

How to export... cotton t-shirts to the European Union



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The European Union (EU) is the world's biggest single market, so many businesses around the world would like to export to it to meet consumer demand. Sometimes, potential exporters feel they need more information on how to meet EU standards. Help is at hand. With the Export Helpdesk, you can find all the facts and figures you need: information, forms and contacts. So, if you want to export cotton T-shirts to the European market, where do you start?

What main requirements must you meet to export T-shirts to Europe?

There are specific requirements for each textile (cotton, silk, polyester, etc) and each textile product (T-shirts, trousers, skirts, etc). Below are the main requirements for cotton T-shirts, though you should check the requirements for your specific product with the *Export Helpdesk*.

Export licence and import licence for textile products

For some countries, there is a double-checking system to limit the quantity of textiles entering the EU. If that is that case, the national authorities in the product's country of origin issue an **export licence** taking into account the annual quotas. This export licence, translated into English, French or Spanish if necessary, should be presented to the EU authorities before 31 March of the year during which the goods are to be shipped. Once you have confirmation that the goods do not exceed the quota, you can submit the original of the export licence and the application for an import licence to the European country where the T-shirts will be sold. This country will, within five days, issue an **import licence, in duplicate**, valid for six months, in the official language of that European country.

Certain textiles, such as traditional products, are not subject to quotas. You need a Certificate of Handloom and Folklore issued in the country of origin to apply for an import licence.

You can check if this applies to your country and find details, forms and quota levels for textiles through the Export Helpdesk

Personal protective equipment

If your T-shirts are designed to be worn for protection against hazards to health and safety, they are considered 'personal protective equipment' and must comply with EU health and safety requirements. These include standards for the product's design, manufacture, materials, testing, instructions, information supplied by the manufacturer, etc. To assist you in meeting these requirements, the EU has developed harmonised standards. If your T-shirts comply with these standards, they are presumed to comply with EU requirements for imports too.

Personal protection equipment must be labelled with the CE marking. This symbol means a product complies with EU health and safety requirements. CE marking must be affixed in a visible, easily legible form to each T-shirt, in a label that includes the identification number of the assessment body notified, if applicable.

Your product also must pass a conformity assessment. This may require an independent body designated by a European country to assess whether the product, in this case, a T-shirt, complies with EU requirements. ***Details on harmonised standards, CE marking criteria and conformity assessments are available from the Export Helpdesk.***

The Export Helpdesk is an online service providing information on how to export to the European Union.

This free, user-friendly service provides all the information you need about EU import requirements, tariffs, preferential trade agreements and statistics, in a tailor-made way, *product by product, country by country*

www.exporthelp.europa.eu



Textile labelling rules

EU labelling rules ensure that consumers can find the information they need to make an informed choice when purchasing clothes. Setting the information out in a consistent way makes it easier for shoppers, so all textile labels must display the same minimum information. This means indicating the fibre composition of the product.

T-shirt labels must indicate fibre content in a clear, legible manner, separate from other information. In certain countries, a translation into the language(s) of the European country to which you are exporting is required.

<i>What is the t-shirt made of?</i>	<i>What should appear on the label?</i>
100% single type of fibre	State '100%', 'pure' or 'all' before the fibre name.
85% single type of fibre	State '85%' or '85% minimum' before the fibre name, or by the full percentage composition of the product
Mixed fibres, none of which account for 85% of total weight	State the name and percentage of at least the two main fibres
Mixed fibres, each accounting for less than 10% of the total weight	State either the name or percentage of each fibre, or simply 'other fibres'. However, if you state the name of a fibre accounting for less than 10% of the total weight, you must give the full percentage composition of the product.
Several parts, each made of a different fibre	State the fibre content of each part. This is not compulsory for parts accounting for less than 30% of total weight.



There are specific rules regarding terms to be used. For instance, the term 'cotton' is reserved exclusively for the fibre obtained from the bolls of the cotton plant (*Gossypium*). The term 'cotton linen union' is reserved for products with a pure cotton warp and a pure flax weft, in which the percentage of flax accounts for at least 40% of the total weight of the fabric. You must specify the exact composition.

All textile products marketed in the EU must be labelled. Accompanying commercial documents can replace labels for products not being offered to the end consumer. T-shirts should be marked individually if they are to be sold one by one. However, if two or more T-shirts with the same fibre content are part of an indivisible set, they can carry a single label.

New EU rules on textile labelling will soon enter into force. *You will find the updated information at the Export Helpdesk*

Eco-label for textile products

The eco-label is the official mark for products with the lowest environmental impact in its range. It is not compulsory on products entering the EU market, and aims to promote good environmental practices, while helping consumers to identify such products. If you want to add an eco-label to your T-shirts, you must comply with its criteria regarding textile fibre, processes, chemicals used and fitness for use. Manufacturers, importers, service providers, traders or retailers can apply for the eco-label. Send your application to the European country where you want to market your product. The national authorities will assess whether your T-shirts comply with eco-label criteria and verification requirements. If so, they will conclude a contract with you covering the terms of use of the label, which will apply to all EU countries. The eco-label can be displayed on any part of the T-shirt and can be used from the date it is awarded, until the end of the validity period. Application for and use of the eco-label is subject to a fee.



The information in this factsheet can in no way be regarded as a commitment on the part of the European Commission. For further information, please contact the National Authority of the EU country to which the product will be exported

Now that you know the basic conditions for exporting your product to the EU, do you need further details, forms or statistics? Would you like to know whether your country has a special trade agreement with the EU that means import tariffs have been reduced, or even eliminated? Do you need further details on rules of origin? Check with the Export Helpdesk!

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