



SWI and Produce Imports FAQ

The Single Window Initiative (SWI) has the potential to significantly streamline and simplify the importation of fresh fruits and vegetables. Below are some frequently asked questions to help explain how SWI can help benefit you.

What is the Single Window Initiative? How can it help my company?

The Single Window Initiative (SWI) is the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) program that allows for the electronic submission of your full import declaration that includes the information that is required by other government departments, such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

The CFIA must approve the release of any shipment of produce into Canada. Currently, the documents they require for this process must be faxed to their National Import Service Centre (NISC). The perils of faxing are obvious – more time consuming, higher potential of lost documents, documents more likely to not be received during system outages. With electronic submission using the Integrated Import Declaration (IID) through SWI, the process is streamlined and receipt of your submission is faster and more easily verifiable.

What is a DIF? Or a 'dematerialized document'?

DIF and dematerialized documents are SWI terms that related to the electronic submission of documents required for the release of shipments. 'DIF' stands for Document Image Functionality. This is a complex way of saying that certain documents that currently need to be faxed to the CFIA, such as a phytosanitary certificate, can be scanned and uploaded and submitted electronically.

'Dematerialized documents' as they relate to produce shipments are documents originating from the CFIA or other departments that previously needed to be faxed but now can be matched electronically to CFIA's own files. For example, an import permit from CFIA will no longer need to be faxed. An importer can provide the relevant permit number on their import declaration and that number will be verified against CFIA's database.

How can SWI save my company money?



In addition to the potential of saving you money by simplifying and streamlining the import process generally, SWI can reduce the number of import declarations required under eManifest. Previously, shipments containing multiple loads from multiple vendors could be submitted under one declaration. However, since eManifest for highway carriers became mandatory in 2015, each load from each vendor must be submitted by your broker individually. This can significantly increase the processing costs for your shipment.

Using the Integrated Import Declaration (IID) under SWI, shipments with multiple loads from multiple vendors - or to use the technical terms, shipments with multiple Cargo Control Numbers (CCNs) – can be submitted under one import declaration. This greatly simplifies these transactions and reduces the associated processing costs.

How else can SWI simplify my imports?

CBSA is moving towards requiring Advance Trade Data (ATD) for pre-risk assessment of shipments coming into Canada. In many cases, this will mean the submission of a separate form containing certain details on the intended shipment. However, if all of the information for your full import declaration is ready to go within the timeframe required for the submission of ATD information, this can be done in only one submission using SWI's Integrated Import Declaration (IID). In this case, your IID will be considered both your ATD submission and your import declaration. This will almost always be the best option for shipments via highway mode as the ATD window is at least 2 hours prior to arrival, while your import information should normally be submitted to the CFIA for their release at least 4 hours prior to arrival.

Is my customs broker using SWI?

SWI is an optional program for customs brokers. In focusing on trying to meet the information technology system requirements necessary to comply with eManifest and other CBSA modernization initiatives, some brokers may have chosen to put their limited resources into other upgrades. However, the system requirements needed for SWI are less than originally anticipated. Talk to your customs broker to ensure that they understand the benefits of using SWI for produce shipments. Ask them if they are currently using SWI or if they plan to in the future.