

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS****Pre-Shipment Verification of Conformity Programme (PVoC)**

This document answers the most frequently asked questions about South Africa's new PVoC Programme. For further information visit [www.sabs.co.za](http://www.sabs.co.za) or attend an SABS public awareness session during the transition period.

**CATEGORY 1 — UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRAMME****Q1. What is the PVoC Programme?**

PVoC stands for **Pre-Shipment Verification of Conformity**. It is a programme that ensures certain products are checked for safety and quality before they are shipped to South Africa — not only when they arrive at the border.

**Example:** *Electric heaters destined for South Africa are inspected in the country of origin before shipping to confirm they meet safety requirements.*

**Q2. Why is South Africa introducing this programme?**

Each year, unsafe or poor-quality products enter the country and reach consumers. These include:

- Electrical appliances that catch fire
- Toys containing harmful chemicals
- Phone chargers that overheat or explode
- Furniture that fails prematurely

The PVoC Programme intercepts non-compliant products before they reach South African consumers, reducing risk and protecting lives.

**Q3. Is the programme starting immediately?**

No. There will be a six-month transition period during which:

- Participation is voluntary
- Businesses and importers can prepare their supply chains
- SABS will provide training, workshops and guidance materials

Mandatory enforcement will follow once the transition period concludes.

**Q4. Which products will be subject to verification?**

The programme focuses on high-risk consumer products, including:

- Kettles, heaters and small electrical appliances
- Phone chargers and power supplies
- Toys
- Furniture and mattresses

The product list will be reviewed and expanded as the programme matures.

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**Q5. Which country is included in the first pilot phase?**

The pilot phase begins with products imported from **China**, South Africa's largest import partner. The programme will expand progressively to other countries.

**Q6: Why is this programme targeting China?**

The programme is not targeting any country.

The pilot phase starts with China because it is South Africa's largest import partner and represents a significant portion of high-risk consumer goods.

The intention is to expand the programme to other countries in a non-discriminatory manner, in line with international trade rules.

**Q7: How do I know which products fall under the PVoC programme (Annexure 1), and are these products linked to HS Codes?**

Yes.

The products listed in Annexure 1 of the PVoC programme are mapped to specific Harmonised System (HS) Codes, which are used by customs to identify goods during importation.

How it works:

- Each product category in Annexure 1 is linked to a specific HS Code or range of HS Codes
- When goods are declared to customs, they are classified using these HS Codes
- The customs system (SARS) uses these codes to automatically identify products that fall within the PVoC scope
- SABS, in collaboration with SARS Customs, is in the process of finalising the integration of PVoC Phase 1 products into the SARS customs risk management and product classification framework.
- This includes the incorporation of relevant PVoC product categories into the SARS restricted product (PR) list, enabling automated identification of applicable consignments through HS Code-based risk triggers at ports of entry.

**Q8: What this means for importers:**

If your product falls under one of the listed HS Codes:

- it will be flagged by the customs risk management system
- you will be required to provide a **Certificate of Conformity (CoC)**
- the shipment may be subject to verification if the CoC is missing or invalid.

**CATEGORY 2 — CERTIFICATES, INSPECTIONS & PROCESS**

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**Q9. What is a Certificate of Conformity (CoC)?**

A CoC is an official document that confirms a product has been inspected and **meets South African national standards (SANS)**. It functions as a “safety pass” for goods entering South Africa.

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**Q10. Who inspects the products before shipment?**

Products are inspected by **approved inspection bodies such as CCIC**, operating under the oversight and authority of SABS. All inspections must conform to applicable SANS standards.

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**Q11. What happens if goods arrive without a CoC?**

If a shipment of regulated products arrives without a valid Certificate of Conformity, customs authorities may:

- Hold the shipment pending further review
- Conduct a physical inspection of the goods
- Request additional supporting documentation
- Delay clearance until conformity is verified

Importers are strongly advised to ensure all required documentation is in order before shipment.

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**Q12. How will customs identify which products need a CoC?**

The system uses a combination of:

- Product classification codes (HS codes)
- Integrated digital systems
- Customs risk management controls

This enables automatic identification of high-risk goods at the point of import.

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**Q13. Does PVoC replace existing import regulations?**

**No.** PVoC is an additional safety layer applied before export. It complements — and does not replace — South Africa's existing import regulations and border controls.

## CATEGORY 3 — IMPACT ON TRADE & IMPORTERS

### Q13. Will PVoC stop or restrict imports into South Africa?

**No.** The programme does not restrict trade. Its purpose is to ensure that imported products are safe and compliant — not to limit the volume or range of imports.

### Q14. Will PVoC make products more expensive for consumers?

The cost impact of pre-shipment verification is expected to be minimal. Moreover, the programme helps prevent far more costly outcomes, including:

- Injuries and property damage from unsafe products
- Costly product recalls and liability claims
- Consumer loss of confidence in imported goods

**Example:** *The cost of verifying a charger before shipment is far less than the financial and human cost of a house fire caused by a faulty device.*

### Q15. Will goods take longer to arrive as a result of PVoC?

**In many cases, transit times may actually improve.** Compliant goods with a valid CoC face fewer delays at the border and require less customs intervention, resulting in faster clearance.

### Q16. What should importers do to prepare?

Importers should take the following steps during the transition period:

- Notify overseas suppliers of South African standards requirements
- Verify that products meet applicable SANS standards
- Arrange pre-shipment inspections through approved bodies
- Prepare and retain all required documentation
- Attend SABS workshops and information sessions

### Q17. Will small importers be negatively affected?

**No.** The programme is being introduced gradually. The six-month transition period, combined with SABS training support and guidance materials, is specifically designed to help smaller businesses adapt without disruption.

**Q18: Is this not a violation of WTO rules?**

“**No.** The programme is designed to comply fully with World Trade Organization principles.

It is based on legitimate objectives such as consumer safety and product quality, and it will be applied in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner as it expands.

Many countries around the world use similar systems.”

## CATEGORY 4 — BROADER ECONOMIC & TRADE BENEFITS

**Q19. How does PVoC benefit South Africa?**

The programme delivers a range of national benefits:

- Protects consumers from unsafe and substandard products
- Improves the overall quality of goods in the market
- Reduces the prevalence of counterfeit and fake products
- Supports fair competition between importers and local manufacturers

**Q20. Will PVoC worsen de-industrialisation?**

**No — PVoC helps prevent de-industrialisation.** Without controls, unsafe imports can undercut local businesses that are required to meet strict safety standards. PVoC levels the playing field by ensuring all products — imported or locally produced — meet the same requirements.

**Example:** *Local manufacturers already comply with SANS standards. PVoC ensures imported products are held to the same standard, making competition fair.*

**Q21. How does PVoC help fight counterfeit goods?**

Counterfeit products often circumvent safety testing, use fraudulent certificates and imitate reputable brands. By verifying products before export, PVoC:

- Makes it significantly harder for fake goods to enter South Africa
- Establishes an auditable chain of conformity from origin to destination
- Deters exporters of non-compliant products from targeting the South African market

**Q22. Does PVoC support fair trade?**

**Yes.** PVoC ensures equal safety standards are applied to all products regardless of origin. This promotes fair competition, protects honest businesses and improves quality across the market — without restricting trade.

**Q23. What is the long-term benefit of the PVoC Programme for South Africa?**

Over time, the PVoC Programme will:

- Improve product safety and reduce consumer harm
- Strengthen and protect local industries
- Reduce the flow of unsafe and illegal goods into the country
- Build lasting consumer trust in products available in South Africa
- Support a stronger, more competitive and safer economy

***“PVoC protects people, supports fair business, and improves the quality of products in South Africa — without restricting trade.”***

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