

Trade Bureau

Exporting and Importing FAQs

Where do I find information about exporting that will help my business weigh the feasibility of exporting, develop a strategy and get started?

Developing and carrying out an export strategy requires a significant amount of research, planning and guidance. The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), through its Trade Bureau, can point your company in the right direction and keep it on track by providing a variety of resources designed to help you compete in the international marketplace. For more information, contact the Existing Industry and Business Division, 601.359.3593.

How do I get paid?

Payment terms are inevitably one of the negotiating points in any sales contract. Cash in advance represents the easiest and safest payment option for your company. However, it is also the most risky option for your customers because their banks must wire funds to your account before you ship. Dollar-denominated checks received by you in the mail involve collection charges and possible delays of up to several weeks if they are drawn on a bank in a foreign country. Letters of credit are a secure and flexible way of mitigating risks for both you and your customer and are a very common means of international payment.

How can I find a buyer, agent or distributor for my products and services in other countries?

MDA has trade specialists to assist companies in locating buyers in international markets. MDA also maintains international offices in China, Chile, Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom to assist the state's businesses and communities in developing export opportunities by working with pre-qualified companies to help them sell their products and services and identify specific buyers.

How do I choose a good freight forwarder?

A freight forwarder represents one of your most important allies in your international sales efforts. Fast and efficient delivery sets you apart from the competition. Evaluate several freight forwarders before you choose one to determine which provides the best combination of service and price. Make sure the forwarder has a local office and their hours correspond to yours. Please contact our office at 601.359.3155 for a list of freight forwarders.

How can I obtain information about importing products into the United States?

To obtain U.S. tariff (duty) rates for imports, check on regulations such as import quotas, or obtain general import information, by visiting the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security) website. Local U.S. Customs offices can also be contacted for import information. A comprehensive listing of U.S. Customs offices and contacts is available at [U.S. Customs Contacts](#).

Do I need an export license to ship my product to a particular market? How do I obtain a license?

An export license grants permission to conduct a certain type of export transaction. It is issued by the appropriate licensing agency after a careful review of the facts surrounding the given export transaction.

Not all exports require a license. In fact, a relatively small percentage of all U.S. export transactions require licenses from the U.S. government. However, the characteristics of your product, the item's destination, and the recipient's intended end-use of the item are all important in determining whether a license may be required. For example, the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) of the U.S. Department of Commerce is responsible for licensing products that are "dual-use," or have both commercial and military or proliferation applications.

Is the NAFTA Certificate of Origin required for my shipments to Canada or Mexico?

NAFTA establishes special preferential tariff treatment for goods "originating" in and traded among NAFTA countries. However, the NAFTA Certificate of Origin is not a required entry document for shipments between the United States and Canada or Mexico and should only be prepared if the product qualifies under the NAFTA Rules of Origin for preferential tariff treatment.