GoGlobal

Selling to customers in India: A guide for SMEs in the UK

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Introduction

India is now the world's most populous country, having overtaken China for the first time this year. With a rapidly expanding consumer market, a booming middle class and a quarter of the world's under-25s, the Indian market is an attractive prospect for ambitious UK businesses looking to expand their global footprint.

Total UK exports to India amounted to £15.1 billion in 2022. This was an increase of 62%, or £5.8 billion, compared to 2021, making India the UK's 12th largest trading partner. However, that number could drastically increase in the coming years as the UK and Indian governments are currently negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Now is a great time for UK companies to think about entering the Indian market. The subcontinent boasts the fifth-largest economy in the world and is on track to become the third largest by 2030. There are opportunities for internationally ambitious UK businesses looking to export across a broad range of industries, most notably technology, fintech and automotive.

Note: The information in this guide is correct at the time of writing (July 2023).

Selling to India

Main benefits

Increased revenue
Expanding your market reach into India allows you to sell to a much larger pool of customers. With a population of 1.4 billion people (and growing fast), India presents a huge potential revenue stream for small and medium-sized British businesses like yours.

Diverse customer base
Exporting to the subcontinent gives you a more varied customer base, reducing your dependence on the domestic market. By targeting the Indian market, you spread your business risk and increase your chances of success.

Brand recognition and global image
Successfully entering and establishing a presence in India can elevate your brand's reputation and credibility worldwide. Being associated with India can attract attention from international markets, potentially opening doors to new global opportunities.

Thriving start-up ecosystem
India's start-up ecosystem has experienced significant evolution in recent years. Start-ups in India are using cutting-edge technologies like social, mobility, analytics and cloud (SMAC), artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to find solutions to challenges in sectors such as healthcare, education, and financial inclusion.

Potential to scale and grow
India's immense size and diversity offers ample room for growth. Successfully penetrating the Indian market can serve as a solid foundation for expanding into other regions or leveraging your success to attract international investors or partners.

Comprehensive tax system
India boasts a strong network of tax treaties and has recently implemented reforms such as the Direct Taxes Code and the Goods and Services Tax (GST), aimed at making it easier for companies to do business.

Business-friendly
The Indian Parliament has passed several significant bills that benefit most industrial sectors. The Goods and Services Tax Bill, the Direct Taxes Code Bill, the Land Acquisition Bill and the Companies Bill all make it easier for UK companies to enter the Indian market.

English is widely used in business
While India has 22 official languages, English plays a key role in business. This is a huge benefit for UK companies looking to export to the subcontinent. However, learning basic phrases in the languages your business partners speak can help negotiations.

Main challenges

Bribery and corruption
While improvements have been made in recent years, India continues to have a problem with bribery and corruption. India was ranked 85 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index 2021. TI's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) Asia found that India has the highest bribery rate in Asia.

Establishing brand recognition and trust
Building brand awareness and gaining trust in a new market can be challenging. Indian consumers are likely unfamiliar with your brand or already loyal to local competitors. It requires time and effort to earn their trust and loyalty.

Disputed territory
UK businesses that are contemplating projects in the disputed territory of Kashmir are advised to consult the nearest British High Commission in India or Pakistan, or the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) in London, before proceeding.

Time-zone differences
Conducting business across time zones can hinder communication, especially when it comes to customer support and timely decision-making. Consider having dedicated support channels, or outsourcing customer service to accommodate inquiries and provide assistance during local business hours.

Protecting intellectual property
Intellectual property (IP) rights are territorial and rights granted in the UK don't provide protection elsewhere. It's advisable to consult legal experts who specialise in international intellectual property law to navigate trademarking, copyright and patent protection in India.

Geographic distance
The physical distance between the UK and India presents logistical obstacles in terms of shipping, delivery times and inventory management. You need to plan your supply chain carefully, taking into account associated costs and complexities.

Cyber-security risks for UK companies
British businesses are vulnerable to cyber attacks that can cause them to lose money, have customer data stolen, suffer breaches of intellectual property, or see harm to their reputation. To deter such attacks, you must prioritise your cyber-security measures.

Pricing, cost and currency exchange
Pricing your products competitively while considering exchange rates, shipping costs, customs duties and local market dynamics can be complex. Striking a balance between profitability and affordability for your target customers is crucial. You also need reliable and secure payment processing systems that support transactions in different currencies.

Business culture in India

India is a vast and highly populated country with many different languages, identities and religions. You must understand the diversity of cultures if you're going to forge successful business relationships on the Indian subcontinent.

While you have to be extremely cautious about making any generalisations about Indian culture, here are some top tips to help you succeed.

Introductions and greetings

Initial greetings: A handshake is common etiquette for business meetings. However, some people may opt for the namaste, a greeting that involves pressing palms together with fingers pointing upwards, accompanied by a slight bow.

Small talk counts: Engaging in small talk at the start of a business meeting is common, and topics such as family are typical. Rushing directly into business without building rapport may be perceived as impolite.

Use formal titles: Indian culture places great significance on formal titles. When meeting a doctor, for example, address them as such unless they indicate otherwise. Use Mr and Mrs when addressing people in senior positions. Men and women in the workplace are often addressed as sir and madam. The suffix "ji" is commonly used, particularly when addressing someone senior both in age and rank.

Language and communication

English is the language of business: English is commonly used for business dealings in India. Many Indian business people speak it fluently, which is a huge benefit for UK founders looking to export to the subcontinent.

"No" can have negative connotations: Many Indians will avoid using the word "no" as it can be considered offensive. Instead, they may use phrases like "We'll see" or "I'll try" when they mean "no". However, be wary of pressuring Indian business partners into being more direct as it risks alienating them.

Use polite questions and interpret answers: Instead of forcing a yes-no answer from an Indian contact, use polite questions and try to interpret the response. For example, you could ask what date and time would be best for a meeting or what the anticipated timeframe is for raising a purchase order. If details aren't forthcoming, it might be a polite no.

General advice

Dress code: When meeting business partners, opt for smart, cool and comfortable attire. For men, a lightweight suit is the safest bet. Ties aren't typically mandatory unless in traditional sectors like banking and law. Women are advised to wear a trouser suit or a conservative dress.

Avoid using your left hand: If somebody offers you a business card, always accept it with your right hand and put it away respectfully. In general, be cautious about accepting things – and eating – with your left hand, as it's traditionally used for washing and is considered disrespectful.

Stay patient during negotiations: Compared to UK standards, negotiations in India may progress at a slower pace. Show patience, as being forceful may risk pushing your contact away.

Importance of good relationships: Trust and intuition are equally as important as statistics and data when forging business relationships in India. Investing in small talk and getting to know your business partner is essential. Inquiring about their family can help foster trust.

The role of hierarchy: Indian businesses typically adopt a hierarchical structure and decisions are generally made at the highest levels of management. Unless a company director, owner or highly ranked manager is present in a meeting, a decision is unlikely.

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Preparing to do business in India

Expanding your small business into the Indian market presents a fantastic opportunity to grow, diversify and increase your sales, revenue and profits.

With the largest population on the planet and a burgeoning middle class, India boasts untold potential for internationally ambitious UK businesses. But there are many challenges to navigate and overcome first.

If you're wondering where to begin, we've prepared a comprehensive, step-by-step guide specifically tailored for UK businesses aiming to sell their goods in India. This guide will provide valuable insights and support to help you embark on this exciting journey.

Before considering exporting to India, you must be clear on your reasons:

- Is it a key part of your growth strategy or something you think you should be doing?
- What are you aiming to achieve and over what period of time?
- Do you have enough time and resources to focus on exporting, or are you too occupied with business at home?
- Is everyone in the business on board? Is the product ready? Are you prepared if an export order comes in tomorrow?
- How will exporting affect your current business?

By stepping back, analysing and defining your export strategy for India, you lessen the chances of making mistakes and increase your likelihood of success.

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Research the market

Market research is an essential part of any business venture. Before exporting to India, you need to understand the demand for your products and customer expectations. Not taking the time to research the market risks costly and time-consuming mistakes.

Market research helps you figure out:

- which market to enter and the best way to do it
- where your products fit in the market you've selected
- who your target customers are
- which other businesses you're competing with
- what similar products are selling for
- what might prevent or hinder you from entering a market

Online research

The best way to start your market research is online. Start by researching your competitors and actively engaging with their content, including company websites, social media profiles, and marketing campaigns. Read customer reviews and industry and media product reviews (if applicable), too.
Ask yourself: What aspects of your competitors' approach do you find appealing? What could your business do better? How can you make your business stand out from the crowd?

You should also use Google Trends to understand the number of online searches for related products or services in India.

The UK Department of Business & Trade website has lots of guidance on using the internet to research overseas markets.

Visiting India for research

While it might be expensive and time-consuming, travelling to India for in-market research is an invaluable way of making connections and getting first-hand experience of the people, cultures and market.

You're also better placed to examine your competitors and assess the demographics, tastes, preferences and behaviours of potential customers in India – and what you need to do to cater for them effectively. Attending trade shows and fairs is a good way to showcase your products, network with prospective customers, and gain insights into your market.

The UK Department of Business & Trade website provides tips on visiting your target market and explains what research you can do when you're there.

Making decisions about the market

Ultimately, you must decide how you're going to reach the market and what you need to do to carve out a share for your business.

- **Number of markets:** Decide how many regions you're ready to enter at the same time. Always align your ambition to the resources you have available.
- **Where to focus:** Don't stretch yourself too thinly. Take the time to gain a deeper understanding of the market and show potential customers in India that you're committed to their country.
- **Route to market:** There are many routes to market – distributor, agent, recruitment, direct, online and so on – and it's essential to fully research your options and choose which is best for your business. The decision isn't always clear, so don't rush it.
- **Choose carefully:** Once you've decided on your best route to market, pick your partners, employees or online portals carefully. The wrong selection now could set you back months or even years. For example, you should see a distributor as your biggest customer and treat them as such.

Once you've decided, don't waver. Focus on it. Find the best distributor, agent, employee or whichever you've chosen. Be patient – you don't need to take the first thing you're offered.

Form a detailed plan

At this stage of the process, it's time to pull everything together into a detailed plan. Define all the key elements and the objectives, including the following:

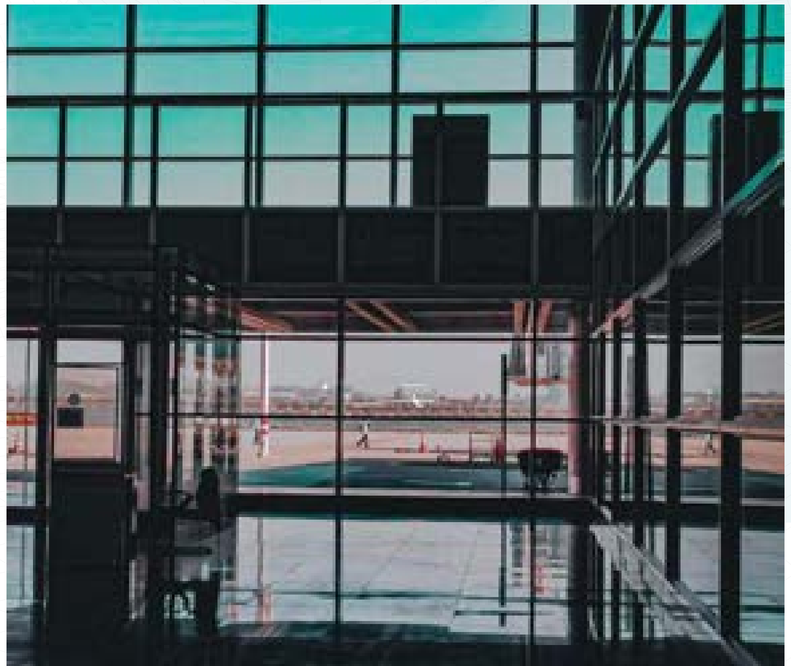
- **The financial investment needed:** Be certain that the amount you're required to invest is something you can both afford and justify. Will the returns exceed the costs?
- **The non-financial resources needed:** Do you have the people, the time, and the right skills in place?
- **Timescale:** How long are you prepared to invest? How soon do you need exports to be self-financing?
- **Level of risk:** Assess the risks you will be exposed to – how do they compare to your risk appetite? Do the potential returns warrant the exposure?
- **Route-to-market strategy:** One of the key decisions is how you'll enter the market. Make an informed choice and focus on it.
- **Milestones along the way:** Consider what you need to achieve and by when to be successful.
- **Expected outcomes:** What progress do you want to have made after three, six and 12 months? Two years? Three years?

Make sure you're comfortable with the plan and the details. Discuss it with the relevant people in your company to make sure everyone's on the same page. Getting colleagues to buy into your strategy now will save a lot of questions later.

Once you're up and running, regularly review your plan and compare it to your results. Measure if you've successfully passed your milestones and achieved the outcomes you expected. Highlight any anomalies and work to put them right; be vigilant in keeping the plan on track.

If it's working, great. If not, feel free to question everything. Are you delivering the resources and investment agreed upon? Is the plan itself wrong or how you're executing it? Don't be afraid to change tack if you need to but be sure of the reasons first.

Visit the Santander Navigator website for more guidance on how to create an export plan.



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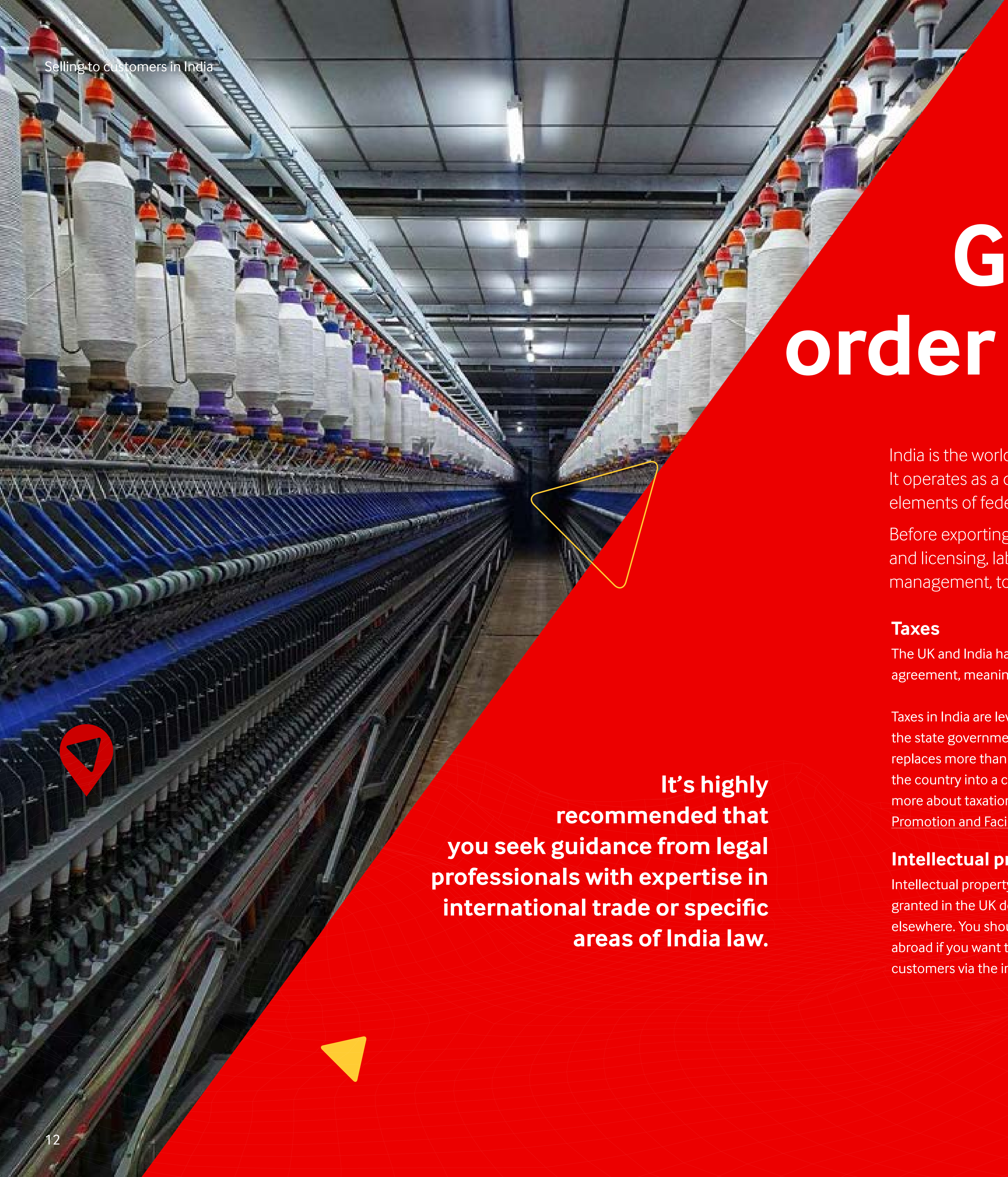

Getting things in order to start trading

India is the world's largest democracy and has the longest written constitution on the planet. It operates as a quasi-federal secular state, which means the Constitution of India incorporates elements of federalism by granting a level of autonomy to state governments.

Before exporting to India, it's essential to familiarise yourself with export documents, regulations, and licensing, labelling and marking requirements, as well as tariffs and foreign currency management, to avoid any legal issues arising later.

It's highly recommended that you seek guidance from legal professionals with expertise in international trade or specific areas of India law.

Taxes

The UK and India have signed a double taxation agreement, meaning the same income isn't taxed twice.

Taxes in India are levied by the central government and the state governments. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) replaces more than a dozen indirect taxes and unifies the country into a common market. You can find out more about taxation from India's National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency.

Intellectual property rights

Intellectual property (IP) rights are territorial and rights granted in the UK don't provide protection in India or elsewhere. You should consider getting IP protection abroad if you want to trade overseas or sell to overseas customers via the internet.

The Intellectual Property Office's International IP Service provides practical information to help you protect, manage and enforce your IP in India. British businesses looking for IP support can also contact the IP Attaché for India.

Import and customs regulation

It's essential to familiarise yourself with Indian import regulations and customs procedures and know what paperwork you need to provide. It will also help to understand product classifications, duty rates and labelling and packaging standards.

The Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) lists goods where restrictions are imposed or import isn't allowed.

Standards and regulations

Some imported products will need to meet Indian quality standards and have to be certified by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) before being exported to India. BIS does offer pre certification, subject to production inspections. Find out more about product certification at the BIS website. Use the Food Import Clearance System if you're exporting food to India.

Labelling requirements

Product labels can be in English or Hindi. All imported goods, as well as transport documents, must show standard units of measurement and weight. You must comply with these requirements for customs in India to be able to clear your consignment.

Consumer protection laws

India has strong consumer protection laws. It's important to be familiar with the Consumer Protection Act, which extends to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir. You must also be aware of regulations related to product warranties, refunds and consumer privacy.

Contract and commercial law

It'll help to know something about Indian contract law and commercial practices. If you enter into any agreements, partnerships or distribution contracts, consider seeking legal advice. That way, you'll make sure those contracts meet Indian legal standards and protect your business interests.

Data protection and privacy

The reworked version of India's long-awaited data protection law is currently going through parliament. Be sure to pay close attention to progress regarding the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022.

Visit the UK government's online service for more information on the rules and restrictions that apply when moving goods from the UK to India.

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Getting your goods out of the UK

Get an EORI number

You need an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number to trade internationally and move goods out of the UK. Assigned by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), this is an identification number unique to your business and made up of two parts:

- The country code of the issuing state
- A code that's unique in the member state

In the UK, this is usually your VAT registration number followed by the UK code of 000.

You'll need to provide your EORI number when completing and lodging a customs declaration via the Customs Declaration Service (CDS). Without it, the customs authorities won't be able to process your document. You'll also need an EORI number to use the UK government's online export licensing system to get an export licence (see **Get an export licence**).

To check whether you have a valid EORI number, you can use the UK government's designated tool. If you don't have one, you can apply to have a number allocated to your business. Just visit the online portal and follow the application process.

Get an export licence

If your product requires an export licence, you'll need to apply to the UK government for one. The export licensing process can take some time, so plan ahead and submit your application as early as possible.

You can go to the government's website to see a list of goods that require export licences. But for small businesses, these are the most relevant types of products:

- Food and drink products
- Animal products
- Plants and plant products
- Drugs and medicines
- Medical devices
- Chemicals

You need an export licence to meet the strict controls put in place by the UK government's Export Control Joint Unit. They help control the movement of certain products across international borders.

If these controls apply to the products you're looking to move into India and you don't have the correct export licence, it's likely that your goods won't clear customs. You'll also need an EORI number (see **Get an EORI number**) to use the UK government's online export licensing system to get an export licence.

Agree incoterms

International commercial terms (more commonly known as incoterms) are the rules that apply when shipping goods overseas. Published by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), they're a set of standards accepted by governments and legal authorities around the world.

When an exporter agrees to sell goods to a buyer (importer), both parties need to agree on who's responsible for shipping the goods and who's responsible if anything happens while the goods are in transit.

Designed to protect both the seller (exporter) and the buyer (importer), incoterms define which tasks, costs and risks are associated with each party, and at what point the costs and risks transfer between them.

The terms define who's responsible for:

- moving the goods between agreed points
- completing customs documents
- providing insurance (see **Cargo insurance**)
- paying tariffs and duties

All international purchases will be processed on the agreed incoterms, which must be clearly stated on the relevant shipping documents. For most modes of shipment (road, rail and air), standard incoterms will apply. For sea and inland waterway transport, however, there are separate incoterms.

The ICC regularly reviews and amends incoterms – you can find the latest incoterms on its website. For more information about incoterms, visit the UK Department for Business & Trade website.

Cargo insurance

In most trade agreements, having cargo insurance in place will be an incoterm. Who is responsible for arranging this (buyer or seller) will depend on the terms agreed as part of the contract.

Cargo insurance protects you from any financial loss if your goods are damaged or lost before you've fulfilled your commitments in the contract. This might be while goods are being moved (whether this is by road, rail, sea or air), loaded, unloaded or put in storage.

When moving your goods internationally, many freight forwarders (see page 18) will cover your goods under their liability insurance policy. However, as this covers only a very small amount of the goods' overall cost, you should arrange a comprehensive insurance policy to cover the difference.

Cargo insurance protects you from any financial loss if your goods are damaged or lost before you've fulfilled your commitments in the contract.

Make a customs declaration

No goods can enter or leave the UK without a customs declaration (import or export declaration) submitted to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Customs declarations are also necessary for security, as certain goods need a licence or permit (see page 16) before they can be exported.

While you can make a customs declaration yourself (using special software), many exporters tend to appoint a customs agent/broker or freight forwarder to do it for them. That way, they can be sure their goods will be cleared for arrival and departure at UK borders.

Incorrect documentation is one of the main reasons that goods are held up at the border, so your customs declarations must be accurate. In the UK, you make declarations via HMRC's CHIEF or CDS online platforms. (CHIEF will be discontinued in late 2023.)

Once you submit your declaration, HMRC checks and validates it and then assigns it a movement reference number (MRN). This allows your goods to leave the country.

Information found on a customs declaration

The customs declaration has several data elements that you must complete for HMRC to accept it. These include the following:

- **Commodity code:** Used to classify imported or exported goods. Having the correct code helps make sure you're keeping to customs rules and paying the right taxes and duties. It also indicates whether any licences are needed. You can search for commodity codes on the government's Trade Tariff website.
- **Information about goods and their journey:**
  - The goods' origin
  - The mode of transport used to move the goods
  - Where the goods are being dispatched from
  - Where the goods will arrive
- **Valuation:** This must be correct, since the value of your goods often acts as a basis for calculating customs duty.
- **Consignee:** The party receiving the goods
- **Consignor:** The party exporting the goods

(This isn't a full list – there are many more data elements in a customs declaration.)

Customs agents/brokers and freight forwarders

You might choose to have a third party – such as a customs agent/broker or freight forwarder – to submit customs declarations on your behalf.

- **Customs agent/broker:** Offers customs clearance and representation services for businesses and traders exporting goods around the world. Their role is mainly to act on your behalf in lodging export declarations to the HMRC platforms.
- **Freight forwarder:** Handles shipping arrangements, working with shipping companies to transport goods to the eventual customer. They don't physically move the goods but do all the logistics work to make sure exports can cross international borders. Importantly, they complete the customs declarations for you.

Unless you're moving goods in high volumes, you might find the cost of installing the special software needed to submit declarations, plus the admin costs, expensive compared to the fees charged by a third party.

Without either the software or a third party acting for you, you won't be able to upload your customs declarations and, as such, move the goods into India. The right customs agent/broker or freight forwarder will give you a choice of solutions that best match your business's needs and help to simplify the entire process.

Arrange for goods to be transported out of the country

Logistics

When you're ready to ship your goods, you can use any combination of road, rail, air or sea to transport them. Which option (or options) you choose will depend on the following:

- Cost
- When you want the goods to arrive in India
- The size and weight of your goods, whether they're perishable, and whether there are any security considerations
- Whether any special requirements apply, such as export licences

There are many logistics providers operating today. For example, you might look for a haulier if you're transporting goods by road, or a freight forwarder if you're sending goods around the world. If you're exporting goods in small volumes, it may be easier, cheaper and quicker to use a parcel courier.

As well as moving your goods, logistics providers can also offer services for warehousing, order fulfilment, inventory management, and more.

Freight forwarders

To send goods to India, you could consider hiring a freight forwarder. Acting as the middleman between you and the shipping company, airline, rail or road haulage company, they manage the whole process of getting the goods from the UK to India, including:

- transporting your goods from where they're made or stored to the port or airport, for shipping
- preparing all the relevant paperwork (including customs declarations)
- booking sea or air freight
- setting up cargo insurance and tracking delivery as needed
- arranging warehousing and storage, if necessary
- managing customs clearance and the payment of import duty on the Indian side

You should use an experienced operator who's a member of the British International Freight Association (BIFA). Find a freight forwarder on the BIFA website

Check for trade barriers

A trade barrier is something that slows down, limits or prevents you from exporting to or investing in an overseas market. It can increase costs, cause delays, or prevent you from exporting altogether. As a result, it's important to check for any issues that may hinder you when selling goods or services in India.

The UK government website has an online service you can use to check for current trade barriers or report any new ones.

Getting your goods into India

Complete the relevant documentation

The documents needed to export goods to India will depend on the products you're selling. Your freight forwarder or customs agent/broker can help you with this process.

Aside from the documents required for transporting goods and for insurance, you may also need the following:

- A **clear written contract** that covers:
  - where and when the goods will be delivered
  - who arranges transport for the goods and insurance
  - who handles customs procedures and pays any duties and taxes
  - what currency payment will be in, and what payment method will be used
- **Export documents** such as the following:
  - Know Your Customer (KYC)
  - GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)/DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade) declaration
  - Purchase order/letter of credit
  - Bill of lading/airway bill
  - Bill of entry
  - Commercial invoice and packing list
  - Technical write-up for specific goods if any

You may need extra documentation to export certain goods.

Prepare a packing list

A packing list is a crucial element of all customs declarations. It helps with border security, making sure that dangerous or hazardous goods are properly screened and that the correct procedures for these products are being followed.

Customs authorities use packing lists to make sure they're applying the correct duties and tariffs, while hauliers, airlines and shipping companies use them to track the weight and measurements of the loads they're carrying.

Without a packing list, your shipment simply won't clear customs. It should clearly set out:

- what's on each pallet/container
- the pallet/container number
- the contents of the pallet/container
- your contact details

If the details on the packing list are incorrect, customs authorities will likely have to inspect your goods before they can release them. Not only can that delay your goods from moving on, but you might have to pay extra costs for the time your goods are held at the border.

Commercial invoice

This is a document the buyer needs so they can pay you. In most cases, it's also used to assess what customs duties and taxes are due. The invoice should describe the goods, provide your address, and set out the terms of delivery and payment.

Pro forma invoice

You prepare a pro forma invoice before shipping your goods. It tells the buyer what goods you're sending, their value, and other key details.

If you're being paid "Pro forma", it means paid in advance. The buyer will use this document to determine what amount they need to pay you.

Air waybill

A receipt an international airline issues for goods, providing evidence of the contract between the consignor (you, the exporter) and the airline. It obliges the airline to carry the goods to the airport of destination, in line with the conditions given.

Bill of lading

A contract containing the details of the international transportation of goods by sea. It serves as proof that the carrier has received the goods from you (as the goods' owner). Importantly, it's a document of title which proves ownership of the goods.

For ships, there are two types:

- **A straight bill of lading**: Non-negotiable, this shows that the carrier has accepted the goods, and obliges them to carry the goods to the port of destination, according to specific conditions.
- **A 'shipper's orders' bill of lading:** This is negotiable. It can be bought, sold or traded while the goods are in transit.

Customs bond

A document proving that a bond has been posted with the customs authorities to cover any potential duties, taxes and charges that may fall due. It allows the buyer (importer) to take possession of the goods before paying customs duty.

Transportation entry

The carrier will need to submit one of these documents if your goods are subject to a customs bond and are being transported from a port of arrival to the intended port of entry.

Manifest for aircraft

If you're transporting goods to India by air, India customs will need a set of documents containing the following:

- General declaration
- Air cargo manifest
- Crew list
- Crew purchase list
- Crew baggage declaration
- Stores list

The commander of the aircraft (or their agent) will complete these forms and submit them to the relevant customs officer.

Manifest for vessels

If you're transporting goods by sea, India customs will need a set of documents containing the following:

- Vessel entrance or clearance statement
- Inward cargo declaration
- Ship's stores declaration
- Crew's effects declaration
- Passenger list – crew list

The master of the vessel (or their agent) will complete these forms and submit them to the relevant customs officer.

Additional documentation for food and drink businesses

If you're exporting food and drink products or any type of animal or plant product to India, there are several specific licences and certifications you'll need to arrange.

Food Import Clearance System

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has an online system for clearing food imports, the Food Import Clearance System (FICS).

Export health certificate

Food items and products of animal origin will most likely need an export health certificate (EHC) signed by an official veterinary surgeon before you can export them to the Indian market.

The main categories of goods include the following:

- Dairy (you must state the country of origin)
- Fish
- Eggs
- Meat
- Pet food
- Gelatine and collagen
- Animal hides

To apply for an EHC, visit the UK government's website. The Indian government's website also explains the rules around exporting different food and drink products.

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The content of this guide is for information only and doesn't amount to advice or recommendations on which you should rely. We recommend that you make independent enquiries before taking action on the back of this content.