

Commercial Cargo Import Checklist – Sterdts

About this checklist

This checklist helps importers prepare commercial cargo imports into South Africa, reduce customs/terminal delays, and avoid clearance issues caused by missing documents, incorrect values, or regulated goods requirements. Requirements vary by commodity, origin, and port/airport, so use this as a baseline and confirm any special rules for your shipment.

1. What we need to quote (import)

Provide as many of the following as possible:

Parties & routing

- Importer legal name + registration details (if applicable)
- Collection address at origin (supplier) + contact person
- Delivery address in South Africa + contact person
- Origin city + country and preferred port/airport (if known)
- **Incoterm** (e.g., EXW / FCA / FOB / CFR / CIF / DAP / DDP) and named place
- Supplier details (name + address)

Cargo details

- Commodity description (plain language)
- HS code (if known) / product category (if not)
- Number of packages + packaging type
- Dimensions per package (L × W × H)
- Weight per package + total gross weight
- Total volume (CBM) if known
- Stackable? (Yes/No) + handling notes
- Cargo value and currency (invoice value)
- Is it **dangerous goods**? (Yes/No). If yes: UN number + class + SDS

Timing

- Cargo ready date at origin
- Target arrival date (if any)
- Any time-sensitive constraints (production shutdowns, project dates)

Documents available

- Commercial invoice (draft acceptable for quoting)
- Packing list (draft acceptable)
- Any permits/approvals you already know are needed (commodity-specific)

2. Import documentation checklist (before shipping)

- Commercial invoice is correct (supplier/buyer details, currency, value, incoterm, item descriptions)
- Packing list matches actual cargo (counts/weights/dimensions)
- Transport document will be issued correctly (shipper/consignee/notify party details as instructed)

- Supplier provides any required product certificates / test reports / compliance documents (commodity-specific)
- If wood packaging is used: confirm required treatment/markings (commodity/destination-specific)
- If DG: SDS + DG declaration and compliant packaging/labels arranged before dispatch

3. Customs clearance readiness (South Africa)

- Confirm who is the importer of record and who will pay duties/VAT/charges
- Confirm commodity HS classification approach (avoid rework and delays)
- Confirm valuation inputs (invoice value, freight/insurance where applicable, terms of sale)
- Identify regulated goods early (some goods may require permits/approvals before clearance)
- Prepare any letters of authority/clearance instructions required to act on your behalf
- Confirm whether inspections (customs/other authorities) are likely for your commodity

4. Arrival planning (avoid storage/demurrage/detention/holds)

- Confirm estimated time of arrival and expected release timeline
- Confirm delivery plan and site constraints (access times, offloading equipment, appointment bookings)
- Confirm whether unpacking/de-vanning, cross-dock, or warehousing is needed
- Ensure funds/approval path is in place for duties/VAT and urgent charges to prevent release delays

5. Cargo delivery checklist (post-release)

- Delivery booking confirmed (date/time, vehicle access, offloading method)
- Check cargo condition on receipt; note shortages/damage immediately
- Verify package counts against packing list and delivery note
- Keep key documents filed for audit/queries (invoice, packing list, transport document, clearance outputs)

6. Common delay points (and how to reduce risk)

- Missing/incorrect invoices or vague descriptions that trigger queries
- HS classification disputes or misalignment between supplier docs and declared goods
- Regulated goods shipped without permits/approvals arranged early
- DG cargo not declared early or documents incomplete
- Duties/VAT approvals delayed internally, causing storage escalation

7. What happens next (Sterdts process)

1. You send the quote inputs (Section 1).
2. Sterdts confirms the best mode/routing and issues a quote with assumptions clearly stated.
3. Once approved, Sterdts coordinates booking, supplier pickup/handover, and document requirements.
4. Sterdts prepares clearance planning and requests final invoice/packing list and any permits (if applicable).
5. On arrival, Sterdts performs customs clearance as your appointed licensed clearing agent (unless explicitly agreed otherwise in writing).

6. Sterdts arranges delivery and closes out documents for your records.

This checklist is for guidance and planning only. It does **not** replace our formal [Standard Trading Conditions \(STCs\)](#), carrier conditions, SARS rules or customs regulations. Where there is any uncertainty or something unusual in your circumstances, please contact Sterdts so we can advise you specifically.

Contact details

Information Officer:

Gert Mostert

Contact details:

Tel: +27 87 057 2777

Email: info@sterdts.co.za

Postal/physical address:

Sterdts (Pty) Ltd
Willow Wood, 220 3rd Street
Chartwell, Johannesburg, 2055
South Africa