

## Implement Track and Trace only if mandated by importing country: Merchant exporters

26 May 2023 | News | By Bhagwati Prasad

### A time-tested mechanism will be beneficial for all the stakeholders



Merchant exporters are waiting a response from the Union Commerce Ministry in terms of putting in place a universal trial based and time tested mechanism for implementation of track and trace. Until the same is developed and run successfully, it has been urged to keep the implementation of track and trace barcode in abeyance.

A four month period was given by the Centre through a notice to implement track and trace barcodes which started from April 2023. The main purpose of the track and trace barcode is to provide assurance by means of traceability.

The Government of India announced on November 18, 2022 that under the new Drugs Rules or the Drugs (Eighth Amendment) Rules, 2022, mentioning a QR code or barcode on the packaging label will be mandatory for the top 300 drug formulations. These QR codes will help verify if the drugs are fake. This will come into force from August 1, 2023.

“Unless proper tested systems arrive, implementation of track and trace barcodes needs to be suspended. We have been given a four month extension but there is no movement in terms of developing the system with properly laid down guidelines and a trial based system. As of today, there is no requirement of bar code on locally procured products. Track and Trace needs to be implemented only if mandated by the importing country, else it is also a financial burden. Additional stickers for products procured locally can't be put as it is also in contravention to the Drug & Cosmetic (D&) Act,” said merchant exporters.

A time-tested mechanism will be beneficial for all the stakeholders including manufacturers, merchant exporters, customs officers and the Custom House Agents (CHA) through its successful implementation, the merchant exporters reiterated.

It has also been urged that a dedicated window be linked to the ICEgate portal where shipment details of products exported by merchant exporters are already uploaded. This should also include products manufactured as well as goods procured from the trade. This will lead to uniform implementation and ensure maintenance of data with secrecy and reliability.

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