

CBEC: TFA implementation: Government formulates action plan with timelines

NEW DELHI: The government has formulated a detailed action plan with timelines for smooth implementation of [WTO](#)'s trade facilitation agreement (TFA), an official said.

Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) including India has ratified TFA, which aims at easing customs procedures, expediting movement, release and clearance of consignments.

For the implementation of the pact, the government has last year set up Cabinet Secretary-headed National Committee on Trade Facilitation ([NCTF](#)).

The official said recommendations made by four working groups on legislative changes, time release study, outreach programme and infrastructure augmentation are included in the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (2017-20).

Implementation of the plan, which also includes suggestions of the private sector, have been divided into short term (0-6 months), medium term (6-18 months) and long term (18-36 months).

The short term action plan includes augmentation of storage infrastructure for perishable goods and clearance of such goods within 12 hours of landing for import and 8 hours for export.

The plan for mid term includes updation of all regulatory information available on the internet on a single window portal; to put in place adequate bio-security measures for livestock imports and publication of all fees on a single window website.

Cargo release time, both for export and import purposes, would also be reduced within a time period.

For imports, sea and air cargo release time would be reduced to three and two days respectively. Similarly, for exports, sea cargo release time would be brought down to two days and air cargo the same day.

The [CBEC](#) and the [commerce ministry](#) would also work on streamlining policy for e-commerce which includes cutting documentation requirements and providing single submissions.

Further, as part of the action plan, legislative changes have been proposed in the Customs Act 1962 for processing of documents among other things.

The agencies and ministries involved in the implementation process includes Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), Directorate General of Foreign Trade and Animal & Plant Quarantine, textiles and environment ministries.

The 164-member Geneva-based WTO is engaged in making rules for free and fair trade across the globe.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations ([FIEO](#)), which is involved in the action making exercise, said that India is ahead in implementing provisions, which it has committed in the TFA.

"We have two years for implementing category A commitments. We are ahead in most of the things. TFA will help boost global trade," FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said.

Category A contains those provisions which a developing member country designates for implementation upon entry into force of this agreement.

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