



Deadline for New UK Customs Import System Imminent

The long-heralded migration of import declarations from CHIEF to CDS comes to fruition on 30th September. Importers in the UK must register on CDS prior to that date or face significant delays in customs clearance of their cargoes. Existing CHIEF system will be shut down as of that date.

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C4T, the global customs solutions provider is increasingly concerned about the number of UK importers yet to register for, and become familiar with, the customs regulator HMRC's new Customs Declaration Service (CDS). The deadline for migration from the old CHIEF system is 30th September and declarations using CHIEF from 1st October onwards will not be valid. At the beginning of this month HMRC drew attention to the urgent need for importers not yet registered for CDS to take action immediately.

Yesterday HMRC reported that it is seeing increased activity according to all its dashboard measures. The agency distinguishes two critical groups of declarants: the top 248 and 3000 others that should 'ideally be ready' (based on the assumption that these companies are currently using CHIEF for imports). Of the top group 225 are live on CDS, representing 77% of all declarations in the current CHIEF system. 400 of the group of 3000 are at least registered on CDS with a further 500 live on the new system.

C4T has clients based in the UK and other parts of Europe regularly moving freight into the country. Pieter Haesaert is Founder and President, "HMRC are making concerted strides to close the gap with a programme of pro-active contact to the balance of non-registered importers with the 3000 group. Over 50% of this out-reach has been completed." he reports. "In addition to these two critical groups, there are some 15,000 importers with direct debit accounts for the payment of import duty that HMRC states need to adapt to CDS. They are also being contacted."

"Despite this concentrated activity by HMRC, and others in educating and advising importers and brokers on the technical detail of the changes in data entry required by the transfer from CHIEF to CDS, there clearly remain major concerns over the lack of preparation by numerous companies."

C4T understands that HMRC is planning a further announcement on the progress of the migration to CDS in mid-September.

Whether registered or not there is also a significant lack of understanding by importers over aspects of the CDS system. Haesaert continues, "A poll taken during one of our own regular webinars offering advice on the changes suggested that over a third of respondents felt 'not comfortable at all' with the changes to the data fields required for customs entries."

C4T is confident that the CDS technology is ready and capable of handling the change-over, believing it to be well designed and thoroughly tested over a lengthy period. It represents a much needed up-date to the thirty-year old CHIEF system and its final introduction is well timed to be synchronised with similar transfers to new systems that are planned in other European countries over the next two years.

C4T, along with the majority of software providers, is well prepared to provide the necessary support to UK importers. With its further established connections into the Dutch, Belgian, French and German customs infrastructures, C4T has the resource to also guide importers and exporters through the coming changes in these countries.

However as Haesaert says, "Our immediate focus is on the end of September. We must continue to urge those companies not CDS compliant to get on-board and seek assistance if they are still not assured of a seamless transfer to the new system. At C4T we stand ready to help and are prepared to adapt should HMRC feel it necessary to introduce a contingency plan to deal with imports accompanied by incorrect declarations post 30th September."

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