



Photo: Trade Week 2021



Kingdom of Tonga

Expedited Clearance to Facilitate the Import of Vaccines

Presented by: Lorraine Kauhenga, Ministry of Trade & Economic Development
to WTO Trade Facilitation Committee Meeting

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The Context

Kingdom of Tonga

- 169 Islands across ~700,000 square kilometres EEZ
- 2 x International airports & seaports
- Population 100,651
- WTO Member since 2007

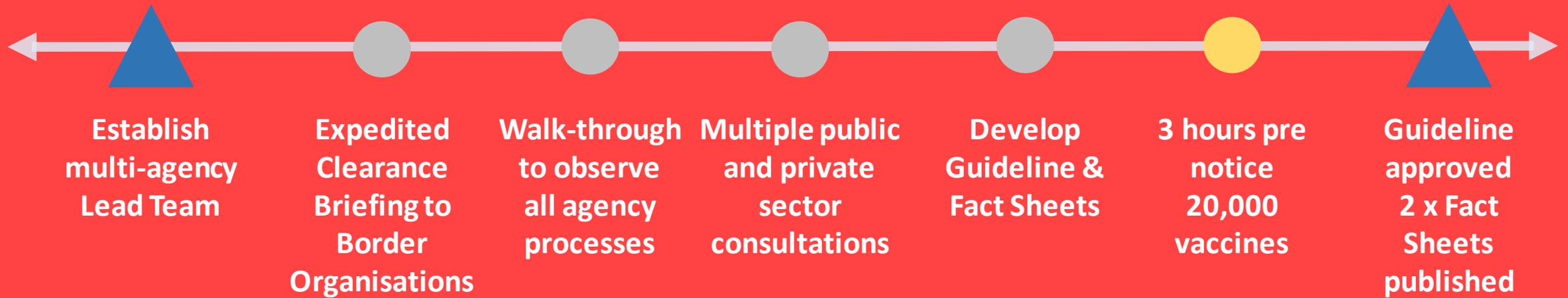
Trade Facilitation

- Tonga TFA Roadmap completed
- Time Release Study completed
- Asycuda World under development
- MOU with Tonga Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Health

- 2 x ICU beds
- National Covid Planning
- Infrastructure for Covid vaccine in place
- Government major importer of pharmaceuticals

Expedited Shipments – The Approach



Observations

- Walk through of the end-to-end approval, import clearance and logistics processes was invaluable for the Lead Team
- Agency coordination and understanding for the regulatory requirements enhanced and enabled quick mobilization for expedited clearance of the first consignment of covid vaccines (completed within 3 hours)
- Fact Sheets for Commercial Importers and Private Importers will be useful for donors
- Consultation further enhanced the engagement that was commenced during the development of the TFA Roadmap.

Communications & Outcomes

1. Import Procedures for Vaccines, Medicines and Medical Products : *Guideline relating to the importation of critical vaccines, medicines, and medical products in response to Covid-19 preparedness, critical humanitarian and relief shipments and in strengthening the resilience of Tonga's national and international pharmaceutical supply chain*

2. Commercial Import Fact Sheet of Medicines, Vaccines, Therapeutics and Pharmaceutical Goods

3. Private Import Fact Sheet of Medicines, Vaccines, Therapeutics and Pharmaceutical Goods

Implementation of further facilitation measures including AO for trusted importers, improved coordination within Ministry of Health

FACT SHEET

Commercial Imports of Medicines, Vaccines, Therapeutics and Pharmaceutical Goods

To further the Government of Tonga's goal to facilitate compliant and legal trade and to stop the importation of unsafe and 'fake' medicines, therapeutics and pharmaceutical goods Tonga's Border Agencies have prepared this fact sheet.

INTRODUCTORY PRINCIPLES

Bringing goods such as medicines, vaccines, veterinary medicines, therapeutics and pharmaceuticals into Tonga from overseas is called 'importing' and there are specific rules associated with importing that must be followed for all imported goods.

In general, goods are defined under the law as "includes excisable goods, documents, tangible personal property, commercial cargo, currency, livestock, motor vehicles, aircraft and ship's stores, accompanied and unaccompanied baggage, aircraft and ships, including self-transported ships and aircraft". Any good that comes from outside the Kingdom of Tonga into Tonga are considered 'imported' regardless of whether the good or goods are;

- New or used
- Gifts, donations or purchased
- Intended for testing or intended for sale
- Samples or commercial lots
- Arrive in Tonga via airfreight, seafreight, express courier or postal mail, or
- Legal or illegal

The person or company or organisation who is receiving the imported goods is 'the importer' and 'the importer' is liable, for example, for wrong information given to the border authority or importing any illegal goods or errors and omissions on the customs declaration.

All imported items must be cleared through Customs

What are commercial goods?

Commercial goods are any items you are going to sell or use in your business. Commercial goods include samples.

Legal Basis for Importing and Exporting

The Pharmacy Act 2004 and the Therapeutic Goods Regulations 2011 establishes the legal framework for the importation and exportation of medical drugs in Tonga.

The Customs and Excise Management Act 2017, Customs regulations, policies and procedures impose controls over the physical importation and exportation of medical drugs. The Customs law also contains powers for the detention, analysis and seizure of fake or counterfeit drugs suspected to be imported illegally.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH APPROVAL & GUIDANCE

Check Before You Import

Before you import or export check to verify if the goods can be imported into Tonga and whether there are approvals, restrictions, or special conditions relevant to the goods.

Medicines, Vaccines, Therapeutic and Pharmaceutical Goods

Some medicines, vaccines, therapeutics and pharmaceutical goods are controlled goods which means the import of the items could be prohibited or subject to restrictions or conditions.

Although some medicines, therapeutics and pharmaceutical goods are available locally this does not automatically allow you to import those same items. There may be conditions, regulations and approvals that must be met before the goods can be imported.

Import Process



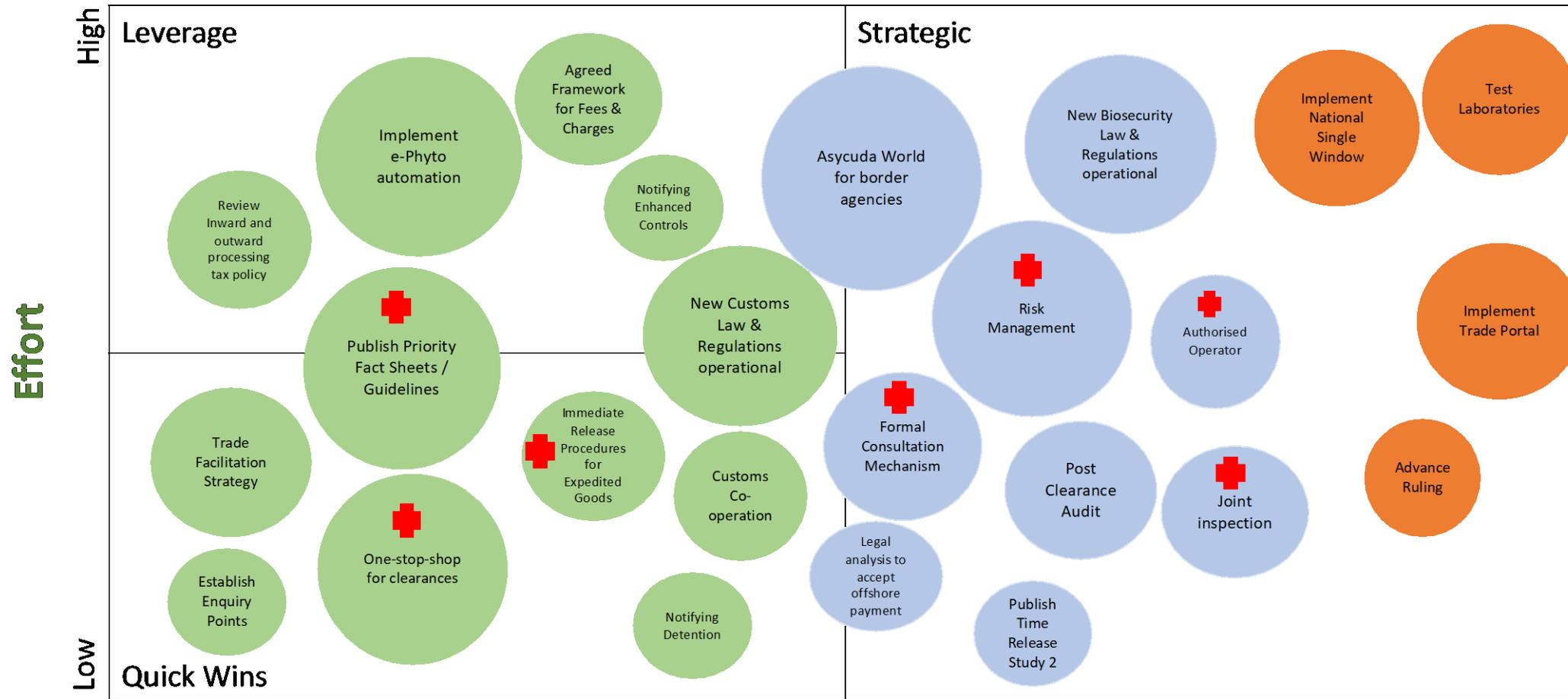
Contact Points

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Revenue & Customs

Quarantine & Quality Div. of MAFF

Connections to The TFA Roadmap



Colour Key

Green	Short Term Implementation
Blue	Medium Term Implementation
Orange	Longer Term Implementation

Impact Key

Circle Size	Denotes the assessed impact on Trade Facilitation – Larger the circle sizes the larger the assessed impact
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Adapted from the National Trade Facilitation Strategy and Roadmap Greece, 2012 p30 last accessed 05/10/2020
<https://www.unecp.org/fileadmin/DAM/Trade/Greece/TradeFacilitationReforms/Documents/NationalTradeFacilitationStrategy/Roadmap.pdf>

Lessons Learned

- Establishing a small multi-agency lead team was a key success factor
- Establishing a structured schedule of working group sessions with outcomes for each activity ensured focus
- Ministry of Health were key participants and identified improvements within their agency
- Physical walk through and observation of each border organisation process identified points of connection for improved coordination and a real understanding of the logistics procedures to support timely delivery of vaccines
- Private sector requested published procedures for clearance and contact points – this led to the development of the Fact Sheets

Lead Team

Trade, Customs, Health, Quarantine (Plant & Animal)

Border Organisations

Port, Airport, Air Cargo Operator, Customs Broker, Freight Forwarder, Transport ministry



Questions Thank you

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