



Singapore Customs Media Release

SINGAPORE CUSTOMS TRANSFORMS TRADE FACILITATION APPROACH WITH NEW CLIENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK:

TradeFIRST

Singapore Customs (SC) today introduces a new trade facilitation and engagement framework called “**TradeFIRST**” which stands for **T**rade **F**acilitation and **I**ntegrated **R**isk-based **S**ys**T**em. TradeFIRST adopts a holistic approach by integrating trade facilitation, compliance and risk management elements to provide a single trade facilitation window that makes trade easy, fair and secure. The framework’s catchy official name is coined by Customs staff and it will *transform* the way Customs facilitates and regulates trade going forward.

TradeFIRST: A One-Stop Service For Traders

2 Currently, a company which requires multiple customs schemes to facilitate their business operations will be making different applications to SC. It will then go through multiple assessments conducted by different Customs’ trade officers. The tedious process is, of course, not ideal for businesses.

3 Under the new framework, traders will experience a streamlined application process for all Customs facilitation and schemes. Other than time and cost savings, companies can also expect a more personal touch from Customs’ trade officers. Armed with a full suite of customs schemes, officers, known as *account managers*, will be designated to the companies and help design a set of facilitation that suit trader’s different business needs.

4 Account managers will assess the companies’ eligibility across all customs schemes using a common set of assessment criteria and methodology. Each company will be placed in one of the five bands –*Basic, Standard, Intermediate, Enhanced* and *Premium*. As a company beefs up its internal control systems and supply chain security measures and moves up the bands, it will be offered more facilitation by SC. A “*total client experience*” will be enjoyed by companies which attain the highest band, “Premium”, where a whole range of customs schemes and those customised to their businesses will be offered.

5 In this way, Customs' account managers are able to provide companies with more comprehensive engagement and facilitation services in a systematic, risk-based and consistent manner. Such attentive services will be similar to those rendered by relationship managers in banks to their clients.

[Please see [Appendix I](#) for the wider selection of customs facilitation offered to companies as they move up the bands.]

Fostering A Closer Customs-Business Partnership

6 With growing complexity in global trading patterns, a close Customs-Business partnership is of utmost importance. TradeFIRST's holistic assessment of companies and their operations will enable Customs' account managers to keep abreast of each company's changing needs and overall industry development. Being closer to the pulse of the industry, officers will then be able to respond swiftly to business needs and proactively offer schmess and facilitations that are customised to their unique business needs..

7 The open communications and partnerships established with the trading community will enable account managers to see the problems through traders' viewpoints and better address business concerns. Similarly, when businesses understand the philosophy of TradeFIRST and rationale behind customs regulatory requirements, they would be more willing to comply and continually improve their compliance and security chain standards.



Logo of Singapore Customs' new trade framework – TradeFIRST

8 SC's new trade facilitation framework was launched by Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Mr Peter Ong (新加坡财政部常任秘书王文辉) at the agency's event to celebrate International Customs Day at Orchard Hotel this morning. To-date, 156 companies have been assessed under TradeFIRST and 29 of them have been assessed and certified under the "Premium" band. This pilot batch of "Premium" companies was presented with their certificates by Mr Ong at the event.

9 Said Mr Ong on the significant industry relevance of TradeFIRST, "Balancing trade facilitation and regulation is not an easy task and I applaud Singapore Customs for managing these two roles well. With TradeFirst, I am confident that Singapore Customs will foster even closer relationships with businesses as a trusted partner and pro-actively develop new innovative schemes to meet industry needs."

10 Director-General of Customs, Mr Fong Yong Kian (关税局局长方永健) added, "Going forward, TradeFIRST is the key platform that we will use to strengthen our partnership with businesses, to serve the twin objectives of facilitating trade and assuring the integrity of the trading system."

Traders' Response: Benefits Go Beyond Convenience of Single Customs Contact

11 The trading community will gain benefits from TradeFIRST such as the following:

- The convenience of a single contact point when liaising with SC on a range of issues. Every company will have a designated account manager to see to their needs, including guidance on various customs requirements and the assessment process. In addition, companies will enjoy a common renewal period for all the schemes that they have with SC. Companies in the "Premium" and "Enhanced" bands will also be assessed less frequently.
- Traders' needs will be met more promptly and their concerns better addressed by account managers through more two-way interactions, thereby fostering a closer Customs-Business partnership.
- Closer partnership with companies will enhance traders' understanding of customs requirements, thus raising the compliance and supply chain security standards of

companies. This enhances Singapore's status as a trusted and secure trade hub and increase the overall competitiveness.

- A common set of clear and transparent assessment criteria and guidelines will also enable traders to improve their systems and processes before the actual assessment so that they can qualify for more facilitation. They are also made more aware of the facilitation that will potentially benefit them, which will in turn accord them with greater certainty in their business decisions.
- Companies in the “Premium” band will enjoy a three-year waiver of the requirement to lodge any security with SC. For companies in the “Standard” to “Enhanced” bands, the security will be reduced progressively.

12 Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) like THT Logistics can look forward to reaping benefits from Customs' new trade framework. THT's Managing Director, Mr Marcus Chang said, “The biggest benefit is that we only need to go through one assessment to be awarded with multiple schemes. TradeFIRST also provides consistency and predictability in our interactions with Singapore Customs as well as the facilitations we could be entitled to. With a better understanding of the regulatory requirements, we are able to lower our compliance and business costs.”

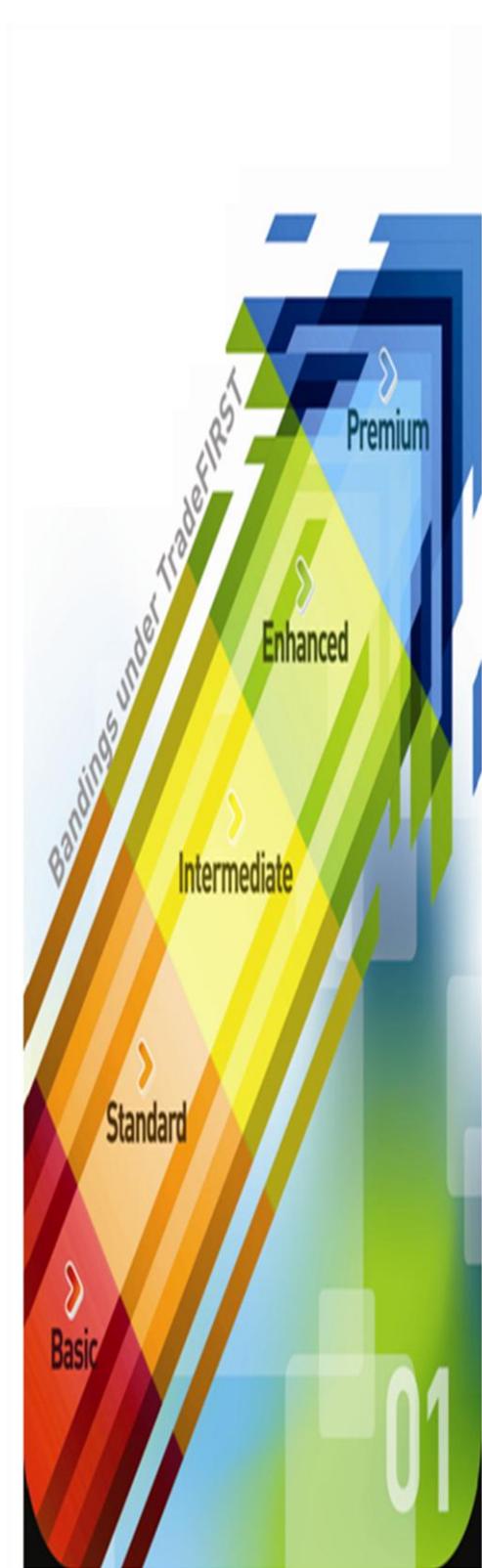
13 Also giving TradeFIRST a thumbs up is Asia Pacific Breweries Singapore's (APBS) Head of Technical and Supply Chain, Mr Duncan Crow. The company complimented the introduction of a pool of dedicated Customs' account managers to serve clients like them. Said Mr Crow, “We are very happy to have one point of contact through our account manager at TradeFIRST. We've got a great working relationship, as he truly understands APBS' business needs and is able to also help us meet Customs' requirements. This balance between regulation and facilitation is what makes this partnership so special.”

14 Singapore Customs encourages companies applying for various customs schemes to participate in the TradeFIRST assessment to help smoothen and expedite the process. Assessment areas include the company's compliance level, its internal control systems and supply chain security measures. For more information on TradeFIRST and applications for customs schemes, companies can visit Singapore Customs' website at www.customs.gov.sg.

[Please see [Appendix II](#) for the list of pilot “Premium” companies and [Appendix III](#) for more quotes from participants of TradeFIRST.]

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Premium

- Waiver of Security
- Reduced Container Sealing
- Waiver of Factory Inspection
- Waiver of Post-Importation Documentation Checks
- Secure Trade Partnership (STP) Plus
- APEX Licence
- Consolidated Declaration
- Bonded Truck Scheme (BTS)

Enhanced

- Strategic Trade Scheme (STS) Tier 2
- Strategic Trade Scheme (STS) Tier 3
- Zero-GST Type III Warehouse
- Petroleum Licences
- Air Store Bond (ASB)
- Duty Free Shop (DFS)
- Excise Factory
- Container Freight Warehouse (CFW)
- Company Declaration Scheme (CDS)
- Industrial Exemption Factory (IEF)

Intermediate

- Zero-GST Type II Warehouse
- Secure Trade Partnership (STP)

Standard

- Licensed Warehouse (LW) Scheme
- Zero-GST Type I Warehouse

Basic (for all traders)

- Waiver of Security Amount of \$2,000 and Below
- Free Trade Zone (FTZ)
- Temporary Import Scheme
- Inter-Gateway Haulage (IGH) / Inter-Gateway Barge (IGB)
- Cargo Agents Import Authorisation (CAIA)
- Certificate of Origin (CO)
- TradeNet Account

Pilot Companies Assessed To Be In The Premium Band Under TradeFIRST

1. Applied Materials South East Asia Pte Ltd
2. Asia Pacific Breweries (Singapore) Pte Ltd
3. British-American Tobacco (Singapore) Pte Ltd
4. CEVA Freight (Singapore) Pte Ltd
5. Chevron Singapore Pte Ltd
6. ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
7. Future Electronics Inc. (Distribution) Pte Ltd
8. Molex Singapore Pte Ltd
9. Nu Horizons Electronics Asia Pte Ltd
10. NYK Group South Asia Pte Ltd
11. Oiltanking Singapore Limited
12. Oiltanking Odjell Terminal Singapore Pte Ltd
13. PB Tankers Ltd
14. PowerSeraya Limited
15. Sanmina-SCI Systems Singapore Pte Ltd
16. SATS Catering Pte Ltd
17. Schenker Singapore (Pte) Ltd
18. Senoko Services Pte Ltd
19. Shell Eastern Petroleum (Pte) Ltd
20. Singapore Petroleum Company Limited
21. Singapore Refining Company Private Limited
22. ST Logistics Pte Ltd
23. Symantec Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
24. TNT Express Worldwide (Singapore) Pte Ltd
25. Tuas Power Generation Pte Ltd
26. United Parcel Service Singapore Pte Ltd
27. Universal Terminal (S) Pte Ltd
28. Vopak Terminals Singapore Pte Ltd
29. YCH Global Logistics Pte Ltd

More Quotable Quotes From TradeFIRST's Pilot Participants

We came to know of TradeFIRST when we applied for Customs' Secure Trade Partnership programme. Under the new framework, companies with multiple schemes will only have one common renewal period. This is unlike in the past where companies have different renewal periods for different schemes. Since we are on several schemes with Singapore Customs, TradeFIRST indeed helps us to eliminate unnecessary procedures and streamline processes. This in turn reduces our business cost and increases our overall efficiency.

The clarity of the assessment criteria has allowed us to know our strengths and weaknesses, and this has helped us in our application process for multiple customs schemes.

TradeFIRST encourages business to play a part as a secure and compliant company to ensure the integrity of Singapore's trading system. We have done this in partnership with Singapore Customs.

– Mr Russell Tham, President of Applied Materials South East Asia Pte. Ltd.

TradeFIRST helps to enhance our position as a logistics provider in Singapore as well as globally.

Singapore Customs has assigned an account manager to assist us. This will have a tremendous impact to our company. We have benefited a lot from this personalised arrangement. Our account manager is so proactive and helpful. Now, we can say that when we go out to compete with the MNCs in the global market, we are not alone. Singapore Customs is running side by side with us.

– Mr Marcus Chang, Managing Director of THT Logistics Pte Ltd

Efficiency is also a very important factor. With the single assessment, you don't have to be assessed again and again. The other thing is we qualify under the "Premium" band. This means that we will only need to be re-assessed once every three years. This really saves us a lot of resources.

One of the major benefits is that you have a single point of contact which works more like a partnership. The account manager understands your business and tries to work with you in a way where you have robustness and yet facilitate the business.

Having a partnership is very different from the traditional approach of just having controls and enforcements.

– Mr Wilfred Lim, Managing Director of Vopak Terminals Singapore Pte Ltd

TradeFIRST speeds up the transaction time required for documentation review during the export declaration process which otherwise would take a longer time under the normal permit declaration.

Customs officers who attend to our applications have been very helpful and quick to respond to our queries on submissions of Secure Trade Partnership and Strategic Trade Scheme documents for the validation processes.

– Mr Hitoshi Shirai, Deputy Managing Director of Hitachi Asia Ltd.