Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the EU-New Zealand

Joint Customs Cooperation Committee

14 April 2025 Virtual meeting

The first European Union (EU)-New Zealand (NZ) Joint Customs Cooperation Committee (JCCC) meeting since the conclusion and entry into force of the EU-NZ Free Trade Agreement (EUNZFTA) on 1 May 2024, and third EU-NZ JCCC meeting overall took place on 14 April 2025 in online format. The JCCC was established under the EU-NZ Customs Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance Agreement (CCMAA), Article 20, which entered into force on 1 May 2018 and the JCCC was charged with additional functions as the specialised committee under the provisions of the EUNZFTA (Chapter 24 Article 24.4 (2).

According to rotation of hosting of meetings between the EU and NZ, this meeting was formally hosted by the EU. The meeting was co-chaired on the EU side by Clare Southworth, Acting Head of Unit A.5, Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) and on NZ side by Michael Blades, Director, International and Governance, New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS).

1. Opening Remarks

Both sides welcomed each other and introduced their delegations to the JCCC. It was a shared view that this was an important forum of bilateral cooperation in the area of customs and that the entry into force of the EUNZFTA both added it new responsibilities and provided new opportunities to expand and deepen this cooperation for the benefit of facilitating legitimate bilateral trade between the EU and NZ and at the same time ensuring effective customs control.

Both sides also confirmed that rules of procedure in Annex 24 of the EUNZFTA would also apply to the JCCC, as foreseen in Annex 24, Rule 13, paragraph 4 for all EUNZFTA related matters.

2 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted and can be found in Annex 1.

3. Customs Cooperation and Trade Facilitation

3.1 Recent developments in customs policy and legislation

3.1.1 Recent developments in customs policy and legislation in the EU

In its update on legislative and regulatory developments in the customs area, the EU focused on the EU proposal for a reform of the Union Customs Code and on the latest developments in the implementation of the EU pre-arrival security and safety programme Import Control System (ICS2). The EU described how the customs reform would allow customs administrations to embrace digital transformation through a new partnership with business, take a smarter approach to risk management, and have a more modern approach to e-commerce. The EU also explained the proposal to create two major enabling capabilities – the Customs Data Hub and the EU Customs Authority.

In its presentation of the ICS2, the EU described how it supported the implementation of the new customs safety and security programme. The EU provided an overview of the staged ICS2 implementation timeline with 3 major releases and devoted particular attention to release 3 requirements for maritime transport. The EU offered to provide NZ with further detailed information on ICS2 and asked NZ, where possible, to further disseminate the relevant information to NZ economic operators involved in exports to the EU.

3.1.2 Recent developments in customs policy and legislation in New Zealand

In its update on legislative and regulatory developments in the customs area, NZ presented three main topics: Tariff Modernization Project, Low Value Goods, and Changes to Goods Charges for Customs and the Ministry for Primary Industries. NZ explained how the Tariff Modernization Project was intended to transform a multitude of manual processes and printed documents into a streamlined and fully digital tariff system that reduces complexity, integrates well with trade documentation and with international best practice. NZ presented the current legal framework for dealing with imports of low value goods, recent import statistics, key challenges for customs that these recent trends pose, and measures taken to try to address them. In its presentation of Changes to Goods Charges for Customs and the Ministry for Primary Industries NZ explained the background for these changes to cost recovery charges, main changes, and provided links to additional information.

3.2 Co-operation in the field of customs in WCO

3.2.1 New Initiatives in WCO – reform of the Harmonized System

Under this information point from the EU, the EU presented its views on the reform of the Harmonized System (HS) in the WCO and explained its vision for the way forward including the request to the WCO for the upcoming Policy Commission / Council meeting in June 2025 to combine 2 concept notes (Follow up HS Study Recommendations to Improve Roles, Tools, and Processes and Green HS Programme).

3.2.2 Proposals on the implementation of the WCO Modernization Plan regarding Regionalization and Financing Sustainability

Under this information point from the EU, the EU presented the upcoming EU proposals (EU Concept Notes) for an enhanced implementation of the WCO Modernization Plan regarding Regional Reform and Financing Sustainability and next steps before the WCO Council meeting in June 2025. NZ expressed its support for WCO Modernization and interest in advancing discussions on how WCO members could improve their cooperation to ensure ongoing success of the organisation under the lead of the WCO Secretary.

3.2.3 Co-operation to update Specific Annex K of the Revised Kyoto Convention

NZ and EU took note of the ongoing fruitful cooperation and support work to update Specific Annex K of the Revised Kyoto Convention. This cooperation has allowed to make contributions and steer the document towards rules of origin practices that echo the approach taken in the EUNZFTA.

4. Rules of Origin

4.1 General discussion on the functioning of Chapter 3 (Rules of origin and origin procedures) of the EUNZFTA

EU and NZ confirmed that in general on both sides the implementation of the preferential origin provisions under the EU-NZFTA has been functioning well. Both sides had also updated contact details for verification requests related to preferential origin.

4.2 EUNZFTA Guidance on rules of origin published by the EU

The EU thanked NZ for its feedback and comments on the EU Guidance document on rules of origin under the EUNZFTA, which was prepared together with EU Member States and published in July 2024. In particular, both the EU and NZ confirmed the common understanding that in relation to the statement on origin on a third country commercial document, the actual statement needs to be completed by the exporter who is located in a Party. The EU also noted that it has identified an issue with the words “date of delivery” in

Article 3.25(1)(c) which could be subject to different interpretations and wanted to align the interpretation with NZ. The EU explained that on the EU side this term might be understood as the date when the verification request is handed over to the postal service provider (postal deliveries) or sent (e-mail deliveries). NZ took note, but indicated that the interpretation might be different on NZ side, so further discussion between the EU and NZ would be needed to clarify this matter.

4.3. Discussion on the need for corrections of the text of Chapter 3 (Rules of origin and origin procedures) of the EUNZFTA

Both sides agreed that in Article 3.23(4) of the EUNZFTA there was a technical error and that this error needed to be corrected. The error consists in a wrong reference. The correct rule is that the importer may inform customs that they do not have any information in addition to the statement on origin, but the importer should always be able to provide the statement on origin itself. With respect to the timing of the correction, both sides agreed to carry it out later together with other amendments to the EUNZFTA text that will need to be updated in view of the HS 2028 update.

4.4 Future review and update of Chapter 3 (Rules of origin and origin procedures) of the EUNZFTA in view of HS 2028 update

Both sides discussed the needs for a timely future review and update of EUNZFTA Chapter 3 on Rules of origin and origin procedures in view of the HS 2028 update. The next version of the HS will be implemented on 1 January 2028, so both sides agreed to start the update work sufficiently in advance of that date.

5. Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters (MAA)

On the occasion of the JCCC, the EU and NZ confirmed that they had exchanged the updated contact points for the implementation of mutual administrative assistance under the EU – NZ CMAA and expressed a shared view that the implementation of the MAA provisions was functioning well.

6. Any Other Business

The EU used the opportunity provided by this JCCC meeting to inform NZ about the customs-related aspects of the European Ports Alliance, a flagship initiative of the EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime, aimed at strengthening security in all EU ports. The presentation referred to the work carried out in 2024 in the dedicated European Ports Alliance project group and outlined the ongoing transition to the EU Customs Alliance for Borders Expert Team (EUCAB). NZ noted similar work strands and informed about the upcoming visit to Europe by NZCS leadership to meet with EU Member States members in EUCAB with an opportunity to revisit this topic also with the relevant Commission services.

7. Confirmation of contact points

Both the EU and NZ shared information on contact points.

8. Meeting Report (process)

The EU as the host would provide a first draft of the meeting report and would send it to NZ contact point for review.

9. Closing Remarks

Both sides agreed that the meeting was held in a smooth, and constructive manner and thanked the other side for all the preparatory work, presentations, and good cooperation. It was preliminary discussed that the next JCCC meeting could take place in the first half of next year and on rotational basis, it would be NZ's turn to host it. EU and NZ would use the designated contact points to further discuss details for the next meeting.

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Acting Head of Unit A.5

Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union

European Commission

European Union

Mr. Michael Blades

Director, International and Governance

New Zealand Customs Service

New Zealand

Annex 1

Agenda

for the EU-New Zealand
Joint Customs Cooperation Committee 3rd meeting[1]
14 April 2025 Virtual meeting
Host: the EU

Time *[Brussels]*	**Agenda Item**
8:00 – 8:05	**1. Opening Remarks**
8:05 – 8:10	**2 Adoption of Agenda**
	3. Customs Cooperation and Trade Facilitation
8:10 – 8:50	**3.1 Recent developments in customs policy and legislation**
	3.1.1 Recent developments in customs policy and legislation in the EU
	3.1.2 Recent developments in customs policy and legislation in New Zealand
8:50 – 9:10	**3.2 Co-operation in the field of customs in WCO**
	3.2.1 New Initiatives in WCO – reform of the Harmonised System
	3.2.2 Proposals on the implementation of the WCO Modernization Plan regarding Regionalization and Financing Sustainability
	3.2.3 Co-operation to update Specific Annex K of the Revised Kyoto Convention
9:10 – 9:30	**4. Rules of Origin**
	4.1 General discussion on the functioning of Chapter 3 (Rules of origin and origin procedures) of the EU-New Zealand FTA
	4.2 EU-New Zealand FTA Guidance on rules of origin published by the EU
	4.3 Discussion on the need for corrections of the text of Chapter 3 (Rules of origin and origin procedures) of the EU-New Zealand FTA
	4.4 Future review and update of Chapter 3 (Rules of origin and origin procedures) of the EU-New Zealand FTA in view of HS 2028 update
9:30 – 9:40	**5. Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters (MAA)**
9:40 – 9:50	**6. Any Other Business**
	6.1 Customs contribution to the EU roadmap to fight against drug trafficking and organised crime …
9:50 – 10:00	**7. Confirmation of contact points**
9:50 – 10:00	**8. Meeting Report (process)**
9:50 – 10:00	**9. Closing Remarks**

[1] 1st meeting since the conclusion and entry into force of the EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement