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Guide to Licences and Permits for Importation of Controlled Goods into Singapore

Singapore has strict regulations when both importing and exporting goods. Products imported into the city-state are divided into several categories, depending on their provenience and are subject to different rules. However, no matter the type of product a Singapore company imports, an import permit is required for each of them. As any other country, Singapore has also established a special regime for certain products upon import. These goods are known as prohibited and controlled goods.

All companies importing controlled products into Singapore must apply for special licenses or permits with the competent authorities, depending on the imported goods. This article will focus on the overview of list of controlled good and permits for importation of controlled goods into Singapore to make a brief introduction.

1. Overview

(1) List of Controlled Goods

There are some goods that are labeled as controlled goods and the import/export of these goods come under the control of the Controlling Agencies. Examples of controlled goods: cigarettes or any tobacco product, animals, food products, petrochemicals and drugs.

If you want to go over a comprehensive list of controlled items, please head on over to [Singapore Customs website](#) and look for [Goods Subject to Control](#) under the Import & Export Procedures headings.

(2) Permits for Importation of Controlled Goods into Singapore

Before you can import any goods (which include controlled and non-controlled goods) into Singapore, you will have to apply for an Import Permit through TradeNet and you will have to do it before the goods are imported into Singapore. Since they are subject to control by Controlling Agencies the controlled goods will also have to be authorized by the respective controlling authority.

2. Specific Licences and Permits Required for Different Controlled Products

(1) Films, Video Games, Audio/Video Records & Publications

Films - A valid import permit that has been approved by Singapore's IMDA (Info-communications Media Development Authority) is required for importation of films into Singapore. The import permit will be necessary to facilitate customs clearance.

Video Games - For the importing of video games, you will need to have a valid import permit that has been approved by the IMDA.

Audio CDs- An importer wishing to import audio CDs for commercial purposes has to declare them through the TradeNet system. It is important to note that these audio CDs must not contain undesirable content, which is anything that has been deemed obscene and/or objectionable under Singapore's Undesirable Publications Act.

Videos – You will have to obtain an import permit from the TradeNet system in order to import videos meant for commercial purposes. During the application process, the permit declarations will be sent to Singapore's BFC (Board of Film Censors) and the importer might have to present additional information regarding the consignment.

Publications - To import publications of any sort, you will require an import permit that has been endorsed by the IMDA. You will not be required to pay any fee or obtain any other license, although the IMDA may request to see a sample of the publications, or a list of all the titles being imported.

Broadcasting Apparatus – You will need a dealer's licenses, issued by the MDA, in order to import broadcasting apparatus. The license costs SGD 330 and is valid for one year.

(2) Pharmaceuticals, Medicines and Poisons

(i) For Registered Medicinal Product

Only authorized medicinal products are allowed to be imported into Singapore.

The Medicines Act states that, in order to import registered medicinal products, the importer must have the relevant product licenses or an Import License (For Authorized Agent) for Medicinal Products. The latter is issued by Singapore's HSA (Health Sciences Authority), and it will only be issued to those importers who are authorized by the product license holders to import the licensed products on their behalf. In order to be successfully issued an import license, the importer must ensure that the medicinal products are in compliance with HSA's Good Distribution Practice standard.

If the importer has the intentions to sell the registered medicinal products to others (resale), they will have to apply for a difference license instead - the Wholesale Dealer's License for Medicinal Products.

Note: There is another license that can be obtained from HSA if the importer is neither (a) a licensed product holder nor (b) an authorized agent for medicinal products. It is called Import License on Consignment Basis. Basically, it allows the importer to import registered medicinal products, but on a per consignment basis.

(ii) For Unregistered Medicinal Products

If the medicinal products are not registered in Singapore, they can still be imported on a named-patient basis, subject to approval by the HSA. There is approval fee for the license, but the importer will have to disclose the product details, importer details as well as patient and physician details. In addition, the importer will also have to maintain records on both the supply and use of the unregistered medicinal products.

(iii) For Medicinal Products meant for Re-Export

HSA approval is required for any import of medicinal products into Singapore that is meant to be eventually re-exported to other countries. The consignment must be exported from Singapore within 2 years of the import date.

(iv) For Chinese Proprietary Medicines (CPM)

In order to import Chinese Proprietary Medicines (CPM), the importer must obtain an Import License for Chinese Proprietary Medicines. This license is issued by Singapore's HSA (Health Sciences Authority). It is the importer's responsibility to ensure that the CPM being imported is registered and approved for sale in Singapore (otherwise no license will be issued). In order to be successfully issued with an import license, the importer must ensure that the CPM is in compliance with HAS's Good Distribution Practice standard.

If the importer has the intentions to sell the registered CPM to others (resale), they will have to apply for a difference license instead - the Wholesale Dealer's License for Chinese Proprietary Medicines.

(v) For Poisons

In order to import poisons, the importer has to obtain a Form A Poisons License. This license is issued by Singapore's HSA (Health Sciences Authority), and it will only be issued to a registered pharmacist who works for a company that deals with active pharmaceutical ingredients, intended for local sales, medicinal products, or controlled drugs. Any transactions related to the imported poisons will be the responsibility of the license holder. In order to be successfully issued with an import license, the importer must ensure that the poisons are in compliance with HSA's Good Distribution Practice standard.

(vi) For Restricted/Psychotropic Substances and Controlled Drugs

Only a registered pharmacist is allowed to apply for and obtain an import authorization for the importing of restricted/psychotropic or controlled drugs. The registered

pharmacist in question also needs to hold a valid poisons license. A consignment containing these substances and drugs must be imported within 6 months of the authorization date.

(3) Animals

(i) Personal Pets

Be aware that the importing of animals into the country is regulated under the Animals and Birds Act. If you are thinking of importing such animals for pets, you must acquire an import license from AVA (Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority). This license costs SGD 50 and must be obtained from AVA no more than 30 days prior to the arrival of the animals.

Any importing of dogs, cats, small mammals, birds and other pets are subject to AVA's veterinary conditions, which includes requirements like healthy certification, inspect by AVA as well as quarantine. Singapore does not allow the import of reptiles, insects and spiders.

(ii) Commercial Pets

Commercial pets simply means that the animals in question are to be imported for commercial purposes. If you want to import animals for commercial purposes (with the exception of domestic birds, day-old-ducklings/goslings and day-old-chicks), you have to have an AVA Import License and CCP (Customs Clearance Permit). The license costs SGD 87 (per consignment) and is valid for 30 days from the date of issue. Anyone who imports the pet animals for commercial purposes must also have AVA-licensed premises to hold the animals in.

Any importing of dogs, cats, small mammals, birds and other pets are subject to AVA's veterinary conditions, which includes requirements like healthy certification, inspect by AVA as well as quarantine.

To those who wish to import animals to serve as livestock (goats, sheep, poultry birds, etc.), a License to Import Domestic Birds, Table Eggs, Sheep and Goats must be obtained from AVA. There is no fee required and the license serves as a one-time registration.

(iii) Lab Pets

All lab animals must be imported from AVA-credited exporters, no exceptions. And the only people who can import lab animals are AVA-licensed institutions who actually use these animals for scientific reasons and purposes. These institutions will need to obtain an AVA import license and CCP (Customs Clearance Permit) before the lab animals are imported. The fee for the AVA import license is SGD 87 (per consignment) and it is valid for 30 days from the date of issue.

Any importing of lab animals are subject to AVA's veterinary conditions, which includes requirements like healthy certification, inspect by AVA as well as quarantine.

(iv) Ornamental Fish

Ornamental fish refer to the varieties of salt-water or fresh-water fish that have ornamental value. The import rules for ornamental fish also cover other forms of aquatic life, as well as their young and their eggs. Fish and fish products, intended for human consumption, are excluded from this category.

Anyone who wishes to import ornamental fish must satisfy certain criteria set forth by AVA, as well as apply for an AVA import license, which costs SGD 350 and can be renewed on an annual basis.

(v) Ornamental Fish Animal Feed

Any importer of animal feed supplements or premixes should provide technical information, in regards to the ingredients used in said feed, to the AVA. The information is required for the AVA to do a proper evaluation before the imports come in. Any animal feed containing meat/meat-products from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia & New Zealand may be imported into Singapore, as long as the consignments are accompanied by a certificate.

All consignments of animal feed must come together with an AVA Import Permit which will cost \$22 per consignment. Importers of Animal feed must also ensure that the consignments are in compliance with AVA's labeling requirements.

(4) Plants and Plant Products

This category includes plants, plant products (seeds, timber, ginseng, etc), foliage, potting mixture and so on (Please go to Singapore Customs for the full list). These are all subject to AVA's regulatory requirements. This category also includes fertilizers or plant origin and insects and microorganisms that are important for agricultural purposes - these will require prior approval of the AVA before import.

Also, in order to import plant and plant products into Singapore, the importer will need a phytosanitary certificate from the country of origin as well a CCP (Cargo Clearance Permit) from AVA. This permit costs SGD 11 and has a validity of 2 weeks. Imports of plant and plant products may undergo AVA inspection, and the importer should ensure that any consignment of plants or plant products must be in compliance with AVA's plant health import requirements.

(5) Endangered Species of Plants/Animals

CITES stands for - The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. It is an international treaty between various countries; its purpose and goal is to ensure that any international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of those species.

An importer looking to import CITES-listed plants or animals, for either personal or commercial purposes, must apply for a CITES import permit. The permit can be obtained from AVA, one week prior to import. They cost SGD 12 per species of plant or animal. When applying for the Singapore CITES import permit, you must also attach a CITES export/re-export permit from the exporting country.

(6) Arms and Explosives, Weapons & Toy Guns

An importer who wishes to import arms, guns, explosives, poisonous gas or substances into Singapore must apply for an A&E (Arms and Explosives) License from the Singapore Police Force. The licensing fee will depend on the kind of arms and explosives that are being imported.

No license is required for the importing of toy guns, but a Licensing Officer from the A&E Division of the Singapore Police Force must still inspect and approve the toy guns. The toy guns must not look like real guns - if they do, they will not be approved by said Licensing Officer. All unapproved toy guns will either be disposed of, or re-exported - the choice is up to the importer.

For all of those goods mentioned above (except for toy guns), they will be inspected by the Police Licensing Division as soon as all of the goods clear Customs. Armed escorts are required for the carrying of arms or explosives anywhere within Singapore.

Note: An importer can import a samurai sword (such as used by a martial artist or weapons collector) through a forwarding agent. The sword will then be subsequently inspected at the point of entry. Any sort of hunting or survival knife has to be approved by the A&E unit.

(7) Telecommunication Equipment

The importer of the telecommunications equipment needs to ensure that the equipment is in compliance with Singapore IDA (Infocomm Development Authority) technical specifications and standards. If the importer intends to import the telecommunications equipment for the purpose of sale or lease in Singapore, they have to obtain a dealer's license from the IDA. It is the responsibility of the importer to ensure that said equipment or devices are not prohibited under Third Schedule of the Telecommunications (Dealers) Regulation.

Approval from the IDA is generally not needed when it comes to the importing of telecommunications equipment. Approval is only needed for prohibited telecommunication equipment or devices. For example: military equipment and scanning transmitters.

Kaizen suggests you to consult with professional advisors before the proposals coming into effect. Kaizen Singapore office is able to provide clients with the licenses and permits for importation of controlled goods into Singapore application and consultancy services, please consult our professional accountants for details.

If you wish to obtain more information or assistance, please visit the official website of Kaizen CPA Limited at www.kaizencpa.com or contact us through the following and talk to our professionals:

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