

Why Doesn't Your Supplier's HS Code Match Your Tariff Code?



Yash Khatri

Founder, SourcingFrom

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Your supplier's code is India's, not yours. Indian exporters use an 8-digit ITC(HS) code, and some invoices carry only the 4- or 6-digit code India's GST rules require. Your country adds its own digits to reach 8 or 10. Only the first six digits are shared, so a mismatch after six is normal. A mismatch inside the first six means one side has classified the goods differently, and you should find out why before you ship, because the code you declare is your responsibility.

The Short Version

- Only the first six digits of an HS code are international. Everything after is national.
- Indian invoices may carry an 8-digit ITC(HS) code or a shorter GST code, neither of which is your tariff line.
- A difference inside the first six digits is a classification disagreement, not a formatting issue.
- The code that counts at your border is the one you declare. Tell your supplier what it is.
- Keep the first six digits the same across the invoice, the certificate of origin and your entry.

It's India's code, not yours. Indian exporters use India's 8-digit ITC(HS) code, and your country uses its own national line of 8 or 10 digits. Only the first six digits are shared between countries. So the code on your invoice often won't appear in your tariff, and that's normal. The code that counts at your border is the one you or your broker declare.

If you've just typed your supplier's code into your national tariff and found nothing, you're not alone, and nobody has made a mistake yet. Our [HS](#)

[codes guide](#) explains how the system is built and how to classify a product from scratch. This page answers the narrower question buyers ask when two codes disagree - which one is right, what to do about it, and which document should carry which code. The caveat - we can tell you how to read a mismatch, but the final classification of your goods is your customs service's call, and on a hard product a binding ruling beats any article.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

powered by [Kirnova](#) - the intelligence company

- 01 **Some Indian invoices only need 4 or 6 digits.** India's GST rules set the minimum HSN digits on a tax invoice by the seller's turnover in the previous year - 4 digits up to ₹5 crore and 6 above. So a code that looks "too short" for your tariff may just be the GST minimum. (*[CBIC Notification No. 78/2020-Central Tax, 15 October 2020, in force from 1 April 2021, read 18 October 2026 · Verified, threshold Indicative](#)*)
- 02 **India's export code is 8 digits and keeps changing.** DGFT keeps the ITC(HS) 2022 schedule in step with each year's Finance Act, most recently, per a trade summary, in July 2026. A code copied from an old invoice may no longer exist. (*[DGFT ITC\(HS\), Notification 24/2026-27 read via a summary](#)*)
- 03 **A mismatched code is one listed reason origin claims fail.** Our exporter guide lists codes that differ between the certificate, invoice, shipping bill and the buyer's entry among the usual causes. (*[How an Indian exporter gets a certificate of origin, our guide](#)*)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ How often Indian export invoices carry a code that differs from the importer's at six digits. Nobody publishes it.

1. Why Are There Different Codes at All?

Because the Harmonized System is only international to six digits. The World Customs Organization keeps the six-digit tree, and every country builds its own lines underneath. India uses 8 digits for ITC(HS) ([DGFT](#)). The UK uses a 10-digit commodity code, the US an 8-digit rate line with 2 statistical digits, Australia an 8-digit tariff item with a 2-digit statistical code, and New Zealand an 8-digit item with a statistical key. The details, with one T-shirt followed across five tariffs, are on [HS codes](#).

So two correct codes for the same product will usually differ after the sixth digit. India's seventh and eighth digits mean nothing at your border, and your ninth and tenth mean nothing in Mumbai.

2. Which Code Is the Right One?

Both, each at its own border. The exporter answers to Indian customs for the code on its shipping bill, and you answer to your customs for the code on your import entry. Neither one replaces the other.

For you, that means your import code comes from your own tariff, read from the product, not copied from the invoice. Use the supplier's code as a hint for the first six digits, then work down your own tariff. If a courier or the supplier's forwarder files your entry, give them your code in writing, because whoever declares picks the code (the story of why that matters is on [importer of record](#)).

3. What Does a Mismatch Tell You?

It depends where the codes part company.

- **They agree to six digits and differ after.** Normal. Your national digits come from your tariff.

- **The invoice code is only 4 or 6 digits.** Probably the GST minimum (see the intelligence note above), not a full export code. Ask for the 8–digit ITC(HS) code the exporter puts on the shipping bill, then classify your own line.
- **They differ inside the first six digits.** That's a real disagreement about what the goods are. Maybe the material by weight, maybe what the item is for, maybe a set or a part. Find out why before you ship, because it changes the duty and may change the origin rule.
- **The code doesn't exist anywhere.** It may be from an older edition. The HS is revised every five or six years, and national schedules change more often than that. Check the edition first, then the typing.

The third case is where money moves. Blends are the classic one. A poly-cotton garment described as cotton sits on a different six-digit line, and in the US the rate gap between cotton and man-made-fibre T-shirts is large, as our [HS codes](#) guide shows.

4. Which Document Should Carry Which Code?

This is the bit buyers rarely set up, and it's where origin claims fail.

- **The commercial invoice.** The supplier's ITC(HS) code is fine here, with a full customs description – material and share by weight, construction, use. Some buyers ask for their own import code to be added alongside. Either way, the first six digits should match yours.
- **The shipping bill.** India's 8–digit ITC(HS) code, filed by the exporter. You won't file it, but you can ask for a copy (see [what an Indian shipping bill is](#)).
- **The certificate of origin.** The goods line and HS code have to line up with the invoice and with your entry, at six digits at least, and the origin rule your goods must meet is chosen by that code. [Rules of origin](#) explains how the code drives the test.

- **Your import entry.** Your national code, chosen by you or your broker, with your reasoning kept on file.

So the rule of thumb is short. Six digits agreed and identical on every document, then each country adds its own.

5. What Should You Say to the Supplier?

Tell them your code and how you got there, early, ideally in the PO. Something like this.

"For our import we classify this item as [your national code], heading [first four digits], subheading [first six]. Please check your ITC(HS) code starts with the same six digits, use the same description on the invoice and the certificate of origin, and tell us if you see it differently."

Most exporters are glad to get this. They know their own code, but they rarely know yours, and a supplier who asks back "why do you think it's 6110 and not 6109?" is doing you a favour. If you and the supplier still disagree at six digits, that's the moment for a broker's view or a binding ruling. How to get one in each market is on [HS codes](#).

Ready to act

Need hands-on help?

If you'd like your range classified once, the codes agreed with your Indian suppliers and the documents checked before each shipment, SourcingSync does that work.

Talk to SourcingSync ↗

Questions Buyers Ask

Can I just use my supplier's HS code on my import entry? 

Not as it stands. Its last two digits are India's. Use the first six as a hint and take your national line from your own tariff.

The invoice shows a 4-digit code. Is that wrong? 

Does the HS code on the certificate of origin have to match my entry? 

Who's liable if the code is wrong? 

6. So Which Code Goes Where?

Two codes, two borders. Agree the first six digits with your supplier, put them on every document, and take the rest from your own tariff. If the six don't match, stop and find out why before the goods move.