Deposit Return Scheme

Exporting drinks containers under the UK Deposit Return Scheme

Practical guidance for producers, retailers, wholesalers and exporters

exchange for change

The key point

The treatment depends on when the goods are exported and, for indirect exports, whether the containers use a national barcode or an international barcode.

1 Decide which export route applies

DIRECT EXPORT

The producer sells and ships the containers outside the UK DRS (England, Northern Ireland, Wales & Scotland) before they are placed on market.

INDIRECT EXPORT

Stock has already been placed on the UK market and a retailer, wholesaler or other business later exports it.

Important

Supply to Crown Dependencies and British Overseas Territories is covered by separate guidance.

2 Direct exports

Where containers are exported before being placed on the UK market from 1st October 2027, there are no requirements to report the volume exported:

- No DRS deposit is due on the direct-export units.
- No standard producer fee is due on those units.
- No additional charge for use of an international barcode is due on those units.
- Units intended exclusively for direct export should have a dedicated barcode as they will never be placed on the UK market, never be registered on the Exchange For Change registration portal and therefore not be included in the producer's placed-on-market declaration.
- If the same SKU is also sold in the UK nations, register the product and declare only the units actually placed on the UK market.

Example

A producer manufactures 20,000 containers and ships 15,000 directly to an overseas distributor. The 15,000 exported units are excluded from the UK DRS scheme, and no deposit, producer fee or international-barcode additional charge applies to those units.

3 Indirect exports

Handling unforeseen exports: where in-scope containers are placed on the UK market and later exported by a third party from 1 October 2027.

For indirect exports, the barcode determines whether a refund route is available. **Indirect exports with an international barcode could be eligible for a deposit reclaim and standard producer-fee refund.**

Financial treatment Summary:

Scenario	Who acts	Deposit and producer fee	International-barcode additional charge
National-barcode stock later exported	No indirect-export claim is available	No deposit refund and no producer-fee refund	Not applicable
International-barcode stock later exported	Exporter submits an evidenced claim to Exchange For Change	Eligible deposit refund to the Exporter and standard producer-fee refund to the Producer.	Not refundable
International-barcode stock placed on the UK market and not exported	Producer declaration	Deposit and standard producer fee are due	Any applicable additional charge is due

Important

A national barcode is only for products eligible to be sold in the UK DRS. If a wholesaler or retailer later exports national-barcode stock, no indirect-export refund is available.

4 Claiming for an eligible indirect export

A retailer, wholesaler or other applicable business may claim where international-barcode stock was placed on the UK market and was later exported without the producer knowing at the point of sale. The final process will be shared by Exchange For Change in Q3 2027.

1

Register:
Register with Exchange For Change before the first claim.

2

Identify the stock:
Provide the barcode/GTIN, SKU, container quantities, supplier information and relevant producer or importer where known.

3

Evidence the export:
A refund will only be considered where the claim is supported by clear, auditable evidence demonstrating that the products were exported, such as invoices and dispatch, shipping, customs or equivalent records. The requirements will be confirmed in Q3 2027.

4

Submit the claim:
Further guidance on the evidence requirements and claim process will be shared by Exchange For Change ahead of the scheme launch.

5

Verification and settlement:
Exchange For Change will review the claim. An eligible deposit refund would go to the Exporter and the standard producer-fee refund to the Producer.

5 Important points for all businesses

- The application for a refund relating to exported products does not replace or change any regulatory requirements placed on producers. Nothing in this guidance removes the requirement to register and supply data on products supplied / made available to be marketed and producers are ultimately responsible for ensuring they meet the requirements of the regulations.
- Refunds associated with indirect exports are not governed by the regulations and are exclusively managed at the discretion of Exchange For Change.
- The additional charge paid by a producer for use of an international barcode is not refunded following an indirect export.
- The same units cannot be excluded from a producer declaration and also claimed as an indirect export. No amount may be recovered twice.
- In order to progress a claim, Exchange For Change would require the information needed to identify the exported units and link them to the relevant barcode, supplier and producer or importer. Its sole purpose is to clarify what stock was sold and facilitate the claim.
- Where several producers or importers use the same barcode, supplier and supply-chain information may be required only to identify the relevant stock and attribute the standard producer-fee refund.
- Exchange For Change encourages exporters, wholesalers and retailers to agree the correct barcode and supply arrangement with producers before stock is supplied for export.
- The proposed solution should be treated as an initial launch position, with the charge, controls and any interoperability or refund mechanisms kept under review once operational evidence on barcode use, redemption behaviour and ineligible redemptions becomes available.

Further information

This guidance addresses DRS product treatment only and does not replace customs, tax, VAT, product-registration or other legal requirements. Questions should be sent to **enquiries@exchangeforchange.co.uk**