Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade

Information Note on a potential Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom and Thailand

24 November 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Consultation on a potential FTA between the UK and Thailand

This consultation is to inform UK priorities in a potential Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiation with Thailand.

The UK Government therefore wants to hear views on the opportunities, priorities and considerations associated with deepening the UK's trading relationship with Thailand.

This consultation marks an early but important stage in the process of assessing future trade opportunities. The consultation published today provides businesses, civil society, consumers and individuals across the UK with the chance to share their insights and priorities, ensuring that any future negotiations are informed by a strong evidence base and reflect the needs of the UK economy.

The government will carefully consider all responses alongside further economic and policy analysis.

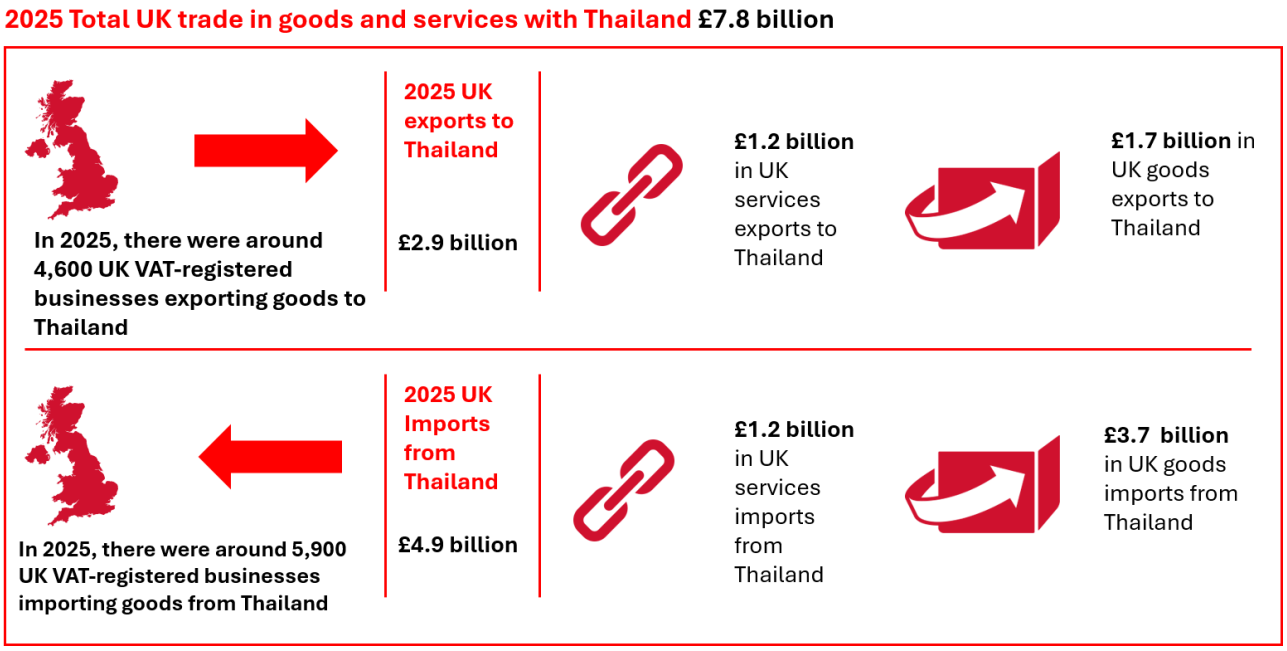
1.2 Trade with Thailand

The purpose of this Information Note is to provide information and data related to the UK's trade relationship with Thailand. It is intended to be used by the public to help inform any responses that they may have to the questions posed as part of the consultation on the future of the UK's trade relationships, published on 24 November 2026.

Thailand is a member state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) alongside Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. ASEAN is an intergovernmental organisation that aims to promote economic and security cooperation among its eleven member states. Thailand is party to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an FTA between ASEAN member states (minus Timor-Leste) plus Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

Figure 1: Goods and services trade between the UK and Thailand, 2025

The following graphic shows the value of UK goods and services exports to and imports from Thailand in 2025, with imports exceeding exports.



Sources: ONS, UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted data (Oct 2026). HMRC data source for Regional Trade Statistics business counts data: UK trade in goods statistics (Sept 2026). Note: Number of VAT registered business exports/imports only relates to businesses trading in goods, and therefore excludes any businesses that only trade in services. Trade figures have been rounded to the nearest £100 million.

1.3 Executive summary

This Information Note brings together data to support informed and evidence-based submissions to the consultation regarding the future of the UK's trade relationship with Thailand.

The information presented summarises the current trade and investment relationship between the UK and Thailand. It outlines economic profiles and trade flows between the UK and Thailand detailing goods, services, imports and exports. It includes analysis about trade and investment restrictions alongside a high-level breakdown of goods tariffs from the UK's Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) schedule.

Feedback submitted will inform the UK's approach to trade with Thailand and it is the aim of this consultation to encourage as wide a range of participants as possible.

A response can be submitted via the Qualtrics survey. The questionnaire closes on 24 January 2027.

2. UK-Thailand trade relationship

2.1 Overview of economic profiles

In 2025, Thailand had a gross domestic product (GDP) of £438 billion.[1] Total trade with the world (imports plus exports) is equal to 145% of GDP for Thailand and 67% of GDP for the UK. [2]

Table 1: Headline economic indicators for the UK and Thailand, 2025

Economic indicator	GDP (£billion)	GDP per capita (£)	Population (millions)	Trade (% of GDP)
Thailand	438	6,110	72	145%
UK	3,043	43,793	69	67%

Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook Database (Oct 2026). UNCTAD, Goods and Services (BPM6): Exports and imports of goods and services, annual (Oct 2026).

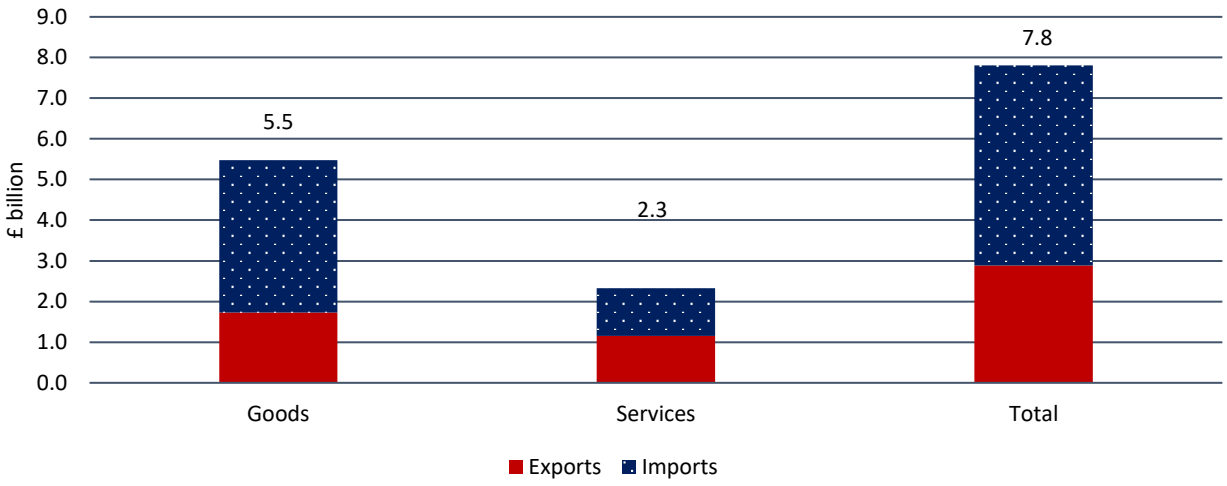
2.2 Trade flows between the UK and Thailand

Thailand is the UK's 36th largest trading partner, accounting for 0.4% of total UK trade in 2025. Total trade in goods and services between the UK and Thailand was £7.8 billion in 2025. As seen in Figure 2, UK exports to Thailand were around £2.9 billion in 2025, accounting for 0.3% of all UK exports. UK imports from Thailand were around £4.9 billion over the same period, accounting for 0.5% of all UK imports. [3]

Figure 2: Trade between the UK and Thailand, 2025, (£ billion)

The following graphic shows UK exports to Thailand totalled £2.9 billion and UK imports from Thailand totalled £4.9 billion in 2025, with goods accounting for most trade.

[1] IMF, World Economic Outlook Database (Oct 2026). Bank of England, Average annual spot exchange rates (Dec 2025)
[2] UNCTAD, Goods and Services (BPM6): Exports and imports of goods and services, annual (Oct 2026)
[3] ONS, UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted data (Oct 2026)

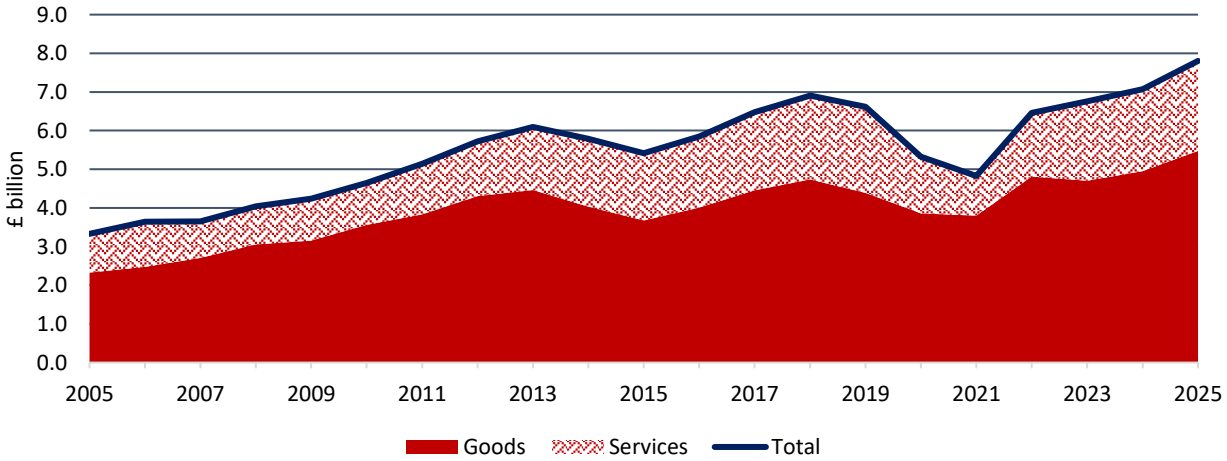


Source: ONS, UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted data (Oct 2026).

Figure 3 shows how UK trade with Thailand has evolved since 2005, broken down by goods and services. UK trade with Thailand has increased by 33% in current prices from 2016 to 2025, from around £5.8 billion to around £7.9 billion.

Figure 3: UK trade with Thailand over time (£ billion)

The following graphic shows UK-Thailand trade declining during 2020 and 2021 before recovering to £7.8 billion in 2025, 33% higher than in 2016.

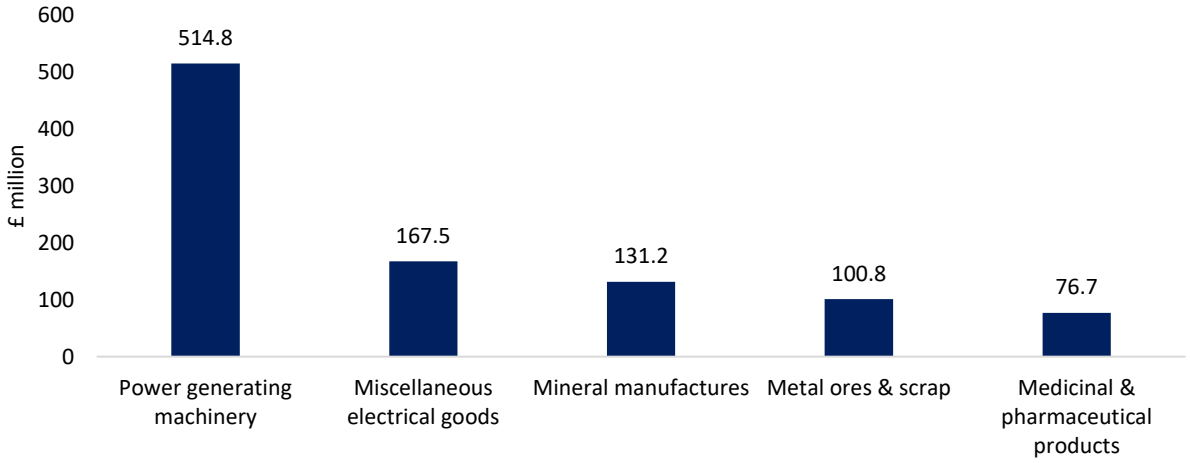


Source: ONS, UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted data (Oct 2026).

The UK's top 3 goods exported to Thailand in 2025 were power generating machinery (£514.8 million), miscellaneous electrical goods (£167.5 million) and mineral manufactures (£131.2 million). These categories together accounted for 47% of all UK goods exports to Thailand. The top 5 UK goods exported to Thailand in 2025 are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Top 5 UK goods exports to Thailand, 2025 (£ million)

The following graphic shows power generating machinery were the largest UK goods export to Thailand in 2025, followed by miscellaneous electrical goods and mineral manufactures.



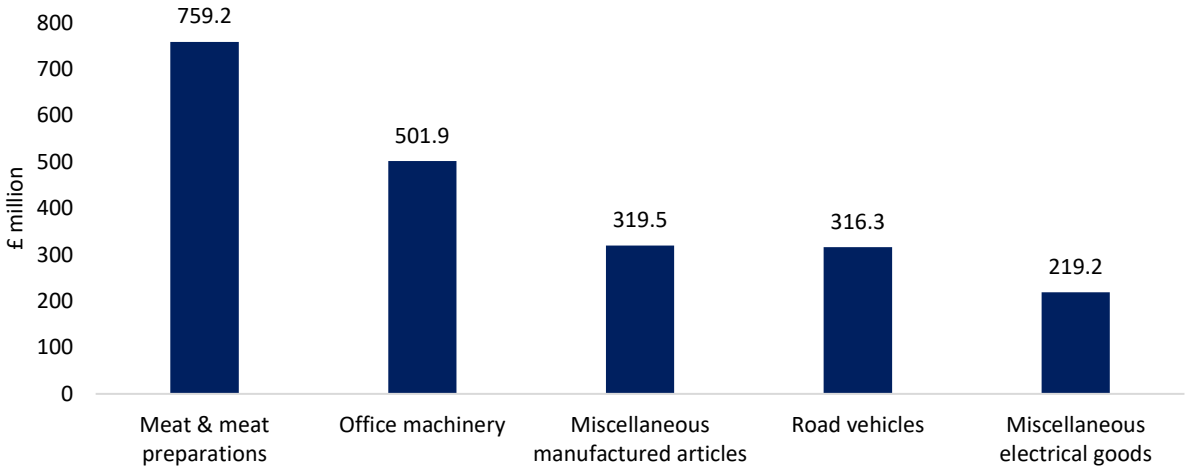
Source: ONS, Trade in goods: country-by-commodity, non-seasonally adjusted (Oct 2026). The commodities are categorised based on SITC codes using level 2 codes.

The UK's top 3 goods imported from Thailand in 2025 were meat and meat preparations (£759.2 million), office machinery (£501.9 million), and miscellaneous manufactured articles (£319.5 million). These categories together accounted for 42% of all UK goods imports from Thailand.[4]

Figure 5: Top 5 UK goods imports from Thailand, 2025 (£ million)

The following graphic showing meat and meat preparations were the largest UK goods import from Thailand in 2025, followed by office machinery and miscellaneous manufactured articles.

[4] ONS, Trade in goods: country-by-commodity, non-seasonally adjusted (Oct 2026). The commodities are categorised based on SITC codes using level 2 codes.



Source: ONS, [Trade in goods: country-by-commodity, non-seasonally adjusted] (Oct 2026). The commodities are categorised based on SITC codes using level 2 codes.

Figure 6: UK regional trade in goods with Thailand, 2025

The following graphic shows the value of UK regional goods trade with Thailand in 2025, with London recording the highest value for both exports and imports.





Figure 6 shows the value of UK goods exports and imports between each UK region and Thailand in 2025. London (£226 million or 13.6%), the South West of England (£170 million or 10.3%) and Scotland (£126 million or 7.6%) accounted for the largest shares of goods exports destined for Thailand. For goods imported from Thailand, London (£782

million or 21.9%), South East of England (£549 million or 15.4%) and the West Midlands (£517 million or 14.5%) accounted for the largest shares.[5]

2.3 Basis of the current trade relationship

2.3.1 Goods market access between the UK and Thailand

In 2025, Thailand was the UK's 30th largest goods trading partner and the 33rd largest goods export market.[6]

The UK and Thailand currently trade under MFN terms. A simple average applied tariff is a numerical average of all tariff rates applied by a partner country. A trade weighted average tariff accounts for the proportion of trade on those tariff lines.

Under Thailand's MFN tariff schedule, 38% of tariff lines are already subject to a zero MFN tariff. The simple average applied MFN tariff rate on Thailand's imports from the UK was 9.9% in 2024. The trade weighted average tariff on Thailand's imports from the UK was 8.3% in 2024. Examples of key UK exports facing high MFN tariffs with Thailand include whiskies (60%), cars (up to 80%), and beauty products (30%).[7]

In 2025, under the current UK Global Tariff (UKGT) schedule, 47% of tariff lines are already subjected to zero MFN tariff. The simple average applied tariff rate of the UKGT was 5.1% across all goods in 2025. UK imports from Thailand had an estimated trade-weighted average tariff of 6.0% in 2025. Examples of key UK imports from Thailand subject to UKGT tariffs include certain cooked or prepared chicken meat (£2,313 or £856 per tonne), diesel vans and light commercial vehicles (10%), and prepared tuna. [8]

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[5] HMRC data source for regional UK trade data: HMRC Regional Trade Statistics – 2025 annual data (Sep 2026), data extracted from the spreadsheet download using the HMRC interactive tables). Totals presented will differ from overall HMRC trade figures due to the exclusion of trade in non-monetary gold and non-response estimates and the exclusion of data not allocated to a UK country or region. Figures from HMRC were reported on a physical movement basis and are not directly comparable with trade data from ONS which are reported on a change of ownership basis. Percentages will not total 100% as data not allocated to a single UK country or English region are not presented.
[6] ONS, UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted data (Oct 2026)
[7] WTO, WTO Tariff and Trade Data (accessed Nov 2026)
[8] BIST calculations using 2025 HMRC annual imports by preference (accessed Oct 2026) and BIST tariff estimates. This does not account for TRQs and may therefore differ from tariffs faced where reduced in-quota MFN rates apply.

2.3.2 Services relationship between UK and Thailand

In 2025, Thailand was the UK's 48th largest services trading partner and 53rd largest services export market. Of all UK exports to Thailand in this period, £1.2 billion (40%) were services, marking an increase of 19.3% compared with 2024.[9]

Trade in services between the UK and Thailand is governed by their respective commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which sets out the baseline level of access and treatment guaranteed to all members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The OECD's Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) measures regulatory barriers to services trade, with higher scores indicating greater restrictiveness. The 2025 STRI of Thailand is above the OECD average and relatively high compared with other countries in the STRI sample. Some of Thailand's most restrictive sectors in comparison with the world average include rail freight transport, accounting, insurance and commercial banking services. In contrast, its comparatively least restrictive sectors include broadcasting, motion pictures, air transport, and sound recording services.[10]

Travel, other business services and financial services were among the top 5 service types exported from the UK to Thailand in 2025 (travel exports to Thailand totalled £470 million in 2025, accounting for 41% of total services exports to Thailand; other business services exports totalled £222 million, accounting for 19%; and financial services totalled £92 million, accounting for 8%).[11] Travel was also among the top 5 service types imported to the UK from Thailand during the same period, amounting to £964 million (82% of total services imports from Thailand). Transportation imports amounted to £45 million (4% of total services imports from Thailand) and financial services amounted to £17 million (1% of total services imports from Thailand).[12]

2.3.3 Temporary entry between the UK and Thailand

According to the World Bank, in 2022 Thailand had some nationality and residency requirements for board of directors in place for several services sectors, such as insurance. These requirements applied to services supplied through mode 3 (commercial presence).[13]

2.3.4 Investment between the UK and Thailand

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[9] ONS, UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted data (Oct 2026)
[10] OECD, Services Trade Restrictiveness Index: Thailand (Feb 2026)
[11] ONS, UK trade in services: service type by partner country, non-seasonally adjusted - (Oct 2026)
[12] ONS, UK trade in services: service type by partner country, non-seasonally adjusted - (Oct 2026)
[13] World Bank, ITIP Services – Thailand (Oct 2026)

The existing UK-Thailand Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) is a non-legally binding memorandum of understanding (MoU) which aims to promote sustainable investment, improve transparency and processes, and explore broader investment cooperation opportunities.[14]

Commitments on commercial presence (mode 3 services) with Thailand are governed by GATS, which sets out the baseline level of access and treatment guaranteed to all WTO members.

In 2024 the stock of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from the UK in Thailand was £3.1 billion, accounting for 0.2% of the UK's total outward FDI stock. This was 59.2% or £1.2 billion higher than at the end of 2023.[15]

The OECD FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index highlights that in 2025.[16] It was also more restrictive than the UK in all 22 sectors. On average in 2025, around 74% of Thailand's restrictions on FDI reflected equity restrictions which are limitations on the level of foreign ownership allowed in a company within a particular sector.

With regards to FDI restrictions that Thailand imposes on investors, all sectors impose some level of restriction. The main restriction imposed is 'foreign equity limits' followed by 'other restrictions', then 'screening and approval' with the least FDI restrictions coming from 'restrictions on key foreign personnel'. The 'real estate' sectors are most restrictive of foreign investment activity and the least restrictive sector for foreign investment activity is 'Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers, semi-trailers and of other transport equipment.'

2.3.5 Government procurement in Thailand

Thailand is not a member of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement, though it has been an observer since 2015. The UK has no existing international trade commitments on government procurement with Thailand.

Thailand has a growing public procurement market. During the period 2019 to 2024, government procurement spending increased by approximately 38%, reaching THB 1,561 billion (£34.6 billion) in 2024, equivalent to over 8% of the country's GDP, up from 6.7% in 2019.[17] Thailand has in place various measures to favour the purchase of local goods,

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[14] DBT, Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Thailand for an Enhanced Trade Partnership (Sep 2024)
[15] ONS, Data related to Foreign direct investment involving UK companies (Jan 2026).
[16] OECD, FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index (Oct 2026)
[17] WTO, Trade Policy Review: Thailand (Oct 2025). GBP figures calculated by DBT using Bank of England annual average spot exchange rate

including construction materials and certain goods. These measures include price preferences and set-aside schemes in favour of SMEs, local content requirements for construction projects and price preference margins for Thai suppliers bidding against foreign suppliers.[18] [19]

2.3.6 Labour commitments in the UK and Thailand

There are currently no bilateral arrangements in place between the UK and Thailand relating to labour standards.

Through their membership of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UK and Thailand have committed to uphold internationally recognised labour rights in its domestic laws, including relating to the elimination of forced and child labour, the elimination of discrimination in employment, and a safe and healthy working environment. The UK and Thailand have both ratified 8 of the 10 ILO Fundamental Conventions.

2.3.7 Environmental commitments in the UK and Thailand

There are currently no legally binding bilateral arrangements in place between the UK and Thailand relating to Environment, but the UK-Thailand Enhanced Trade Partnership does have environment and clean energy content.

The UK and Thailand both participate in the WTO's environment-related plurilaterals on the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) and the Dialogue on Plastics Pollution. The UK and Thailand are both party to key Multilateral Environmental Agreements including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting substances, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Flora and Fauna, and the Basel Convention on hazardous waste.

[19] WTO, Trade Policy Review: Thailand (Oct 2025)

3. Questions for stakeholders

This consultation forms part of the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade's (BIST) work to consider its approach to future trade policy. It asks for views on deepening the UK's trade relationships with Thailand. The survey asks 2 main questions:

1. What issues would you like us to consider regarding deepening the UK's trade relationship with Thailand?

2. Based on your selection (or selections) in the previous question, please provide further detail on why you think the UK Government should consider these issues, regarding deepening the UK's trade relationship with Thailand?

With this in mind, responses to this consultation could highlight:

- Challenges or constraints when trading or investing in Thailand, and if so, what are these challenges and constraints, and how significant is the impact on your business activity?

- How would you expect your business to respond if restrictions were removed on trade or investment with Thailand? For example, might you look to increase trade and investment or attract increased trade and investment from Thailand?

- Are there any areas where you see opportunities from increased liberalisation of trade between the UK and Thailand?

- Are there any areas where you would have concerns about increased liberalisation of trade between the UK and Thailand?

4. Drafting a response to the questions

The Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade is committed to delivering benefits across the UK.

The responses to this consultation will help inform the UK's strategy and positions for engaging with Thailand and so it is important that you set out your priorities in your response.

Prior to submitting your response, we encourage you to talk to a range of experts in your organisation to understand the full picture of current trading priorities.

Where it is relevant, we welcome the inclusion of figures, data and evidence to illustrate the examples you give in your response. More detailed answers will help the UK to best understand your needs. Further, we are keen to ensure consideration is given to those with characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as part of this questionnaire.

Once you have answered several questions to tell us who you represent, this consultation provides the opportunity to provide information in 3 ways:

1. You will be able to answer the questionnaire.
2. You may submit your own evidence directly.
3. You will also have the option to complete both the questionnaire and submit your own evidence.

Please follow the link to see the questions: Consultation on a bilateral Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom and Thailand

The questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete and closes on 24 January 2027.

5. Conclusion

This Information Note has presented data about the UK and Thailand's trade relationship. It does not interpret the data and is available for respondents to the consultation to use this in their analysis if they wish to do so.

Respondents can also refer to experiences and insights from other sources to support their submission. The more detail that can be provided the better as this enables a more informed UK stance in the UK's approach to trade with Thailand. Ideas for what to include in a response have been provided in Section 4 of this document.

The UK Government encourages feedback from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.

A response to the consultation can be submitted via the Qualtrics survey and the questionnaire closes on 24 January 2027.

6. Glossary

ASEAN: Association of South East Asian Nations. An intergovernmental organisation that aims to promote economic and security cooperation among its eleven member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

Bilateral: Agreement between 2 parties.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Investment by an entity in a foreign operation, or establishment of a new operation in another country.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA): A treaty among 2 or more countries to form a free trade area. This means having zero tariffs (or reduced tariffs) and reducing other regulatory restrictions on trade in substantially all goods and/or services.

GATS: The WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): the standard measure of the value added created through the production of goods and services in a country during a certain period.

International Labour Organization (ILO): United Nations agency for promoting labour rights.

Market access: Conditions set by governments to control which goods or services can or cannot enter their domestic market.

Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN): A non-discrimination principle enshrined in many WTO rules that prohibits a WTO member from treating some WTO members more favourably than others. The MFN obligation requires each WTO member, in its trade with all other WTO members, to give the best ("most-favoured") treatment that it accords in trade with any other WTO member. If, for example, a country lowers tariffs on goods from the GCC, it must also do so on similar goods from Argentina. Exceptions to the MFN principle exist under WTO law, such as in the form of Customs Unions, Free Trade Agreements, Generalized System of Preferences and certain trade remedies. FTAs often contain their own MFN commitments between the treaty partners.

Multilateral: Agreement at global or near-global level.

Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA): Binding international agreements for promoting cooperation on environmental issues.

National Treatment: A non-discrimination principle enshrined in many WTO rules that prohibits a WTO member from treating imported goods or foreign services and services suppliers less favourably than domestic goods or services and services suppliers in its domestic market. The national treatment obligation helps ensure imported goods and

services are not unfairly disadvantaged compared with their domestic counterparts. Such obligations may also be included in FTAs between the country parties.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. An intergovernmental organisation which provides a forum for the promotion of policies which improve economic outcomes.

Party (plural Parties): An economy that has entered into a legally binding agreement.

Plurilateral: Agreement between more than 2 member states of the World Trade Organization.

RCEP: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Free Trade Agreement between 10 ASEAN members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ): The application of a higher tariff or tax on certain goods once an agreed quota (amount) of imports is reached.

Tariffs: Refers to customs duties on imports of goods, levied either as a percentage of value or on the basis of a formula (e.g. 10 per cent or £7 per 100 kg).

Trade liberalisation: The removal or reduction of restrictions or barriers to trade.

WTO: World Trade Organization. International organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade
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