

## Tariff-Free Indo-UK Trade Deal Set to Lift India's Rubber Exports

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India's rubber industry is poised for a boost as the upcoming India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is expected to grant tariff-free access for natural rubber and rubber products to the UK market. The move could open new avenues for Indian exporters, particularly in specialised rubber segments, while also supporting domestic growers and manufacturers.

According to the Rubber Board, which functions as the official export promotion council for natural rubber (classified under Harmonised System Code 4001), the trade pact's provisions place rubber products in "Staging Category A." This designation ensures a complete elimination of tariffs over a set timeline, streamlining access to the UK for Indian rubber exporters. The potential impact could see India's rubber exports to the UK rise significantly from their current value of \$150.80 million, a figure that already reflects an 11 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

Despite India not being a major global exporter of natural rubber, the agreement presents a strategic opportunity. Binoy Kurian, Deputy Director (Marketing) at the Rubber Board, noted that while domestic natural rubber exports are generally limited due to internal supply deficits, selective exports can serve as a buffer to stabilise local prices during periods of suppressed demand. He added that concentrated latex (HS 40011010), a key grade exported to the UK, is likely to benefit most from the new trade terms.

India's trade in rubber products with the UK has shown resilience and steady growth, and industry leaders believe the free trade agreement could accelerate that momentum. Shashi Singh, President of the All India Rubber Industries Association, emphasised that aligning trade standards and removing tariffs would offer Indian manufacturers a competitive edge. However, he cautioned that meeting stringent environmental and quality benchmarks will be essential for Indian exporters to maximise this opportunity. He also acknowledged that UK firms, in turn, may find greater access to India's growing industrial and automotive sectors.

Overall, the Indo-UK trade deal marks a strategic step forward in bolstering India's export potential in a high-demand industrial segment. With the proper adaptation to regulatory expectations, the benefits of tariff-free access could be wide-reaching for both economies.