

Import Requirements in Botswana

Trade Barriers

Apart from restrictions on licensing for some business operations, which are reserved for Botswana companies, there are few tariff-based barriers to trade with Botswana. Importers require an import permit from the relevant Ministry or Department. Other non-tariff barriers include import permit requirements for a variety of food products, seasonal trade bans on selected agricultural goods, a state monopoly on beef exports, and increasing local procurement preferences. In a recent development, the GoB, through parliament, approved the liberalization of the beef market. This means beef exports will no longer be monopolized by the Botswana Meat Commission and a beef regulator will be put in place to allow for more players in the market.

Tariffs

Goods imported into Botswana from outside the SACU market are liable to 14% VAT and tariff rates set out in the Customs and Excise Tariff Schedule. Goods imported from any SACU Member States (Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa or Swaziland) attracts only 12% VAT.

SACU CET – tariff ranges,

% of tariff lines and products Tariff range % tariff lines Products

Duty-free 55% Handmade articles, motorcycles, certain vehicle parts (mainly for tractors), construction equipment, fresh fish and vegetables and coffee and green tea.

0%-5% 2.80% Citrus fruits, grapes and stone fruits (4% duties); sorghum malt (3% duties) and most prepared or preserved fruits (5% duties)

>5%-10% 10% Dried beans, starches, seeds for sowing, olive oil, paints and varnishes, flat-rolled products of iron or steel and sailboats and yachts (10% duties); and oilcake (6.6% duties)

>10%-20% 16% Original automotive components for the motor vehicle industry, furniture, most vehicle parts, vehicles carrying more than 10 passengers and hearses (20% duties); beauty products, ceramics and preserved and prepared vegetables (20% import duties); and nails and screws, glassware and yarn (15% duties)

>20%-30% 9% Most motor vehicles, fermented beverages, wine, fruit juices and frozen fish fillets (25% duties); fabrics (22% duties); and mounted brakes, Christmas articles, footwear, linen and threaded screws and bolts (30% duties)

>30%-40% 1.20% Overcoats, ensembles, suits and pyjamas (40% duties); chewing tobacco and uncooked pasta (40% duties); bus retreaded tyres (36% duties); and prepared or preserved tomatoes and mushrooms and frozen chicken cuts (37% duties)

>40%-50% 2.20% Most articles of clothing, cigarettes and cigars (45% duties); and retreaded pneumatic tyres (43% duties)

>50%-100% 0.02% Preserved or prepared pineapple (55% duties) and frozen whole chicken (82% duties) Specific/combined tariffs 4% Milk and cream products (450c/kg with a maximum of 96%); cheese including fresh, grated or powdered and blue-veined (500c/kg with a maximum of 95%); dairy spreads and butter (500c/kg with a maximum of 79%); unstemmed or unstripped tobacco (860c/kg less 85% with a maximum of 44%); black fermented tea (400c/kg); garlic (325c/kg with a maximum of 37%); ethyl alcohol (317c/ℓ); and worn clothing (60%)

Import Permits

With the exception of goods originating in Malawi, import permits – issued by Department of International Trade, in the Ministry of Investment, Trade, and Industry – are required for goods entering Botswana directly from outside the SACU. The import permits are not transferable. Permits are usually granted upon request, and because Botswana does not have foreign exchange restrictions, it is not difficult to access foreign currency to cover transactions.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

There are specific package labeling requirements. Law and policy prohibit the use of information that could mislead consumers. These regulations apply to pre-packaged and wholesale goods. The regulations extend to foods supplied to restaurants, hospitals, and other institutions. The Botswana Bureau of Standards conducts periodic inspections to verify compliance with this compulsory standard specification.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

Prohibited imports include habit-forming drugs and obscene literature (pornographic magazines and videotapes). Importation of certain agricultural products and plants requires approval from the Ministry of Agriculture before obtaining an import permit from the Department of Trade and Consumer Affairs. Imports of fresh pork and beef are banned; import permits are granted only on processed pork products. Poultry imports are permitted only in the uncommon event that there is a domestic market shortage. Imports of some vegetables, meat, and dairy products are seasonally banned.

Standards for Trade

The Botswana Bureau of Standards (BOBS) is a parastatal organization that develops and implements national Botswana standards. Separate government ministries, parastatals, and private companies can develop standards specifically for their own institutions; however, only BOBS is recognized by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and has the authority to create national standards. The procedures used in the development of standards comply with the World Trade Organization's code of good practice for the development of standards.

Botswana's standards regime consists of compulsory and voluntary standards. Compulsory standards affect human health, safety, environment or export, which BOBS monitors to ensure compliance. BOBS enforces compulsory standards on seven products: petroleum gas, poultry feed, pre-packaged goods for consumers, cereals/sorghum grains for consumption, cattle feeds, garments, and drinking water. Voluntary standards are not binding or legally required, but compliance may increase product competitiveness. Altogether, there are more than 600 Botswana standards that have been published for different sectors in Botswana. A standards catalogue is now available to the public at the BOBS Information Department. Any foreign entity or company that is accredited in its home country is allowed to certify products in Botswana.

BOBS is the sole organization that develops national standards, and it has an annual plan of standards. The National Food Control Board is the only other organization in Botswana that develops an annual plan. BOBS sends its plan annually to the ISO.

Testing, Inspection and Certification

Conformity Assessment

BOBS provides conformity assessments in testing, certification, and inspections. The government-created National Testing System (NTS) is made up of all government, private, and parastatal laboratories. Through a Memorandum of Agreement with BOBS, these laboratories perform tests for the government whenever required. Whenever BOBS receives a request for testing or calibration, the request is passed on to a relevant laboratory. However, according to the Director of Standards, BOBS has well-equipped laboratories and continues to equip others to carry out testing, though they still send some requests outside the country.

Product Certification

Any public or private body whose product satisfies all the requirements of a Botswana product standard can apply to BOBS for the product to be certified. Samples of the product are then tested to verify its conformance to the requirements of the product standard, and if the results are acceptable, the product can then obtain the BOBS certification mark.

There are benefits to product certification. The construction industry is one of the major users of standards in Botswana. The GoB has insisted that materials and products for construction must be BOBS-certified. No waivers are available for compulsory standards.

Botswana does not have any mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) on standards with U.S. organizations.

Accreditation

The government does not have a national accreditation body. Laboratory reports are sent to the accreditation boards in South Africa, Mauritius, or the United Kingdom. SADC countries established a regional accreditation organization called the Southern African Development Committee for Accreditation Services (SADCAS).