

UAE CEPA Webinar Q&A Session: 26 November 2025**Q: How do businesses go about claiming preferential tariff treatment?**

Nick Baldwin (Customs): Under the CEPA, eligibility for preferential treatment is based on a certificate of origin which must be issued by the competent bodies who are approved by either New Zealand Customs or the Ministry of the Economy in the UAE. For New Zealand, these are the Auckland Business Chamber, Trade Window Origin LTD, Otago Chamber of Commerce, Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce, and Wellington Chamber of Commerce. These can be found on the Customs UAE CEPA webpage by clicking through *Business*, *Tariffs*, *FTAs* and the *UAE CEPA* page. Unfortunately, we are still working through the process for approving exporters for self-declaration and will have to get a notification up on that shortly.

Q: What is the best way to protect trademarks in the UAE given that every product is required to be registered in the country before it can be imported? I don't believe registration can be achieved by those companies located outside the UAE.

Craig Kearney (Vitaco): You should be able to get your trademark registered. You don't need to be in the market to be able to say that 'we intend to move into the UAE and therefore we will commence IP protection'. If you are going to be an international business, you need to start establishing your IP protection as soon as you possibly can. As soon as you start to get a little bit famous, people are going to try and copy you, so work with your IP lawyers, work with your patent offices. You can start to get trademarks done straight away; you don't have to wait to be situated in the marketplace to do that.

Carmen Vicelich (Valocity): Yes, I fully agree, and I think that is probably something that New Zealand companies don't do as well as they could. We certainly had those lessons to not just set-up global from day one in ambition and solution, but also make sure you do in branding, so grab all the domain names, do grab all the trademarks and make your collateral sound global. We had to do a lot of work after a lot of success in New Zealand even though we had the global ambition from day one, brand wise we weren't ready, we didn't sound global, we sounded like a little Kiwi company that was only in New Zealand. Thinking about that is important and you can become unstuck because competitors will grab your brand names if you don't.

Craig Kearney: We are battling with that now, not necessarily in the UAE but in other markets, people are just copying Healtheries and then putting products in the market. You've got to be bullish and just take them on, but the most important thing you can do is patent and protect your trademarks now. You can do all of your global trade marketing through IP lawyers across the globe; you can do it locally. You really need to protect your brands.

Q: In addition to the previous question, what is the best way to achieve product registration as opposed to trademark registration?

Craig Kearney: We work with Elegant Services, a Dubai based regulatory company that register healthcare products, vitamins, supplements, skincare products. We use them to get all of our vitamin products and sports nutrition products registered with local authorities. There are a number of companies that can do this. You have to go with local experts in Dubai to get those approvals done.

Q: How does the Māori and Indigenous trade element of the agreement specifically and practically benefit Māori export businesses seeking to enter the UAE market.

Barney Riley (MFAT): The indigenous trade chapter has a number of objectives and functions. At its base, it is about connecting Māori exporters with partners in the UAE. It is about ensuring that New Zealand's interests in the Māori export economy can be discussed between government officials and between agencies, and also, there will be particular products of interest to Māori exporters that will be recognised in a chapter like that. So, fundamentally, it is about establishing those connections and building those relationships, which, as we've been hearing, is fundamental to doing business successfully in the Gulf.

Q: Do you still need to have a UAE Consulate to endorse all of your export documentation? If so, what are the charges, will it still be based on the invoice value and which Consulates do you go to?

Nicholas Baldwin: Unfortunately, consularisation is still required by the UAE despite the CEPA, however, the UAE consularisation process doesn't require sighting the stamping paperwork like consular attestation in some countries. It is done electronically with a set fee of 150 dirhams which is about 75 New Zealand dollars for shipments over 10,000 dirhams, which is about 5000 New Zealand dollars. This is instead of an ad valorem fee, which is very good. The value would likely be customs value, which is covered by the customs valuation agreement, but, in short, this just means that yes, it will be in the first instance the invoice value. Because it's online, this can be done through the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, though in practice we understand that often it has been the importer that is doing this, so it is important to check with both your customs broker and importer when exporting to UAE to deconflict this.

Q: There are a number of pet food and honey companies registered for the Webinar. Is there anything broadly that they need to know if they are looking to export to the UAE?

Georgette Soppet (MPI): We have good access for primary sector products to the UAE, the CEPA is building on that relationship. I'd encourage new exporters to visit the MPI website as there is a good step by step process on how to export product from New Zealand. If you are already a registered exporter familiar with the process, I would encourage you to have a look at the UAE overseas market access requirements. We have access for several primary sector commodities, and it provides information on what requirements you need to meet and additional guidance. If you still have questions, we

have a fabulous regulatory advice service and I understand that the email address will be provided later, I believe it is also on the MFAT website. If you still have questions, please ask. We are happy to assist and provide information. If we don't know the answer, we will find it. Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Q: New Zealand wine exports to the UAE have been in good growth in recent months. Is this a result of the 10% tariff reduction, or are there changing attitudes to drinking Sauvignon Blanc given that it is seen as more lifestyle friendly, cool, crisp, etc?

Ahmad Zakkout (Trade Commissioner): The reality is we will need to wait and see. The leveraging around the CEPA and having the New Zealand name in the media quite a lot is fantastic (that is on top of the agreement itself). We've seen a big increase in exports (around 56% in September alone) to the UAE, which is great. We can only wait and see, quarter by quarter, across all products if that is directly because of the CEPA. The 10% tariff reduction does make it cheaper than other brands/countries, which is great. From the research we have done in that space, we know New Zealand is rated higher in these categories, which is great to see.

Q: When you have had distribution partners appointed, how frequently are you or your key sales staff visiting the market and what are the most effective KPIs that you or your team set to keep the distributor focussed on your brand's sales?

Craig Kearney: We've just appointed a dedicated account manager whose only role is to keep the Middles East going and growing fast. I expect that person will be in the market at least every 3-4 months for a week to three weeks. He's going up there in January for basically the entire month. He will be connecting face to face at least 3 or 4 times a year and then on an unrelenting weekly and monthly basis to keep them honest and focused. The most important thing to do is to create a business plan that has monthly, quarterly, and annual targets, promotional calendars of activity, and you are constantly keeping the distributor on track towards those goals. I think there is the carrot and stick approach – there are carrots about being able to achieve certain targets and potentially having incremental rewards, but the stick is having agreed to and having applied a plan that they need to unrelentingly deliver on. The other part of it is, you need to win the hearts and not just the minds of the partnership. It's a partnership, not a transactional relationship. You want to create the sense that the distributor is part of your company and that they are as emotionally connected to the company as we are. You can only do that through frequency of contact, human interaction, cups of tea/coffee, and communication. Engage at a human level as well as a commercial level, consistently, and create a partnership not a transactional relationship.

Ahmad Zakkout: It's being frequent in the market but also being genuine in love for your product. You can be here all year long, but if it's just transactional and you are just looking at commercials, you are not going to be successful because it's the story and how your product is different. A small example is one customer that built their success by

having someone here about 1-2 weeks every other month and they saw their sales quadruple. Sometimes you get more questions by being face to face rather than emailing because talking to each other generates more conversation which doesn't happen on Zoom, which is when things really progress. That specific company had been trying for a while but hadn't gained traction until they got someone there that was focussed on the Middle East and understood the UAE.

Q: Who do we contact for regulatory support for beverages (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic)?

Georgette Soppet: You can feed that through the regulatory advice service.

Q: Just curious about general dieting trends, particularly luxury and premium restaurants? (from Red Meat Industry)

Ahmad Zakkout: Restaurants here have high turnover so there are challenges and opportunities. Because competition is high, you will see the great restaurants stay, and others on shaky grounds leave. There are lot of cultures in the UAE, so it's good to invest in campaigns such as Michelin guide, know exactly where you are targeting, and which category of restaurant you are targeting. NZTE can assist and we can also share the Red Meat Sector report that we generate.

Carmen Vicelich: It depends on the context of the restaurant, but for anyone doing business in the UAE, it's worth understanding the thinking of the history and the ambition of where they are going. Typically, in the UAE, if someone is going to do something, they want to be the best, do it well, and future-proof. It comes across in everything that they want to do things well. There are a lot of high calibre, high quality restaurants. It is really high class, good quality, good competition, and they want to be the best, so I imagine it is a successful market for NZ food exports.

Q: What are the key Rules of Origin requirements and how does Customs look to verify compliance?

Nicholas Baldwin: To qualify as originating, your goods need to be wholly obtained or produced entirely in New Zealand or the UAE, or produced entirely from non-originating goods, provided that the goods meet the product-specific rules in Annex 3a.

For Annex 3a there are three types of rules. This is typically:

- a change in tariff classification where your good need to move up or down the tariff.
- a value content rule which sets the minimum level of value which producers in New Zealand or the UAE must contribute towards the ex-works price of the goods.
- For some goods, there's a process rule where you need to meet a simple change.

Where more than one rule is provided, these are treated as co-equal, and you can choose the one that you can most easily meet.

You will need to record the origin criteria on the certificate of origins. It is important to remember that you need to be able to show this through your record keeping both under the CEPA and under New Zealand Customs law (I think there is a 5-year period for keeping records). This supports how Customs verifies these claims. Initially, we check the certificate of origin. But if we are unsure, then we can go to the supporting documents, the bill of lading invoices etc, and see if there is enough information to support the transformation or production claims. If we are still unsure, under the CEPA we can commence a verification process and get more information, from either the company or the exporting customs. At the very last stage we can commence a verification visit to the producers' premises.

An important note - we've had some issues both into NZ and the UAE where traders have been obtaining non-preferential certificates of origin from Chambers of Commerce that have not been certified, so please go through the ones that are listed on the Customs website.

Q: Given the UAE's position as both a regional hub and a rapidly diversifying economy, where do you see the next wave of opportunity for New Zealand exporters post-CEPA, particularly in food systems, green technologies and digital trade?

Ahmad Zakkout: We measure how many questions are being asked by exporters through ISRs (Internationalist's requests) and we have seen a big wave of F&B questions come through to the UAE. Saying that, specialised manufacturing and tech and services have seen a massive wave of requests, both inbound and outbound as well as the creative sector into Abu Dhabi. If you are looking at Dubai this is fintech, real estate. There is also some of the areas between Abu Dhabi and Al Ain where agritech is a big focus and we have farmers working in building vertical farming as a food security and as ordinary green farming. Food systems are more around the specialised manufacturing space so you need to know specifically where you are going and understand the customers and be here to see where the opportunities are. A lot of these companies will have someone based in the UAE. We are seeing more NZ companies basing themselves in the UAE and setting up offices so that is a good sign.

Craig Kearney:

I would just like to add an interesting incremental marketing feature which is the New Zealand Story Fernmark. It's a way of distinguishing New Zealand products on the label with the fern which really helps to establish the New Zealand origin of products and that is going to be an interesting incremental attribute to put on our brands. Having the Fernmark gives a sense of quality and knowledge that it is a New Zealand based product, and that adds another point of differentiation. We position Healthies as the number one and most trusted vitamin brand in New Zealand and having the Fernmark on the packaging gives it almost a tick of authority. Reach out to NZTE and New Zealand Story to find out whether the Fernmark can help in your entry point into the UAE and other parts of the Middle East.

Carmen Vicelich: I would add that the UAE wants to be the best country in the world in AI by 2031, and there's investment coming in with Microsoft, Google, Palantir, AI hubs, data analytics centres. It's not just digital and tech. it's also any NZ tech that is particularly focused around AI. This is a really massive focus in a market that doesn't just say they want to do things, they do them, which is a massive opportunity for us to pick up. Of course, everybody does see that Dubai does things quickly and we know in Saudi and other Markets the fact that we are in the UAE really does help you across the region.

Q: Interested in retail channels and key accounts for oral care products. Approaches to on-the-ground representation. Value chains i.e. key account supply or via distributors. Labelling and other related requirements or certification for oral care.

NZTE: Some retailers operate consolidation models from New Zealand that allow for direct listings. Oral Care products would tend to be sold via distributors. All products will require registration with the relevant authority. Medical grade products registration can be an expensive & time-consuming process. There are many options for companies that can act as brand ambassadors/business development agencies for your products in market. Their relationships with distributors/retailers can be vital. Companies that join NZTE may be assisted with labelling queries, please find the link to sign up here: [Join NZTE to grow your business overseas - myNZTE](#)

Q: Interested in local access for 100% foreign owned companies to import and sell only within the UAE (not regionally).

NZTE: Federal Decree-Law No. 26 of 2020 and Federal Decree-Law No. 32 of 2021 removed the old requirement for a UAE national to hold at least 51% of shares in mainland companies. Foreign investors can now own 100% of Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) and other corporate entities onshore, without needing a local sponsor or service agent.

Q: (follow up to question in webinar) How do we reach distributors initially for non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages?

NZTE: These are two very different routes to market. Alcohol distribution regulation varies depending on the Emirate. Most foodservice & retail distributors carry a range of non-alcoholic beverages. Companies should be aware of upcoming changes to sugar tax regulations in UAE which come into effect on January 1st, 2026. NZTE can support companies who have signed up on myNZTE on these requests.

Q: What are future projections of Red Meat exports from NZ to Middle East Markets and supplier expectations from importers?

NZTE: NZTE has recently conducted market research on selling New Zealand red meat in the United Arab Emirates. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the red meat

market in the UAE, focussing on macro trends, market size, consumer insights, and routes to market.

You can access the full report on myNZTE here: [Selling red meat in the United Arab Emirates - myNZTE](#) (Accessible to those with myNZTE accounts).

Q: Looking to expand into UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia and would like to learn if identifying a partner locally in these markets is better or if moving to Abu Dhabi/Dubai for 6 months is better from a business development perspective.

NZTE: It depends. If you find one, a trusted partner can open doors immediately to new business and help you navigate cultural and regulatory nuances. The trade-off is sharing a portion of your profits with that partner. Relocation on the other hand builds credibility. Spending time in market signals commitment, builds relationships, and helps you understand your customer needs.

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR EXPORTERS

MFAT

[Exploring New markets – United Arab Emirates Stakeholder Webinar](#)

- [Text of the NZ UAE CEPA Agreement](#)
- Tariff Finder - www.tariff-finder.govt.nz
- Services Exporter Tool – services-exporter-tool.govt.nz
- Market Reports – mfat.govt.nz/market-reports
- Export Helpdesk – Email exports@mfat.net or call 0800 824 605
or visit <https://www.tradebarriers.govt.nz/en>

NZTE

- United Arab Emirates Market Guide – [MyNZTE UAE Market Guide](#)
- The New Zealand Fernmark Licence Programme - [The New Zealand Fernmark Licence Programme](#)
- NZTE Contact [Contact us | NZTE](#)

Customs

[New Zealand – United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.](#)

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