approval for registered exporters • Scope can be scaled up or down, depending on the circumstances
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May increase the risk smuggling • Can be used to test out new processes for permanent adoption
6. Examples	<p>The Australian Border Force (ABF) is working in partnership with the Australian Government’s Supermarkets Taskforce to implement temporary measures to fast track the movement of essential groceries.</p> <p>Chile simplified processing for the importation of relief items.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Recommendation of the customs co-operation council to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters (1970)</u> • <u>Revised Kyoto Convention, Guidelines to Specific Annex J, Chapter 5</u> • <u>Convention on Temporary Admission, Istanbul, 1990</u> • <u>Istanbul Convention Handbook</u> • <u>Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the role of customs in natural disaster relief, June 2011</u> • <u>The key principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards for further facilitating clearing relief consignments</u> • <u>Guidelines for Customs administrations on humanitarian assistance and emergency measures [es]</u> • <u>Customs commitment highlighted at the World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May 2016</u>

16. Extending time limits for payments and financial obligations

1. Description	Extending the time limit for payments and other financial obligations owed by traders.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease pressure on traders • improve the cash flow and the financial situation of economic operators • accelerate customs operations • limit the exposure of the personnel involved in customs operations
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be general or only include trusted traders • May only include certain industries • May have parameters around size of businesses (eg. only applies for MSMEs) • Usually interest would not be charged, however there may be exceptions • Time limits will depend on the crisis
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative/regulatory changes may be required • Trusted trader agreements may be leveraged
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Means border agencies will have decreased income in the short-term
6. Examples	<p>On March 19, 2020, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) began providing a 45 business days grace period for imported goods requiring account declarations. The CBSA suspended late accounting penalties released on minimum documentation from the period of 11 March to 14 May 2020. This grace period was to be reviewed as the situation evolved.</p> <p>Japan implemented an extension of time limits for customs procedures, including payment of customs duties in some cases.</p> <p>New Zealand and Chile were amongst economies which allowed payments to be made in installments. In Chile, this measure applied to the Value Added Tax (VAT) payment.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org) • Kyoto Convention (wcoomd.org)

17. Flexibility of temporary entry and carnet requirements

1. Description	Extending the timeframes or review processes for goods that are imported on temporary basis
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the need for unnecessary contacts between traders and customs officials • Potentially provides financial relief by avoiding unnecessary costs to some traders • Flexibility for traders unable to re-export goods during trade disruptions • This may also be used to facilitate the temporary importation of essential equipment during an emergency • Decrease time pressure on traders and customs workers
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May apply for all goods or only specific classes of goods • Allowing for longer timeframes, or less regular renewals • Can involve greater flexibility being shown for renewals of temporary imports (impacted by closed border, disrupted shipping routes etc.) • Could involve reducing or waiving fees and charges • Changes can be applied either “by default” to all traders or on request
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require legislative changes • All staff must be aware of changes • Needs to be signalled • Will need to be accompanied by clear communications about what is permitted and in what circumstances • May require some coordination and collaboration with overseas partners • May require systems changes to enable this to occur
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some small risk of revenue loss and noncompliance • Opportunity to reduce work flow at critical times by delaying non-essential Customs work until a more convenient time • Can be an opportunity to test out more flexible temporary import arrangements. • There may be issues in accommodating flexibility within the International Carnet arrangements
6. Examples	In Chile, the validity of expiring customs carnets was extended, without requesting operators to visit the Customs Service offices.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org) • Istanbul Convention - Annex B.9 (wcoomd.org)

18. Flexible regulations

1. Description	Creating and/or modifying regulation to allow flexibility in times of crisis.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease hurdles in the way of trade disruption responses • Allow for mitigation strategies to be quicker and more efficient • Become more nimble
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One regulation that can be implemented in times of crisis, allowing for extra powers that will assist with the response, or • Have sections in individual regulations that are flexible to changing circumstances
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will likely need to go through a formal process to implement these initial changes • Will require legislative changes • Definitions on critical and essential goods should be flexible to allow for changing demand • Increase the power of border agencies to make decisions in response to disruptions
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parameters may also be put in place, so increased powers are not abused
6. Examples	<p>Chinese Taipei has relaxed restrictions on the storage period of bonded goods in duty-free shops and Offshore Island duty-free shops by promulgating additional regulations, which stipulate that due to natural disasters, incidents, or other force majeure, the storage period may be extended more than once. Also, in an emergency, the deadline for re-exportation of goods temporarily imported by ATA Carnet holders may be extended.</p> <p>In New Zealand, changes in regulations quickly resolved the issue of bottlenecks that were caused due to the restrictions for imported non-essential cargo and the inability to move this cargo.</p> <p>In the US, the HHS Secretary is authorized to take measures to prevent the entry and spread of communicable diseases from foreign economies into the US and between states (under section 361 of the PHS Act).</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCO - Customs in the 21st Century: Enhancing Growth and Development through Trade Facilitation and Border Security

19. Help desks and 24 Hours assistance

1. Description	Creating capacity so 24-hour contact teams and support centres can be easily set up to address border delays.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a platform for traders to address their concerns quickly and efficiently • Gather real-time information about the current experience of traders • Identify and/or anticipate supply chain issues • Provide traders with confidence needed to continue trade • Prevent delays in clearance
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be permanently adopted or rolled out when necessary • Can be either virtual or in-person • Could leverage off existing arrangements or be a new standalone arrangement • Can be very effective if it is linked to coordinated border management and brings in other border agencies
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs staff that are well-informed and able to answer queries and give confidence • Regular meetings to address situations and findings • May require significant investment • Allowing for flexibility of roll out, eg. in case of a pandemic employees may need to be at home and/or social distancing • Will be less effective in situations where Customs and clearance activity works limited/fixed hours • Does not require any legislative/regulatory changes • This can be setup very quickly
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is something that may not be appropriate in pandemic situations • Relatively resource intensive, to get up and running • There may be additional costs and resource implications involved
6. Examples	<p>The Korea Customs Service (KCS) has established and operates customs Clearance Support Centers for COVID-19 at major customs offices across the economy, focusing its resources on safeguarding the global supply chain by facilitating the movement of inbound and outbound raw materials for importers and exporters</p> <p>In Peru, SUNAT upgraded its virtual communications by establishing a virtual reception desk. A corporate email between operators and Customs operates 24 hours.</p> <p>In the US, the CBP activated its Emergency Operations Center (ECO) to assist with the response to the pandemic, operating 24/7. The ECO had full support of all US CBP offices and subject matter experts to gather, and submit responses, both internally and externally.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Customs Response the SCCP virtual workshop <i>COVID-19 Trade Recovery – Lessons learned and future opportunities</i> (11 June 2021), industry representatives expressed they found this measure very useful.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs</u>
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20. Increased reliance on post entry audits	
1. Description	Enabling delivery from customs and testing compliance through greater use of Post Entry Audit to manage risk.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the need for interventions at the border • Help to clear ports quickly • Enable urgent supplies to be released
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be a facility that is linked to Trusted trader schemes • May be deployed as a temporary measure, and it can be scaled up or down depending on the experience and value • It can also be confined to specific classes and types of goods and shipments • It may also be limited to certain ports of entry and locations • Can be an expansion of an existing service
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need legislative and regulatory changes or may be a matter of adjusting risk profiles and work practices • It may or may not be a measure that is publicised, other than at a general level • This may require a slightly different skill set from staff or some deployment of staff
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be a slightly elevated risk with goods released from Customs control • While more likely as a temporary measure, this can also be something that is adopted permanently based on the experience.
6. Examples	Many customs agencies work on a post clearance audit basis, including New Zealand.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WTO TFA Article 7 Section 5 • The Revised Kyoto Convention of the WCO

21. Leveraging off Trusted Trader arrangements to clear shipments

1. Description	Applying additional trade facilitation measures to existing Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) arrangements which are available for low risk importers and traders.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplification of customs procedures for AEOs • Help prioritise and clear low risk trade • Avoid trade delays and build ups at ports
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures can be time limited • Coverage can be focussed to specific types of goods • It may be possible to expand the scope and coverage of the existing AEO scheme to enable others to temporarily join • Changes for AEO partner can be linked to new “green lane” arrangements • Can use Mutual Recognition Arrangements to also recognise the low risk status of AEOs of other members
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope will depend on how the existing Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) scheme is configured • Legislative/regulatory change may be needed • Any use of the AEO scheme needs to be carefully communicated and publicised • In theory this could be deployed relatively quickly • AEOs could be utilised in stages
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a means of promoting the benefits of the AEO scheme in the medium to long term (priority clearance upon resumption of trade following a disruption is a key benefit of an MRA) • There may be a minimal increase in the risk of noncompliance
6. Examples	<p>China enhanced mutual recognition of Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) throughout the “Belt and Road”, which has entailed implementing facilitative clearance measures and promoting credits to enterprises to qualify as AEOs.</p> <p>New Zealand’s Secure Export Scheme (SES) and Australia Trusted Trade Programme (TTP) which recognise secure supply chain and compliant trade practices, offer tailored trade facilitation benefits, which was highly leveraged by accredited businesses during the pandemic.</p> <p>In the US, Abbott Laboratories stressed that via the trusted trader accreditation with US CBP, the business was able to advise in advance when critical shipments required facilitation, helping to get critical goods cleared immediately.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong alignment with the WCO SAFE framework • WTO TFA Article 7 section 7 • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs

22. Mechanisms for engagement with industry

1. Description	Providing mechanisms for industry engagement, which will allow collaboration and provide support which are critical to achieving the mission and vision of customs authorities.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration to develop more streamlined and simplified border process, improving service delivery • provide certainty to industry • Optimise legitimate trade to support economic growth
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be both a short-term response to a challenge and a long-term commitment to facilitating trade. • Many methods, including workshops, forums, direct conversations • Method of collaboration may depend on industry variation (ie size and type). Eg Stakeholder engagement continuum: mode of engagement varies according to the nature of the issues, the breadth of possible impact, the timeframes available and a range of other factors • Method of collaboration may also depend on individual economies and their different goals
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should provide a number of channels for communication, such as a website, service centers and regular information updates through digital and face-to-face channels • Set up clear points of contact, accountability and service standards • be pro-active in engagement, responsive to requests and feedback, and focus on actions and results • further develop industry relationships into resilient and trusted partnerships, use these to resolve complex issues and achieve substantive improvements to traveller and trade facilitation
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise delays for low-risk passenger and goods • Minimise the ability of criminals to take advantage of legitimate trade and travel activities across the border • Allows for industry and border agencies to communicate clearly and find best for all solutions
6. Examples	<p>New Zealand Customs Service Delivery Unit supported private clients and trading community by processing registrations, lodgments and answering queries in a speedy manner.</p> <p>In Peru, communications with the trading community was boosted; with SUNAT organizing virtual workshops providing guidance on pre-arrival processing, Authorized Economic Operators and Customs clearance system.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World Customs Organisation (WCO) provides a model to enhance the industry-Government engagement, which can be accessed here. • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • Alignment with the WCO SAFE framework. • WTO TFA (through Domestic level Trade Facilitation Committees)

23. Paperless Trade measures

1. Description	Digitalisation of customs procedures by making e-versions of administration documents available and legally equivalent to paper documents. Note that this differs from scanned documents in that we are capturing formatted data sets rather than images of hardcopy documents.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow contactless and timely movement of goods and people • Decrease bottlenecks • Speed up border processing • Reduce costs for traders
3. Variations	<p>There are different ways of introducing this measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be for selected documentations – Certificate of Origin are an obvious candidate • Can be also for selected processes, such as electronic delivery orders • Can be added to goods clearance existing systems – including Single Window systems • May also be a new standalone system focussed on one process. • Different documents may require different standards eg encryption
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be associated with costs and new infrastructure – meaning adoption will be phased • Harmonise and standardise e-versions of trade administration documents across APEC using the WCO Data Model • Require legal frameworks that govern electronic transactions to be consistent with internationally developed model frameworks i.e., WTO TFA • Legislative/regulatory changes may be required to recognise the electronic submission • May require coordination and participation of other agencies. • Can be optional or mandatory • Systems need to be secure and compatible to avoid further delays
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk profile will change but it will almost certainly increase the ability to assess, identify and manage risk. • May be associated with costs and new infrastructure – meaning adoption will be phased • This is something that will decrease costs and facilitate the compliance process, allowing for more streamlined and inclusive trade
6. Examples	<p>Canada’s border agencies adopted <u>temporary electronic procedures</u>, such as the electronic submission of Duties Relief Program applications, Drawback claims, Single and Blanket B2 Adjustments and Voluntary Disclosure requests.</p> <p>Chile’s Customs issued <u>13 measures</u> aimed at the use of technologies for the realization of foreign trade processes.</p> <p>Mexico’s internal administrative procedures are followed up with electronic documents, without the need for autograph signatures or face-to-face deliveries.</p>

	<p>In Peru, SUNAT placed a strong focus on digitalization and paperless trading. Various export and import procedures that required by law paper base document were adjusted to the new reality.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revised Kyoto Convention• WTO TFA alignment• United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT)• Paperless trade is also a subject of a separate SCCP initiative• International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs

24. Prioritising Clearance or Relief/emergency supplies

1. Description	This is a relatively simple measure that means that selected key imports (or exports) are prioritised by customs for clearance.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the clearance of certain essential goods and shipments
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At its simplest this is about identifying and ensuring that all border requirements are met as quickly as possible. This can also involve simplifying or altering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documentary requirements Release criteria Duty payment arrangements The scope and nature of the facilitation can be tailored to certain types of goods. This measure may be combined with other initiatives such as waiver of certain requirements and advance clearance arrangements. This may be either on application, or applied to all relevant shipments
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication to traders is important Customs needs to be very clear and unambiguous about what types of goods and shipments are being facilitated Legislative/regulatory are typically not required, unless customs is waiving requirements. This could include temporary or permanent measures Other border agencies need to be involved in any decision on this
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may have resources implications This is a very simple and quick measure to implement
6. Examples	Japan Customs clearance was prioritized for relief goods relating to countermeasures to COVID-19.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Recommendation of the customs co-operation council to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters (1970)</u> <u>Revised Kyoto Convention, Guidelines to Specific Annex J, Chapter 5</u> <u>Convention on Temporary Admission, Istanbul, 1990</u> <u>Istanbul Convention Handbook</u> <u>Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the role of customs in natural disaster relief, June 2011</u> <u>The key principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards for further facilitating clearing relief consignments</u> <u>Guidelines for Customs administrations on humanitarian assistance and emergency measures [es]</u> <u>Customs commitment highlighted at the World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May 2016</u> <u>HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org)</u>

25. Proactive communication with stakeholders

1. Description	<p>The establishment of regular engagement and proactive messaging from customs to the trading community. Traders should be able to rely on getting a single picture of the changing situation as quickly and easily as possible. A key element of this measure is to be as open and upfront as possible in the circumstances. As far as practicable this should also involve pushing out the message as opposed to simply having it sitting on a website.</p>
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that, during any disruption, there are timely, accurate and relevant communications being made available to the traders, logistics companies and partner agencies.
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The actual methods of communication can differ depending on what is available and what is most effective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regular meetings and teleconferences (see 25) ○ Official websites ○ E-mailing lists ○ Leveraging of existing consultative groups ○ Publications (if they are available in a timely fashion) ○ Formal Customs notices ○ Alert messages • This can be a customs initiative, or it may be progressed with other border agencies • It may be appropriate to maintain several channels of communication – but if this occurs then consistent messaging is critical.
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is imperative that some point within the organisation is acting as a command centre or clearing house for information related to trade impacts and Customs initiatives and responses • This can be implemented relatively quickly, and can be either scaled up, or back, according to the circumstances • Ensuring consistency and widely publicising the key channels of communication are very important to helping traders. Stakeholder will need one source of truth they can trust, • Where websites are used – messaging relating to the trade disruption should be easy to find
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can have some resource implications. • May need to publicise the key messaging channels • Might involve being more open with the private sector than usual.
6. Examples	<p>In China, COVID-19 related information was made available on news media, General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) official website, Customs official Weibo and WeChat accounts and journals.</p> <p>Chinese Taipei created a section on official website to disseminate COVID-19 related measures and regulations.</p> <p>The New Zealand's Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Federation (CBAFF) worked arduously to support the industry, providing updates, raising issues around trade facilitation with appropriate stakeholders. The CBAFF participated in industry group discussions with major stakeholders. Has been actively involved with industry associations, border agencies, and government in general.</p>

	In Peru, SUNAT organized virtual workshops providing guidance on pre-arrival processing, Authorized Economic Operators and Customs clearance system. This was an extremely important element for traders in the initial COVID-19 response.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alignment with WTO TFA, Article 12 Section 1• <u>WCO Customs-Business Partnership guidance</u>• <u>International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs</u>

26. Regular teleconferences with brokers and traders

1. Description	Participating in regular teleconferences, increasing communication and collaboration between customs and trader/brokers.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push a single, joined up message out to traders • Get some real-time information about the current experience of traders • Identify and/or anticipate supply chain issues
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be either virtual or in-person – whatever is most practical and timely in the circumstances • Could leverage off existing arrangements or be a new standalone arrangement. • Aim can be to respond to current challenges or long-term focused • Can be a temporary or permanent measure
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be a two-way engagement – pushing out messages and getting real-time feedback. • Can be a new focused standalone group or leverage off an existing forum. • Catch-ups can be scheduled as a regular meeting (daily, weekly etc.) • They should be scheduled and managed quite efficiently and focussed on the current situation • Meetings can be set up quickly and with minimal organisation
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is something that may not be appropriate in pandemic situations • Increased communication can lead to partnerships
6. Examples	<p>In Chile, the Public Private Customs Council (CAPP) ran sessions in which chambers and agencies that bring together customs agents, logistics, storage and transport operators and chambers of commerce, as well as public bodies linked to the area and other representatives participated.</p> <p>In Mexico, administrative communications were issued aimed at strictly complying with the relevant contingency measures.</p> <p>The Australian Border Force is supporting trade-related stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic by convening a monthly teleconference with approximately 80 trade-related stakeholders across industry and Government. These monthly meetings update stakeholders on the COVID-19 responses by Australian Government agencies. The teleconferences also provide industry with an opportunity to resolve any concerns regarding importing, exporting and transshipment.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCO Customs-Business Partnership guidance • WCO - Customs in the 21st Century: Enhancing Growth and Development through Trade Facilitation and Border Security

27. Removing/reducing duty on certain critical supplies

1. Description	<p>Reducing or eliminating customs fees for essential goods or critical supplies. Also includes promoting the reduction or elimination of tariffs and other fees.</p> <p>Note: The points that likely involve agencies other than customs authorities are indicated with square brackets [].</p>
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and facilitate the importation of those selected essential goods
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Can be either the complete removal of fees, or the reduction of them] • [Its scope can be determined by the type and range of goods selected] • [Can be a temporary or permanent measure] • [This might also be implemented as the temporary deferral of duty requirements] • [Reductions can be introduced as either an automatic, or something that traders must apply for (concessions)]
4. Implementation	<p>Depending on the mechanisms and local legislative framework this may require regulatory changes to be implemented by other agencies, which also may need the approval of a legislative body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customs authorities should work with other agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to this measure • After the [liberalization], Customs should simplify and facilitate the customs procedures which follow this measure • [It is most likely to be a temporary measure] • [If temporary this should be clearly signalled, and the time period should be apparent] • [It may require systems changes to implement]
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [This will mean a fall in duty revenue] • [May change import patterns and incentives] • There may be a risk of some traders trying to exploit this offer
6. Examples	<p>This measure was widely deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>[Singapore, Russia, Philippines, Canada, Malaysia, Korea and Indonesia were some of the economies that eliminated tariffs and other customs duties, at least temporarily.]</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation of the customs co-operation council to expedite the forwarding of relief consignments in the event of disasters (1970) • Revised Kyoto Convention, Guidelines to Specific Annex J, Chapter 5 • Convention on Temporary Admission, Istanbul, 1990 • Istanbul Convention Handbook • Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the role of customs in natural disaster relief, June 2011 • The key principles of the SAFE Framework of Standards for further facilitating clearing relief consignments • Guidelines for Customs administrations on humanitarian assistance and emergency measures [es] • Customs commitment highlighted at the World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May 2016

28. Removing/reducing or deferring duty, taxes and fees on certain supplies

1. Description	<p>This involves the reduction or elimination of customs fees certain supplies, as well as the promotion of eliminating or reducing tariffs and other fees. This differs from the measure above as certain supplies are not limited to critical supplies.</p> <p>Note: The points that likely involve agencies other than customs authorities are indicated with square brackets [].</p>
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and encourage the import of these selected goods
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Can be either the complete removal of fees, or the reduction of them] • [Scope can be determined by the type and range of goods selected] • [Can be a temporary or permanent measure] • [Can be phased out with time] • [This might also be the deferral of duty requirements]
4. Implementation	<p>Depending on the mechanisms and local legislative framework, this may require regulatory changes to be implemented by other agencies, which also may need the approval of a legislative body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customs can be responsible for removing or reducing customs related fees • Customs can play a role in facilitating and/or promoting the customs procedures which follow this measure • After the [liberalization], Customs role is to simplify and facilitate procedures • [If temporary, this should be clearly signalled, and the time period should be apparent] • [May require systems changes]
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [This will mean a fall in duty revenue] • [May change import patterns and incentives] • [There may be a risk of some traders trying to exploit this offer]
6. Examples	<p>[China temporarily decreased tariffs on certain products such as agricultural products, raw materials and meat.]</p> <p>Japan reduced or exempt fees relating to customs duty.</p> <p>[Indonesia temporarily eliminated import certification requirements on imports of onions and garlic.]</p> <p>[Singapore and New Zealand adopted a Declaration on Trade in Essential Goods for Combatting the COVID-19 Pandemic in April 2020, eliminating tariffs on over 120 listed tariff subheadings.]</p>
7. Resources	

29. Reviewing timeframes

1. Description	Involves reviewing and adjusting timeframes for a range of border transactions; likely relaxing or suspending timeframes requirements
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the need to come into the customs office • Take the pressure off front-line customs officers • Facilitate shipments
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be introduced as either a temporary or permanent measure • It can be applied to a range of scenarios associate with border clearance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Temporary import entries ○ Timing to submit documents ○ Reviews and renewals of licensing and certification requirements ○ Extending the validity of permits, licenses etc.
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative/regulatory change may be required if existing timeframes are currently set in legislation • Needs clear communication with trading community so that they understand the scope of any changes • May need to involve other agencies • Relatively simple concept which can be quickly introduce
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may not be able to be easily introduced if regulatory changes are required • Can be flexible to allow for changing circumstances • Decreases pressure on businesses
6. Examples	<p>One of the common methods of this used by economies during COVID-19 was to extend the expiry dates for temporary imports - which meant less need to have in-person transactions.</p> <p>Japan Customs extended the deadline of application submission and tax payment, etc. regarding the laws about customs duty.</p> <p>The New Zealand government agreed to a 12-month deferral of the scheduled fee changes for Customs' clearance of imported and exported across New Zealand's borders.</p> <p>Peru extended the term for the enforcement of sureties, letters of guarantee and customs bond policies.</p>
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Chamber of Commerce – Customs Measures to Save our SMEs • HOW COUNTRIES CAN LEVERAGE TRADE FACILITATION TO DEFEAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (unctad.org)

30. Single Windows and Online Clearance Systems

1. Description	Trade Single Windows are typically online systems that enable traders to provide information needed by various agencies via one single system, of which border agencies will use to process craft and cargo data.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide “one stop” integrated services through multiple channels • electronically link agencies that are involved in the process • Decrease costs for traders and Governments • expedite cargo release and clearance • eliminate duplicated processes for the trading community • Better respond to volume increases
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of integration: Domestic single windows, Regional single windows, Global single windows • Single Windows arrangements may require legislative changes the recognise the online environment and the interaction between border agencies
4. Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paperless customs + e-Payment for customs duty + e-Payment for Customs Duty + Container Loading List + Simple e-Documents Exchange with Port Authority and/or Terminal Operators 2. Connecting Other Government Back-end IT systems, and e-Permit Exchange with Paperless Customs System 3. E-Documents Exchange stakeholders within the port community 4. An integrated domestic logistics platform with also traders and logistics-service providers information exchange 5. A regional information-exchange system
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single window systems can be expensive but deliver a range of benefits in the longer term • Will involve significant change programmes for customs and traders (inc. training, investment, staff support, guidance etc.) • May require multiple manual systems to complement • Very problematic if system is down • Facilitate compliance • Optimizing clearance processes • Increasing transparency and predictability for traders • simplify and harmonise border procedures • Facilitate trade • provide a fully transparent and predictable border environment while ensuring safety and security through a high-performing risk management • enhance transparency and impartial treatment in the fiscal and customs framework • Removes duplication and improves the accuracy of information by removing human error element in a number of areas • Vastly improves the ability of customs to manage risk at the border by harnessing data and advanced technology • eliminate corruption by improving methods to counter dishonest practices and reducing discretion • Opportunity to use the technology to exchange information with likeminded partners in the future to facilitate trade

6. Examples

Most APEC economies have already implemented some sort of Single Window System and took further advantage of these during the pandemic. For example, in Peru, SUNAT made well use of its Single Window system, which had already implemented a number of paperless trading measures and simplification of Customs procedures.

7. Resources

- United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business ([UN/CEFACT](#))
- WTO TFA
- United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific ([UNNExT](#))
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations Single Window ([ASEAN](#)).
- Economic Commission ([unece.org](#))
- [WCO | Understanding Single Window Environment](#)
- [UNESCAP | Regional Best Practices of Single Windows](#)

31. Utilizing Domestic Trade Facilitation Committees

1. Description	Utilizing Domestic Trade Committees on Trade Facilitation or another similar mechanism to facilitate a coordinated trade disruption response.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable Government to speak with a single voice • Ensure Government agencies hear the same message from key private sector stakeholders • Facilitate timely and consistent communications with the trading community • Enable joint solutions to be developed by using pre-existing and established arrangements, and trusted relationships
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be initiated by utilising the formal Domestic Trade Facilitation Committee or by setting up a stand-up committee or working groups • Meeting frequency may change depending on the type and severity of trade disruption • Can involve a wide range of participants or just relevant ones • Can allow for additional participants to be brought in • Regional sub-groupings or specialist working groups can be established • May just focus on information sharing or it can develop and coordinate responses
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will likely not require a legislative basis • Planning for “scale-up” means it can be quickly deployed • Can be initiated quickly • May want to consider a representative group of trusted traders, including SMEs and large companies
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone may be represented, leaving some feeling disadvantaged and information to be biased
6. Examples	On May 18, 2021, the Philippine Trade Facilitation Committee (PTFC) was created, and has since assisted in improving customs procedures.
7. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WTO TFA Article 23 Section 2

32. Waiving penalties for errors

1. Description	Not applying penalties for minor errors associated with imports and exports processes.
2. Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitating trade by removing or minimising the application of penalties for minor and technical errors• Avoiding unnecessary interventions and holds• Decreasing additional costs for traders under financial pressure
3. Variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This can be introduced as either a temporary or permanent measure• It's scope can be determined by limiting the type and range of goods selected, and the type of noncompliance
4. Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative/regulatory changes may be required if discretion is not available• Care should be taken in communicating this (if at all)
5. Risk and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk that noncompliance and minor offending may increase• Risk of receiving inaccurate information from traders (due to reduced incentive to provide accurate information). This will impact how effectively customs can perform its role• Allows for resources to be focused on other areas• Will stimulate trade flows
6. Examples	Peru approved the discretionary power not to determine or punish customs offences provided for in the General Customs Law committed during the health emergency declared as a result of COVID-19.
7. Resources	

Other useful resources

[APEC | Disaster Risk Reduction Framework](#)

[ASEAN | ASEAN Single Window](#)

[International Chamber of Commerce | Customs Measures to Save our SMEs](#)

[Logistics Operational Guide \(LOG\) | Digital Logistics Capacity Assessments](#)

[UNCTAD | COVID-19: A 10-point action plan to strengthen international trade and transport facilitation in times of pandemic \(unctad.org\)](#)

[UNCTAD | How Countries can Leverage Trade Facilitation to defeat the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[UNECE | The Economic Commission](#)

[UNECE | Trade Facilitation and E-business \(UN/CEFACT\)](#)

[UNESCAP | Regional Best Practices of Single Windows](#)

[UNESCAP | The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific](#)

[WCO | 2nd edition of the Secretariat Note on the role of Customs in facilitating and securing the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines](#)

[WCO | Convention on Temporary Admission](#)

[WCO | Measures adopted by AMS customs in response to COVID-19](#)

[WCO | Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on the role of Customs in Natural Disaster Relief](#)

[WCO | Revised KYOTO Convention](#)

[WCO | SAFE framework of standards](#)

[WCO | Understanding Single Window Environment](#)

[WTO | Protocol amending the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation](#)

[WTO | Trade facilitation](#)

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