

"You Don't Need Any Import Documents" and Other Things Suppliers Get Wrong



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When an Indian supplier says you need no documents, it usually means its own export side is handled. Your side is not. The importer carries the destination rules, such as an EORI number in the UK, the FSVP importer role for food in the US, and a full import declaration above A\$1,000 in Australia or NZ\$1,000 in New Zealand. Seven common supplier claims and the facts behind each.

The Short Version

- Your supplier can file India's export paperwork. It can't file your import in your country.
- UK imports need an EORI, US food imports need an FSVP importer, and AU and NZ need a full declaration above their thresholds.
- A free trade agreement lowers duty. It doesn't remove standards, biosecurity or product rules.
- A preferential certificate of origin has to be asked for. It doesn't come automatically.
- Buyers on forums prefer suppliers who already export to their market, because those suppliers know what the importer needs.

It's usually half true. Your Indian supplier can take care of India's side, the export filing, the shipping bill and the certificates it issues, and when it says "nothing is needed from you" that's often what it means. Your own country's import rules are a different matter. They sit with whoever imports the goods, which is normally you.

Buyers hear the line in many forms. One buyer on a seller forum quoted a supplier telling them "You don't need no any document. i take care sir" (2019, from our forum research, FS-SUP-059). A US spice importer, by contrast,

was out looking for "an FSVP (Foreign Supplier Verification Program) agent", which is a role no Indian supplier can fill for you ([r/CustomsBroker, January 2025](#)). Here are seven claims we see in our forum research, and what's actually true, as read at the official sources on 18 October 2026. The caveat - rules differ by product, so treat this as the map and confirm your own goods with your customs broker.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01 **Importers, not suppliers, carry the destination rules.** UK, US and Indian voices in our forum research agree that the importer handles destination compliance, and buyers advise choosing a maker that already exports to your market. An Indian voice put it as "Just find the manufacturer who have knowledge of export". (*Our forum-signal log FS-SUP-059, 2019 to 2025*)
- 02 **The FSVP importer is a US party.** FDA defines the FSVP importer as "the U.S. owner or consignee of a food offered for import". With none, a US agent of the foreign owner must consent in writing to take the role. ([FDA, FSVP final rule page](#), *content current as of 1 May 2026, read 18 October 2026*)
- 03 **AU and NZ full declarations start at A\$1,000 and NZ\$1,000.** Above those values the goods need a full import declaration. ([ABF, ACN 2021/01, NZ Customs import declaration fact sheet](#), *read 18 October 2026 · Verified, Indicative thresholds*)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ How many first-time importers from India get stopped for a missing importer registration. No customs service publishes it.

1. Do I Really Need No Documents If the Supplier "Takes Care"?

What's true. The supplier takes care of India. It files the shipping bill, gets export clearance and issues the commercial invoice, the packing list and any certificate of origin. That's real work, and a good exporter does it well.

What's missing. The import side, in your country, in the importer's name. In Great Britain you may need an EORI number to move goods in from another country, unless the goods are not controlled and are for personal use only ([GOV.UK, EORI](#)). In Australia a consignment over A\$1,000 must be formally entered on an import declaration ([ABF ACN 2021/01](#)), and in New Zealand an import declaration is required above NZ\$1,000 ([NZ Customs](#)). In the US, informal entry is generally allowed up to US\$2,500 and formal entry above it ([CBP e-commerce FAQs](#)). Somebody files each of those, and it isn't your supplier.

2. If the Supplier Ships DDP, Is Customs Its Problem?

What's true. Under DDP the seller agrees to clear the goods into your country and pay the duty.

What's missing. An Indian exporter can only do that through someone set up in your country. Most small exporters can't, which is why their DDP prices often look high or the goods stop at the port. If you accept DDP, ask who the importer of record will be, by name. Importer of record explains what you hand over when it isn't you.

3. Can Stock Go as a Gift or Sample to Avoid Duty?

What's true. Some countries do have reliefs for genuine gifts. The UK, for example, doesn't charge VAT on gifts worth £39 or less sent to you by

someone else ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)).

What's missing. Stock you bought for your business isn't a gift. Labelling commercial goods as gifts or personal items to avoid duty is a false declaration, and it's the importer's declaration. We cover the money side, including split cash-and-invoice offers, in [my supplier offered to under-declare the invoice](#).

4. Does Shipping in Several Boxes Avoid Customs?

What's true. Low-value parcels clear through simpler routes in most markets.

What's missing. Customs counts the order, not the box. Australia says outright that packages "known to be part of the same order" are one consignment, even when they arrive on different days ([ABF ACN 2021/01](#)). The full answer by market is in [can you split an India order to stay under the duty-free limit](#).

5. Is It Really Zero Duty From Day One?

What's true. India's trade agreements cut duty to zero on many lines in Australia, the UK and, from 20 October 2026, New Zealand.

What's missing. Two things. First, the date the agreement enters into force, and the date on your import entry, decide the rate. A New Zealand post in May 2026 promised "zero tariffs from Day 1" and "customs clearance from India guaranteed within 48 hours" before the agreement was in force, and a reply pointed out that "removal of tariffs does not remove quality standards" ([r/newzealand](#), May 2026, from our forum research, FS-SHP-014). The dates are on [India to New Zealand](#). Second, the zero only applies with the right proof of origin in your broker's hands.

6. Does a Certificate of Origin Come With Every Shipment?

What's true. Indian exporters can get preferential certificates through DGFT's systems, and most do it routinely for buyers who ask.

What's missing. The asking. A certificate is made for one agreement and, in most cases, one shipment, signed only by an agency listed for that agreement, and since April 2026 its invoice number has to match the shipping bill. Put it in the PO. The exporter's side is on how an Indian exporter gets a certificate of origin, and what each agreement accepts at your border is on certificate of origin.

7. If the Product Is "Approved for Your Market", Are You Covered?

What's true. Many Indian exporters hold real certifications and ship to your market regularly.

What's missing. Product rules usually bind the importer or the person placing goods on the market, not the overseas maker. For food into the US that means the FSVP importer, a US party (FDA), plus the facility and prior notice rules on FDA food facility registration. Natural goods into Australia and New Zealand meet biosecurity checks separate from customs, covered on biosecurity for natural goods. A supplier's certificate is evidence you use, not a compliance status you inherit.

8. What Should You Do Instead?

Make a short import checklist before the first order, and share it with the supplier so both sides know who does what.

1. **Your registrations.** EORI in the UK, an importer number and bond with your US broker, an ABN or a broker who lodges in your name in Australia, a client code in New Zealand. Your broker will tell you what applies.
2. **Your product rules.** Food, cosmetics, toys, electrical goods and anything natural carry extra rules. Find yours on [certifications](#).
3. **The documents you need from India.** Name them in the PO - commercial invoice, packing list, the right certificate of origin, any product certificates and the bill of lading.
4. **Who clears.** You and your broker, unless you've agreed otherwise in writing.

Then prefer a supplier who already exports to your market. It doesn't have to be a big one, just one that has shipped to your country before and knows what your broker will ask for. If you're unsure whether a supplier makes the goods or buys them in, [manufacturer vs trading company](#) helps you ask.

Ready to act

Need hands-on help?

Setting up the importer side, briefing the supplier on the documents you need and checking them before the goods sail is execution work. SourcingSync does it for buyers importing from India.

[Talk to SourcingSync](#) ↗

Questions Buyers Ask

What documents do I need to import from India? ^

From India, the commercial invoice, packing list, bill of lading or air waybill and, for an FTA rate, the right certificate of origin. On your side, your importer registrations and your import declaration, plus any product approvals your goods need.

Does an FTA certificate replace my product approvals? 

Who carries the fine if my import entry is wrong? 

My supplier says it has exported to my country before. Is that enough? 

9. Back to "I Take Care, Sir"

The supplier who said that wasn't lying. It meant its side, and its side probably was in hand. The gap was everything after the ship docked, and that belongs to the importer. So thank the supplier, ask exactly what it will send, and then sort out your own half before the goods leave India.