

Navigating Customs and Import Logistics for Solar Equipment in Tanzania

Customs, Logistics & Regulatory Planning Guide

Content Partner: J. v. G. technology GmbH

Turnkey solar module production lines — since 1997

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Technical Overview: Solar Equipment Customs and Import Logistics in Tanzania



Created as part of the PVKnowHow Knowledge Network



Prepared by J.v.G. Technology GmbH



European specialists in turnkey solar module production lines

Key Project Data

0%

Import Duty

Most manufacturing equipment under EAC Common External Tariff capital goods band

18%

VAT at Import

Applied at point of importation; deferment may apply for qualifying capital goods

7-14

Clearance Days

Typical port clearance timeline for well-documented shipments at Dar es Salaam

EAC C...

Tariff Framework

East African Community Common External Tariff – 3-band structure (0% / 10% / 25%)

📄 Industry: Solar module manufacturing · Focus: Customs & logistics planning · Import duty: 0% for most manufacturing equipment · VAT: 18% · Main logistics hub: Port of Dar es Salaam · Region: Tanzania / East Africa · Source: PVKnowHow / J.v.G. Technology GmbH

The Import Challenge

Why Importing Machinery to Tanzania Is Complex

- Solar manufacturing lines involve 20–40+ individual equipment items across multiple shipments
- Each machine may carry a different HS code and duty treatment
- Documentation errors at customs can delay an entire production line launch
- Incorrect HS classification can trigger unexpected tax liabilities

What a Structured Import Plan Addresses

- Pre-classification of all equipment before shipment begins
- Correct customs agent selection and early engagement
- VAT and cash-flow planning for port release payments
- Coordination between supplier, shipper, and local CFA

Tanzanian Regulatory Framework

Governing Legislation

- East African Community Customs Management Act (EACCMA) 2004
- Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) administers all import declarations
- Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) may grant duty/VAT exemptions for qualifying investors

EAC Common External Tariff


- Three-band structure: 0% raw materials & capital goods / 10% intermediate / 25% consumer goods
- Most manufacturing equipment falls in the 0% capital goods band
- Tanzania is also a member of SADC and AfCFTA — preferential rates may apply

Electronic Systems

- All declarations lodged via TANCIS — Tanzania Customs Integrated System
- Documents submitted at least 7 days before vessel arrival recommended by TRA
- Single Customs Territory (SCT) enables regional clearance for EAC-bound goods

HS Code Strategy for Solar Manufacturing Equipment

Equipment	HS Code (EAC)	Import Duty	Notes
Automatic Stringer Machine	8486.10.00	0%	Essential manufacturing equipment
Solar Module Laminator	8477.59.00	0%	Core capital equipment
Solar Cell IV Tester	9030.33.00	0%	Testing & measurement instruments
General Assembly Machines	8479.89 / 8486.20	0%	Verify classification per function
Electrical Control Cabinets	Chapter 85	0%–10%	Depends on standalone vs. integrated

 HS codes must be confirmed with a licensed Tanzanian CFA before shipment. Incorrect classification can trigger reclassification, penalty duties, and customs holds.

Customs Clearance Workflow

- 1 — Pre-Shipment Preparation**

Appoint a licensed Clearing and Forwarding Agent (CFA)
Pre-classify all equipment HS codes; obtain TIN from TRA if not yet registered
- 2 — Documentation Assembly**

Prepare: commercial invoice, packing list, bill of lading, certificate of origin
Import permit if required; CFA lodges documents in TANCIS \geq 7 days before arrival
- 3 — Customs Declaration (TANCIS)**

CFA submits Single Administrative Document (SAD) electronically
TRA reviews declaration; physical inspection may be triggered for verification
- 4 — Assessment & Payment**

TRA issues final duty/VAT assessment; importer pays all levies via bank or online platform
Includes: 18% VAT + port fees + scanning fee + 0.6% Destination Inspection Fee
- 5 — Release & Transport to Site**

TRA issues Release Order after payment confirmation
Container collected from Dar es Salaam port; transport to factory site arranged with logistics partner

Cost Structure: VAT, Port Fees & Logistics

Tax & Levy Components

- **Import duty:** 0% for most capital equipment (EAC CET)
- **VAT:** 18% of CIF value — largest cash-flow item
- **Railway Development Levy (RDL):** 2% (most goods; some exemptions apply)
- **Destination Inspection Fee:** 0.6% of FOB value
- **Import Declaration Form (IDF):** 0.4% of CIF value (min. USD 5,000)

Logistics & Port Considerations

- Port of Dar es Salaam is the primary entry point for East Africa-bound cargo
- Government upgrades ongoing to reduce container dwell time
- Central Corridor road/rail connects Dar es Salaam to inland sites
- Heavy oversized machinery requires specialist transport and lifting coordination
- VAT on capital goods may be deferred — confirm eligibility with TIC / TRA

Common Risks & Mitigation Strategies

HS Code Misclassification

- Risk: Incorrect code triggers higher duty band or customs hold
- Mitigation: Pre-classify all items with experienced local CFA before shipment
- Seek advance customs ruling from TRA where classification is ambiguous

Documentation Errors & Delays

- Risk: Valuation disputes, permit gaps, or missing certificates extend clearance to 3+ weeks
- Mitigation: Submit complete, accurate documentation package \geq 7 days pre-arrival
- Ensure commercial invoice clearly reflects market value to avoid TRA valuation queries

VAT Cash-Flow Exposure

- Risk: 18% VAT on large equipment shipments creates significant upfront cash requirement
- Mitigation: Plan VAT financing in advance; assess capital goods deferral eligibility
- Note: VAT deferral on imported capital goods is scheduled to cease from 30 June 2026

Operational Planning Considerations

Supplier Coordination

- Request itemised packing lists and HS code suggestions from the turnkey equipment provider
- Align invoice descriptions with EAC CET terminology
- Coordinate multi-container shipment sequencing with production line installation schedule

Local Partner Selection

- Appoint a CFA licensed by TRA – verify experience with industrial machinery imports
- Engage local logistics company capable of handling heavy and sensitive equipment
- Consider TIC registration for potential duty/VAT incentive access

Timeline Budgeting

- Allow 7–14 days for standard clearance; 3+ weeks as contingency buffer
- Factory site preparation, installation, and commissioning to be scheduled after clearance
- An experienced European turnkey provider can advise on phased equipment delivery sequencing

FAQ Highlights

Are there import duty exemptions for solar manufacturing equipment?

- Yes — most capital goods and manufacturing machinery qualify for 0% import duty under the EAC CET
- This does not exempt shipments from 18% VAT and port-related fees
- TIC-registered investors may access additional incentive packages

How long does customs clearance take at Dar es Salaam?

- 7-14 days for well-prepared shipments with accurate documentation
- Documentation issues, valuation disputes, or physical inspections can extend this to 3+ weeks
- Pre-arrival TANCIS declaration (≥ 7 days before vessel arrival) reduces clearance time

What is the role of a Clearing and Forwarding Agent (CFA)?

- A TRA-licensed CFA manages the entire customs declaration and clearance process
- Prepares and submits TANCIS declarations; coordinates with TRA and port authorities
- Arranges final cargo release and handover to the logistics team

Strategic Conclusion

1

Duty Advantage

Tanzania's 0% import duty on capital goods under the EAC CET materially reduces equipment acquisition cost for new manufacturers

2

Planning Is Critical

VAT cash-flow, correct HS classification, and pre-arrival documentation are the three controllable variables that determine clearance speed and cost

3

Turnkey Advantage

A proven turnkey manufacturing concept with experience in African market entry reduces import risk through pre-classified equipment lists and on-the-ground logistics support

- ❏ A proven turnkey manufacturing concept integrates customs and logistics planning into the full-line commissioning methodology – reducing the regulatory learning curve for new manufacturers entering the Tanzanian market.

About the Content Partner

J. v. G. technology GmbH – The DESERT Company

Founded in 1997 in Bavaria, Germany. Family-owned engineering company specializing in turnkey solar module production lines.

More than 90 factory projects delivered worldwide.

On-site team training included – no prior manufacturing experience required.

Key areas:

Turnkey PV manufacturing lines | DESERT Technology® |
TÜV-certified module designs | Factory planning to production

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