

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What are the key amendments to the Regulation of Imports and Exports Act (RIEA)?

The key amendment to the RIEA will allow the sharing of trader's declaration information among domestic public agencies to safeguard national security, public health and safety, as well as for the investigation, prosecution and enforcement of offences under domestic laws, other than the RIEA. There are also technical amendments, which involves no change in policy or its execution.

2. Why is there a need to share traders' information for national security and public safety and health?

Currently, the RIEA prohibits Singapore Customs from disclosing information provided by traders to public agencies, unless the traders give their consent in writing, or the information is required for the investigation, enforcement and prosecution of offences under the RIEA. However, in cases such as public health and safety threats, for example, pandemic flu and food contamination incidents, public agencies may need traders' declaration information to trace movement of food supplies and specific items in order to deal with the crisis.

3. Why is there a need to share traders' information for investigation, prosecution and enforcement under other domestic laws, besides the RIEA?

Currently, the RIEA limits disclosing of information to public agencies for investigation, enforcement and prosecution of offences only under the RIEA, for offences such as incorrect or fraudulent trade declaration. However, this prevents domestic regulatory and enforcement agencies to use traders' declaration information to investigate other offences against errant traders.

4. What are the other technical amendments?

The other technical amendments includes the clarification of trade terms definition with respect to transshipment, a correction of misnomer to rationalise the two-tier composition sum and an amendment to provide legal clarity to share information with public agencies for the purpose of compilation and publication of trade statistics. These are meant to provide greater legal clarity to traders and will involve no change in policy or its execution.

5. What are the safeguards in place to protect traders' confidentiality?

All the substantive amendments relates to sharing of information only with domestic public agencies, which includes government ministries, governmental departments, organ of statutes and statutory boards. There is no change in legislation governing sharing of traders' declaration information with overseas agencies.

Approval from the Ministry of Trade and Industry is required for disclosure of information for trade statistics compilation and publishing, as well as for national security and public safety and health. Where trade statistics are published, as per current practice, they will be

published in a form that does not identify individual trader through data aggregation and, where necessary, data suppression.

6. When will the amendments to the RIEA come into effect?

We expect these amendments to come into effect by the end of 2013.