**THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM**

**OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION**

**CONTENTS**

[1.0 THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM 3](#_Toc473096087)

[2.0 CONTENTS OF THE NOMENCLATURE OF THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM 3](#_Toc473096088)

[3.0 EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM 6](#_Toc473096089)

[4.0 THE ROLE OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION 6](#_Toc473096090)

1.0 THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM

The Harmonized System Nomenclature shorter known as HS that is governed by [the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/instrument-and-tools/hs_convention.aspx) is an international multi-purpose nomenclature elaborated under the auspices of [the World Customs Organisation (WCO)](http://www.wcoomd.org/).

The *HS Convention* was adopted in Brussels and entered into force on 1 January 1988. The HS is contained in the Annex to the Convention and forms part thereof.

The HS Nomenclature with six-digit codes is used as a basis:

* For national customs tariffs
* For collecting international trade statistics
* For defining origin rules
* For trade negotiations
* For collecting national taxes
* For freight tariffs and transport statistics
* For monitoring controlled goods (e.g., waste, drugs, chemical weapon, ozone depleting substances, protected species etc.), and
* As an indispensable tool in the performance of customs controls and customs procedures, risk analysis and in information technology.

The HS is used for various purposes; however, it is primarily used for the classification of goods in terms of the customs tariff and collection of customs duties, taxes and trade statistics.

Over 200 countries, unions, or international organisations (e.g., WTO, UNO) use the HS Nomenclature. The Combined Nomenclature used in the European Union is based on the HS Nomenclature. Over 98 % of goods in the international trade are classified according to the HS Nomenclature.

2.0 CONTENT OF THE NOMENCLATURE OF THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM

[The HS Nomenclature](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/instrument-and-tools/hs-nomenclature-2017-edition/hs-nomenclature-2017-edition.aspx) comprises more than 5,000 groups of goods each identified by a six-digit code arranged in a legal and logical structure:

* The first four digits of the code correspond to the relevant HS Heading number,
* The fifth and the sixth digits identify the HS Subheadings.

The HS Nomenclature includes:

* The General Rules for the Interpretation of the HS;

(Goods must be classified in the HS Nomenclature clearly and unambiguously according to the General Rules for the interpretation of the HS. These rules ensure that a certain product is always classified under the same tariff heading.)

* The Section, Chapter and Subheading Notes;

(The above-mentioned Notes are intended to define the scope of each tariff Heading/Subheading, Chapter or Section, in order to avoid divergent classification.)

* A systematically arranged list of tariff headings divided into tariff subheadings where necessary.

The tariff headings in the HS are grouped in 96 Chapters, which themselves are arranged in 21 Sections (numbered with Roman numerals):

Section I: Live animals; animal products

Section II: Vegetable products

Section III: Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; animal and vegetable waxes;

Section IV: Prepared foodstuffs; beverages, spirits and vinegar; tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes

Section V: Mineral products

Section VI: Products of the chemical or allied industries

Section VII: Plastics and articles thereof; rubber and articles thereof

Section VIII: Raw hides and skins, leather, furskins and articles thereof; saddlery and harness; travel goods, handbags and similar containers, articles of animal gut

Section IX: Wood and articles of wood; wood charcoal; cork and articles of cork; manufactures of straw, of esparto or of other plaiting materials; basketware and wickerwork

Section X: Pulp of wood or of other fibrous cellulosic material; recovered (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard; paper and paperboard and articles thereof

Section XI: Textiles and textile articles

Section XII: Footwear, headgear, umbrellas, sun umbrellas, walking-sticks, seat-sticks, whips, riding-crops and parts thereof; prepared feathers and articles made therewith; artificial flowers; articles of human hair

Section XIII: Articles of stone, plaster, cement, asbestos, mica, or similar materials; ceramic products; glass and glassware

Section XIV: Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad with precious metal and articles thereof, imitation jewellery; coin

Section XV: Base metals and articles of base metal

Section XVI: Machinery and mechanical appliances; electrical equipment; parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers; television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles.

Section XVII: Vehicles, aircraft, vessels, and associated transport equipment

Section XVIII: Optical, photographic, cinematographic, measuring, checking, precision, medical or surgical instruments and apparatus; clocks and watches; musical instruments; parts and accessories thereof

Section XIX: Arms and ammunition; parts and accessories thereof

Section XX: Miscellaneous manufactured articles

Section XXI: Works of art, collectors’ pieces, and antiques

As a rule, goods are arranged in the HS in order of their degree of manufacture: raw materials, unworked products, semi-finished products, and finished products. The same order exists also within Chapters and Headings.

On 1 January 2022, the seventh edition of the HS Nomenclature 2022 entered into force and will be valid for the period up to 2027. It brings more than 350 amendments. The HS Nomenclature is amended every five years.

The *web version* of the HS 2022-2027 nomenclature is accessible on the World Customs Organisation website: [WCO Trade Tools](https://www.wcotradetools.org/).

You can purchase the HS nomenclature 2022-2027 in *paper version* on the following website of the World Customs Organisation:

[Harmonized System Nomenclature 2022 | WCO Bookshop (wcoomdpublications.org)](https://www.wcoomdpublications.org/en/products/harmonized-system/harmonized-system-nomenclature-2022)

The main features of the amendments to the HS 2022-2027 are adaptation to trade and product technological developments, addressing environmental and social issues of global concern, health, safety and social security and counterterrorism which are of increasing importance to customs.

The HS 2022-2027 modernises subheadings for goods specifically controlled under different conventions. The amendments of the HS 2022 are not only limited to the creation of new provisions and headings/subheadings for different goods, but also include updates and alignments of texts between language versions to ensure uniform application of the nomenclature.

The amendments of HS 2022-2027 include, inter alia:

— Specific provisions for the classification of electrical and electronic waste and scrap (e-waste) under the Basel Convention due to the large volume of trade and environmental problems

— Provisions for new tobacco and nicotine-containing products because of the difficulties in classifying these products, the lack of trade statistics and the high monetary value of trade in these products

— Specific provisions for the classification of drones (unmanned aircraft) to simplify classification

— Introduction of a new note and subheading for smartphones to facilitate the classification of multifunctional devices

— Revision of subheadings for glass fibres and their articles, and the transformation of subheadings for metal forming machines, reflecting technological progress in these sectors, the lack of trade statistics and classification problems

— New subheadings for flat panel displays to eliminate the need for end-use definition and to simplify classification

— New provisions for diagnostic reagents to accelerate the diagnosis of communicable diseases and pandemic outbreaks and to reduce delivery delays

— New provisions for placebos and blind clinical test kits will help facilitate cross-border medical research

— Specific provisions for cell cultures and cell therapies

— New provisions for various dual-use items (from toxic substances to laboratory equipment)

— New subheadings for dual-use items (radioactive elements, biological security boxes) which can be diverted to unauthorised use, and for products used for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices, such as detonators

— New subheadings for specific chemicals controlled by the Chemical Weapons Convention, for hazardous chemicals subject to the Rotterdam Convention and for certain polluting chemicals under the auspices of the Stockholm Convention

— New subheadings for the monitoring and control of fentanyl and its derivatives and the two precursors of fentanyl at the request of the International Committee on Narcotic Drugs

— New provisions and a new tariff heading for gases controlled under the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol

— Alignment of texts between French and English as regards the appropriate measurement of unworked wood

3.0 EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE HARMONIZED SYSTEM

The official interpretation of the Harmonized System (HS) is given in the Explanatory Notes to the Harmonized System (*HS Explanatory Notes*) published by the WCO, which represent an important means for uniform classification of goods and application of the Common Customs Tariff.

The HS Explanatory Notes and *Classification Opinions* are published by the WCO as tools for correct classification of goods according to the HS nomenclature and uniform interpretation of the system at an international level. They do not form part of the Convention on the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System and are therefore not legally binding. However, they are indispensable in the daily use of the Community Common Customs Tariff and in the interpretation of tariff headings and subheadings, which has also been confirmed by the case law. The European Court of Justice agrees that the HS Explanatory Notes and Classification Opinions are not legally binding but contribute greatly to the interpretation of individual HS codes. The HS Explanatory Notes are published by the WCO in English and French and are amended by the *Harmonized System Committee*.

The *web version* of the HS 2022 Explanatory Notes and Compendium of classification opinions nomenclature is accessible on the World Customs Organisation website, based on a subscription: [WCO Trade Tools](https://www.wcotradetools.org/).

You can purchase the HS 2022 Explanatory Notes in *paper version* on the website of the World Customs Organisation:

[Explanatory Notes 2022 | WCO Bookshop (wcoomdpublications.org)](https://www.wcoomdpublications.org/en/products/harmonized-system/explanatory-notes-2022)

You can purchase a collection of opinions on the classification of certain goods 2022 in *paper version* on the website of the World Customs Organisation:

[Compendium of Classification Opinions HS 2022 | WCO Bookshop (wcoomdpublications.org)](https://www.wcoomdpublications.org/en/products/harmonized-system/compendium-classification-opinions-hs-2022)

Due to an unresolved dispute linked to the WCO’s copyrights the HS Explanatory Notes should not be officially translated and distributed.

4.0 THE ROLE OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION

The primary role of the WCO is the maintenance of the HS ensuring its uniform interpretation and periodic updating considering developments in technology and changes in the structure of the international trade. The WCO manages this process through the Harmonized System Committee which is composed of the representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Convention.

The Committee meets twice a year, and each contracting party represented in the Committee has the right to one vote. The European Union has thus one vote. The Committee suggests decisions amending the Convention including the nomenclature. Furthermore, it prepares Classification decisions, Explanatory Notes, Classification opinions or Recommendations for the interpretation of the Convention.