



International
Centre for Digital
Trade and Innovation

The roadmap to digitalise UK trade

Making trade cheaper, faster, simpler, secure, sustainable

DELIVERING ON THE GOVERNMENT MISSION
TO DRIVE GROWTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

It is time to raise ambition and make trade easier



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Digitalising trade and moving to a data-driven trading system will make trade cheaper, faster, simpler, secure and sustainable. In the UK, this will deliver £25 billion in economic growth, £224 billion in efficiency savings and generate a 35% efficiency gain for SMEs. It is an excellent opportunity to meet the government’s ambition on growth and productivity.

To make this a reality will require buyers and sellers (cargo owners) to lead and drive the transformation opportunity on offer, and for government to incentivise the change and de-risk the private sector investment to make it happen.

*The roadmap builds on the 2017 ICC Digital Trade Roadmap and aligns to the 2024 ICC Digital Standards Initiative Roadmap with a specific focus on UK trade.

There are many benefits of digitalisation, whether that is data management, the ability to better control and manage cash, improve liquidity, strengthen reporting, reduce costs, or regulatory risk. Trade digitalisation is an enabler to being more resilient and agile in an increasingly uncertain world, as well as a stepping stone to delivering transparent, sustainable global supply chains.

Short to medium term, digitalisation provides an opportunity to replace antiquated trade processes and systems with modern technology- and data-driven solutions. Longer term, digitalisation provides a unique opportunity to connect operational processes and systems and transform operations through better data and information management. This can be achieved by connecting data systems across treasury, compliance, procurement and supply chain functions.

The purpose of this roadmap* is to provide a practical framework to inform businesses on what is changing over the next 3–5 years, and what the direction of travel is, highlight why now is the time to take action, which trade corridors to focus on and what help and support is available to make it happen.

The roadmap is not intended to be perfect. It is intended to be a living document that provides more clarity, and to be reviewed and updated every year.

The roadmap is for all buyers and sellers of goods and related services. It is intended to be relevant to all decision-makers, but particularly important to Finance Directors/Treasurers, Global Supply Chain/Procurement, and Compliance Directors.

It is not important what the starting point is when digitalising trade systems. It is more important to get started, be practical, and keep it simple. The legal landscape is changing, with all major economies now on a path to remove legal barriers to trade digitalisation. Over the next 3–5 years, we need to prepare the ground to capitalise on AI technology, but to do that we must transition away from paper, standardise data, and have the systems in place to aggregate and analyse data at scale.

This should start with identifying key pain points in the supply chain, where data can replace paper-based systems and where data can be connected. It is also about understanding technology solutions available and designing plans to scale the benefits at a pace that meets the needs of the business.

I’d like to give a special thanks to the Trade Digitalisation Taskforce, who have initiated and contributed to delivering the roadmap.

Chris Southworth
Secretary General, ICC United Kingdom

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Glossary

AML	Anti-money laundering
G20	Group of 20
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
GLEIF	Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asia Nations
IMDA	Infocomm Media Development Agency
C4DTI	Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation
KYC	Know your customer
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
SCF	Supply chain finance
DSI	ICC Digital Standards Initiative
SME	Small and medium enterprise
ESG	Environmental, social and governance
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
ETDA	Electronic Trade Documents Act
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
G7	Group of 7



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Digitalising the trade ecosystem

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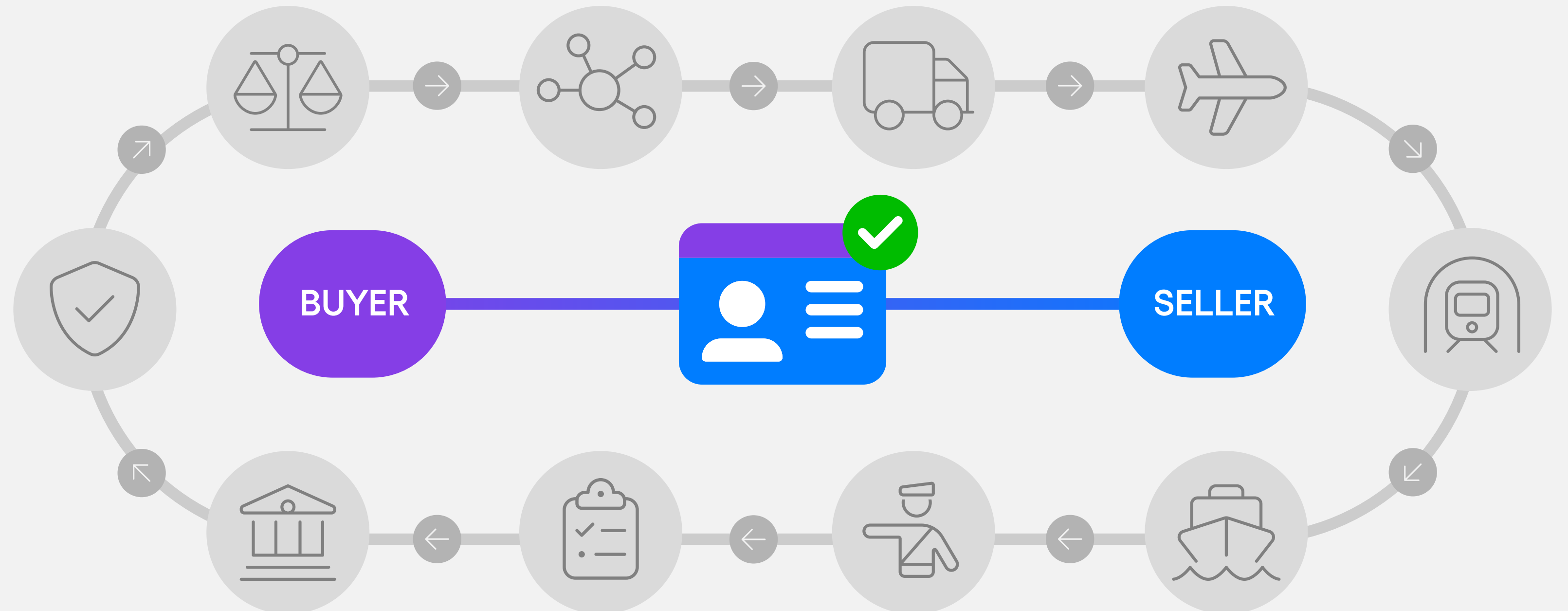
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By trade ecosystem, we mean all actors and processes associated with trade transactions and automating all processes across the whole trade ecosystem — eContracts, eCustoms, ePayments, eSignatures, eTransactions and cross-border digital identities. In time, every process will be digitalised and all data standardised and able to flow between actors, platforms, systems and jurisdictions in a way that is not possible today.



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What has changed?

Trade digitalisation has been a topic of conversation for many years, so what has changed and why are we now calling on government and industry to take action? Despite much investment in digitalising customs and trade facilitation processes, worldwide only 1–2% of trade documents are handled in digital (data) form. Trade platforms and systems remain fragmented and disconnected due to a lack of trade data standardisation. This situation is changing. Companies can digitalise trade today in ways that were not possible only a few months ago. The legal environment has changed, technology solutions are available and more and more case studies are proving the benefits.

The ICC Digital Standards Initiative (DSI)

Launched in 2020, DSI for the first time provided an international focal point to coordinate digitalisation efforts across governments, institutions, standards bodies and industry. Its role is critical with a goal to enable 60–80% of world trade to be digitalised by the end of 2026. ICC’s Key Trade Documents and Data Elements toolkit now enables companies to map all documentary processes. The ICC Reliable Systems Framework provides a globally recognised standard to support legal reforms and digitalised trade.

👉 For more information visit dsi.iccwbo.org

Legal infrastructure

Antiquated laws, dating back to the 1800s, have been a major block to trade information being handled in digital form. UNCITRAL Model Laws on e-contracts, e-payments, e-signatures and e-transactions have created an interoperable legal framework for digitalised trade for the first time. G7, G20, the World Trade Organization, United Nations, ASEAN and Commonwealth are just some of the institutions and trade blocs working with ICC to actively remove legal barriers. The Electronic Trade Documents Act 2023 has changed the game with English law now enabling 80% of bills of lading, 60% of global trade finance and the lion share of shipping, insurance and commodity trade to be digitalised. Today, 80–90% of all trade transactions can be digitalised with governments covering 80% of world trade now committed to remove legal barriers to electronic transactions.

👉 For more information on the status of legal reforms visit digitalizetrade.org

Data Standards infrastructure

A lack of common, interoperable data standards in trade and too many competing data standards have prevented trade information from flowing across platforms, systems and jurisdictions in the way we need for future trade. Of the 35–40 documents in trade, ICC has mapped every data point and every data field and format to prepare the ground for data standards alignment. When complete, this work will, for the first time, enable trade information to flow in standard formats across platforms, systems, supply chains and jurisdictions.

Policy environment

In the past, trade digitalisation has not been well understood by governments with an over focus on customs and not enough focus on enabling the whole trade ecosystem to be digitalised. This is changing with digitalisation now front and centre of trade strategies all over the world.

Industry

There has been significant progress in the shift to digitalised trade with companies all over the world benefiting from electronic transactions. The Digital Container Shipping Association and Bimco are on track to stop using paper bills of lading by 2030. Internationally, the use of e-bills of lading (eBL) has more than doubled since 2023 with adoption rates amongst the largest commodity traders of over 60%.

Training

The ICC Academy now provides two online training courses — MLETR Foundations and Certificate on Digital Trade Strategy.

👉 For more information on training courses visit <https://icc.academy>

Why we need a roadmap

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Digitalising trade requires all stakeholders to take action — buyers, sellers, government, investors, logistics, ports, carriers, financiers, insurers, lawyers, regulators, technology providers... The purpose of this roadmap is to provide a framework for decision makers to inform decisions on what to do and when to take action.

Why

WE NEED A ROADMAP

Aligns diverse stakeholders towards common vision and approach

Improves access to information to better inform decisions

Strengthens collective purpose

Provides clear lines of responsibility

Promotes a results-driven approach



Who

THE TARGET AUDIENCE IS

Industry experts from buyer/sellers/ cargo owners — corporate treasuries, legal, compliance, procurement, customs, strategy, sustainability, technology

Policymakers and regulators



What

WE ARE ASKING YOU TO DO

Promote the roadmap to align efforts, and align strategy and investment plans to roadmap

Identify pain points in the transaction process and remove all paper from trade processes

Build a familiarity with technology solutions

Ensure systems are using standardised, interoperable data formats

Get ready for sustainable supply chains — remove paper, integrate trade/ESG data

Champion digital transformation within industry



How we transition to a data-driven trading system

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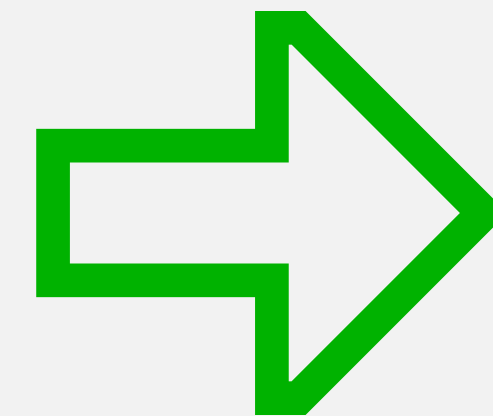
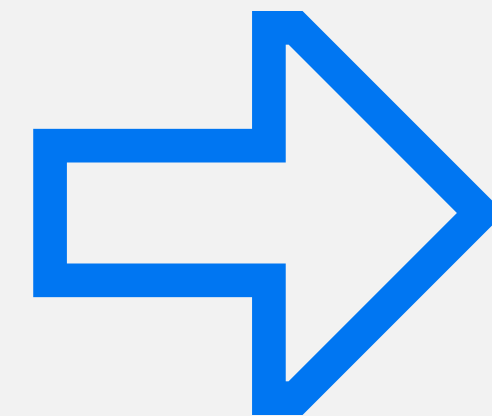
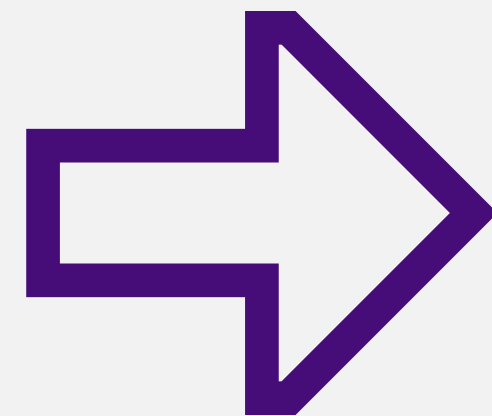
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Engage
supply chain
stakeholders

Identify
practical
pain points in
the financial
supply chain

Replace
paper-based
processes
with data and
technology
solutions



Delivering growth and productivity

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The government is playing a leading role as a global champion to digitalise trade. Trade digitalisation delivers a wide range of government priorities to unlock growth, improve productivity, secure supply chains and foster innovation.

Trade digitalisation provides an opportunity to improve the environment, remove export and market access barriers, reduce border friction and improve access to finance to fund trade.

Trade digitalisation provides a solution to a host of government priorities including:

Legal reforms — leveraging the Electronic Trade Documents Act and Digital Assets Bill to enable cheaper, faster, simpler trade; position the UK as a global legal centre for future trade.

Industrial strategy — six priority sectors are beneficiaries of digitalised trade (Defence, Advanced Manufacturing, Greentech, business/professional/financial services, tech).

Trade strategy — enabling global trade; promoting international cooperation; making trade cheaper, faster, simpler and more sustainable; improving access to SME trade finance.

SME Digital Adoption Task Force — enabling SMEs to adopt digital tech for international trade.

FTA utilisation — enabling 40% of UK FTAs with digital chapters (estimated by OECD to double the value of UK trade).

Increasing emerging market trade — making trade cheaper, faster, simpler, sustainable with Asia (ASEAN, APEC, CPTPP), Africa (supporting AfCFTA), Commonwealth, Middle East (GCC FTA).

Supporting priority programmes — delivering the world’s most effective border, freeport innovation, National Wealth Fund, Net Zero/biodiversity strategies (sustainable global supply chains, Scope III commitments).

Reducing fraud and tax evasion — shutting fraudsters out of the trade system, using smart API technology to connect HMRC with financial institutions.

Aligning to multilateral trade commitments and ambitions — G7, G20, WTO, CPTPP, APEC, ASEAN, Commonwealth.

Supporting the Regulation Innovation Office — removing barriers to growth created by paperwork and bureaucracy.

Meeting the recommendations of the government’s “Task and Finish” Group — better data management, supporting Critical Imports Strategy.

Securonomics — bringing together of legislation, policy, standards and technology.

Office for Digital Identities and Attributes/Companies House review — establishing interoperable digital identity infrastructure, aligning UK to global system.

De-risking private sector investment — catalysing the transition to a data-driven trading system, unlocking \$10 trillion in global trade growth, supporting the International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation / ICC United Kingdom — Corporate and Trade Digitalisation Taskforces.



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United Kingdom

Digitalising trade transactions will boost national economic growth and productivity by delivering:

£25 billion
in trade growth

£224 billion
in efficiency savings

35% SME
efficiency gain

£1 billion
in additional trade
finance

80% reduction
in trade transaction costs

International

There is a multi-trillion economic opportunity for UK exporters, solution providers and investors to improve the way we trade internationally. Digitalising trade transactions will boost global growth:

\$9 trillion
across the G7

\$1 trillion
across the
Commonwealth

\$1 trillion
across the ASEAN

\$500 billion
trapped cash across
global supply chains

**50% trade
finance gap**
improve access to finance
to fund SME trade

Sources: 'Creating a Modern Digital Trade Ecosystem; the economic case to reform UK law and align to the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferrable Records (MLETR)', ICC United Kingdom, 2021. 'Impact assessment of the Electronic Trade Documents Bill', 2022.

Sources: 'G7 | Creating A Modern Digital Trade Ecosystem Cutting The Cost And Complexity of Trade', ICC United Kingdom, 2021. 'Quantitative Analysis of the Move to Paperless Trade', The Commonwealth, 2023. 'Study on the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement' Boston Consulting Group, 2023.

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Since the Electronic Trade Documents Act (ETDA) came into force, we have seen transformational improvements to the way companies are trading. The opportunity now is to scale these benefits to all trading companies.

Trade digitalisation and faster e-transactions benefit companies of all sizes and sectors in a myriad of ways. These include.

For corporate treasuries, finance directors

Better cash control and management

End-to-end audit trail

Greater liquidity and agility

For compliance managers/directors

End to end intelligent reporting systems

Risk reduction opportunities

For supply chain/procurement managers/directors

Cost reduction opportunities

Process efficiencies

Increased profitability

The EDTA has delivered

15%
increase in SME
profitability

40%
reduction in cargo
shipment time

1 hour
transaction time
— down from 2–3
month average

30%
reduction in
operation cost

100%
increase in
trade flow

18%
reduction in
shipping costs

80%
reduction in border
processing times

75%
reduction in freight
forwarding costs

80%
reduction in
transaction costs

67%
Increase in
workforce
productivity

Full list of company benefits

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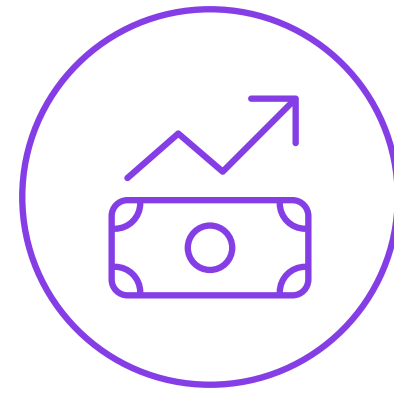
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Finance

- ✔ Improved cash control and management
- ✔ Improved audit and reporting
- ✔ Reduced risk
- ✔ Access to short-term working capital
- ✔ Security of payment
- ✔ Speed of execution
- ✔ Improved liquidity
- ✔ Better access to finance



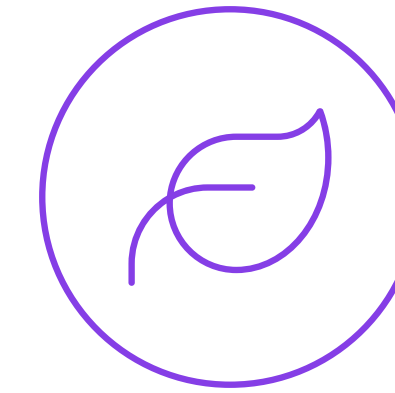
Compliance

- ✔ Reduced fraud, regulatory risk
- ✔ Reduced risk of loss, theft, or forgery associated with paper documents
- ✔ Speedier company authentication and verification times
- ✔ Greater transparency and improved supply chain relationships
- ✔ Reduced cost of meeting regulatory requirements
- ✔ Real-time monitoring and decision-making



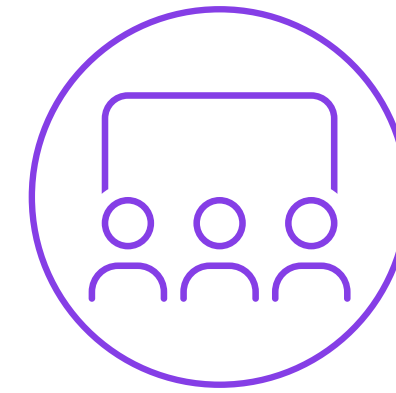
Efficiency

- ✔ Reduced administrative cost
- ✔ Reduced waiting times, border checks and faster crossover the border processes
- ✔ Eliminating courier-related delays and printing processes
- ✔ Reduced delays and exposure to disruption
- ✔ Reduced intermediary costs — insurance, brokerage, demurrage fees
- ✔ Addressing bottlenecks
- ✔ Smarter resource allocation
- ✔ Increased security, enhanced trust and reliability



Sustainability

- ✔ Greater supply chain transparency
- ✔ Improved consumer confidence and supply chain relationships
- ✔ Standardised data sharing and integration opportunities
- ✔ More accurate and cheaper supply chain reporting
- ✔ Reduced ESG risk
- ✔ Enhanced operational resilience, mitigating vulnerabilities to external disruption
- ✔ Less waste and reduced use of paper



Workplace

- ✔ More attractive work environment
- ✔ Modern, technology-driven systems
- ✔ Ability to retain and attract high-calibre talent
- ✔ Improved competitiveness

Finance benefits

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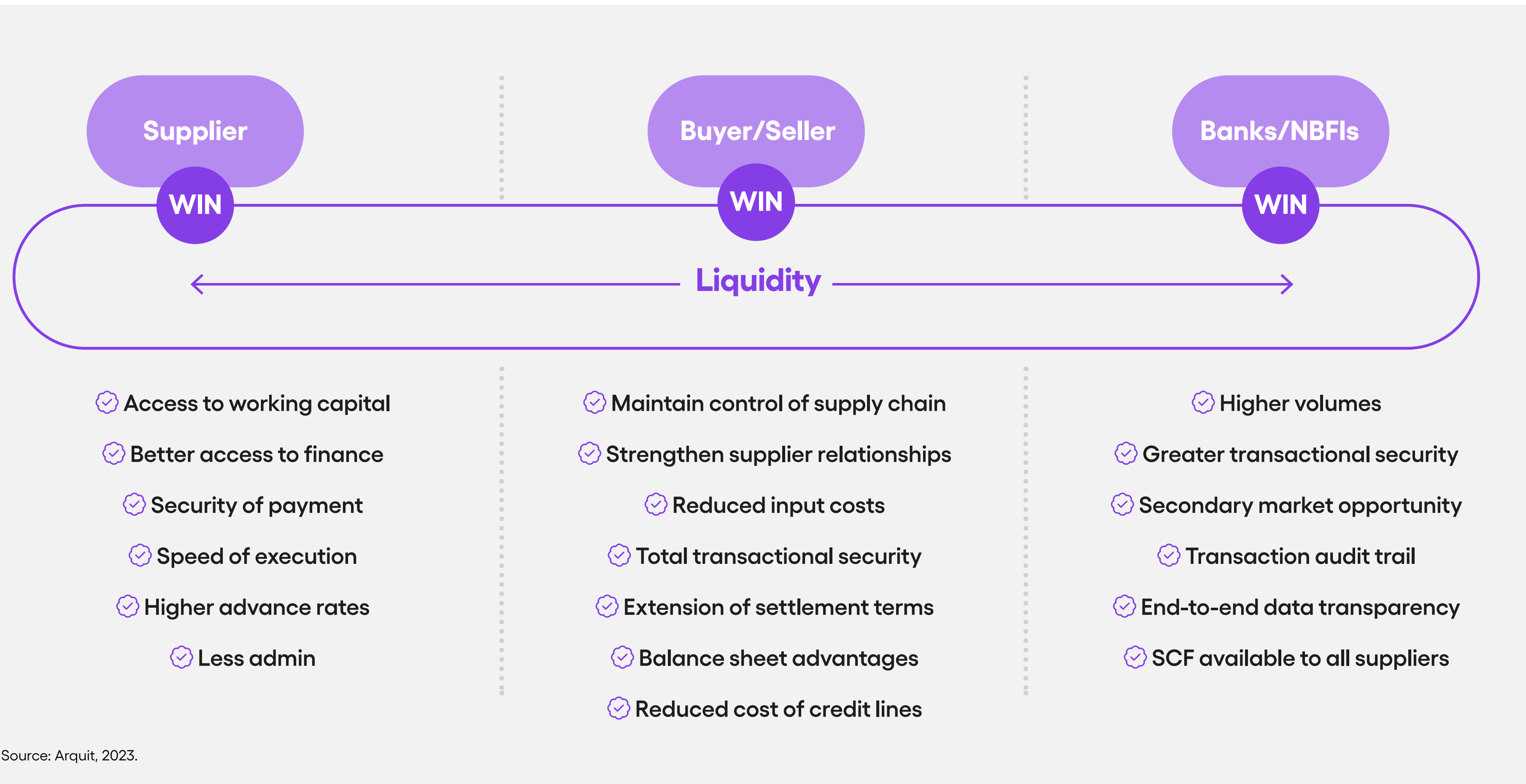
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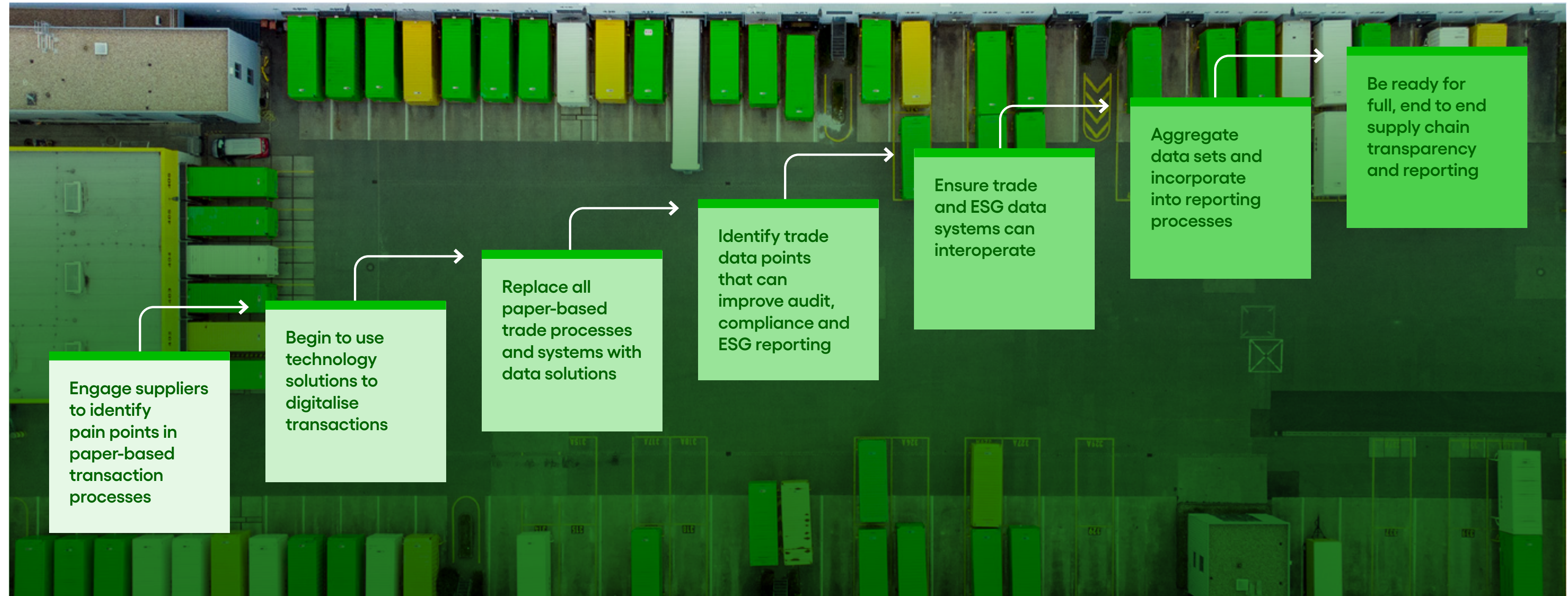
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Digitalising trade will enable companies to get ‘match fit’ for a future world where there will be an expectation to have full visibility and transparency across global supply chains in line with Scope III commitments in the Paris Climate Accord and Global Biodiversity Framework. Current trade systems don’t enable this — they are fragmented, disconnected with many processes still paper-based. Key trade information is inaccessible but can be better utilised for supply chain reporting and

decision making if using interoperable data systems. Such information includes what the goods are, where they are geographically, who owns them, who is paying for them.

Replacing paper-based systems enables companies to better use data to reduce regulatory reporting risk, age cash, reduce costs, improve efficiencies and make better, more informed decisions with an end-to-end data trail.

Digitalising trade enables companies to demonstrate how they are delivering on 12 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and meeting ESG commitments. Data-driven systems improve reporting accuracy and reduce the risk of ‘greenwashing’ accusations.





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Action plan for government and industry

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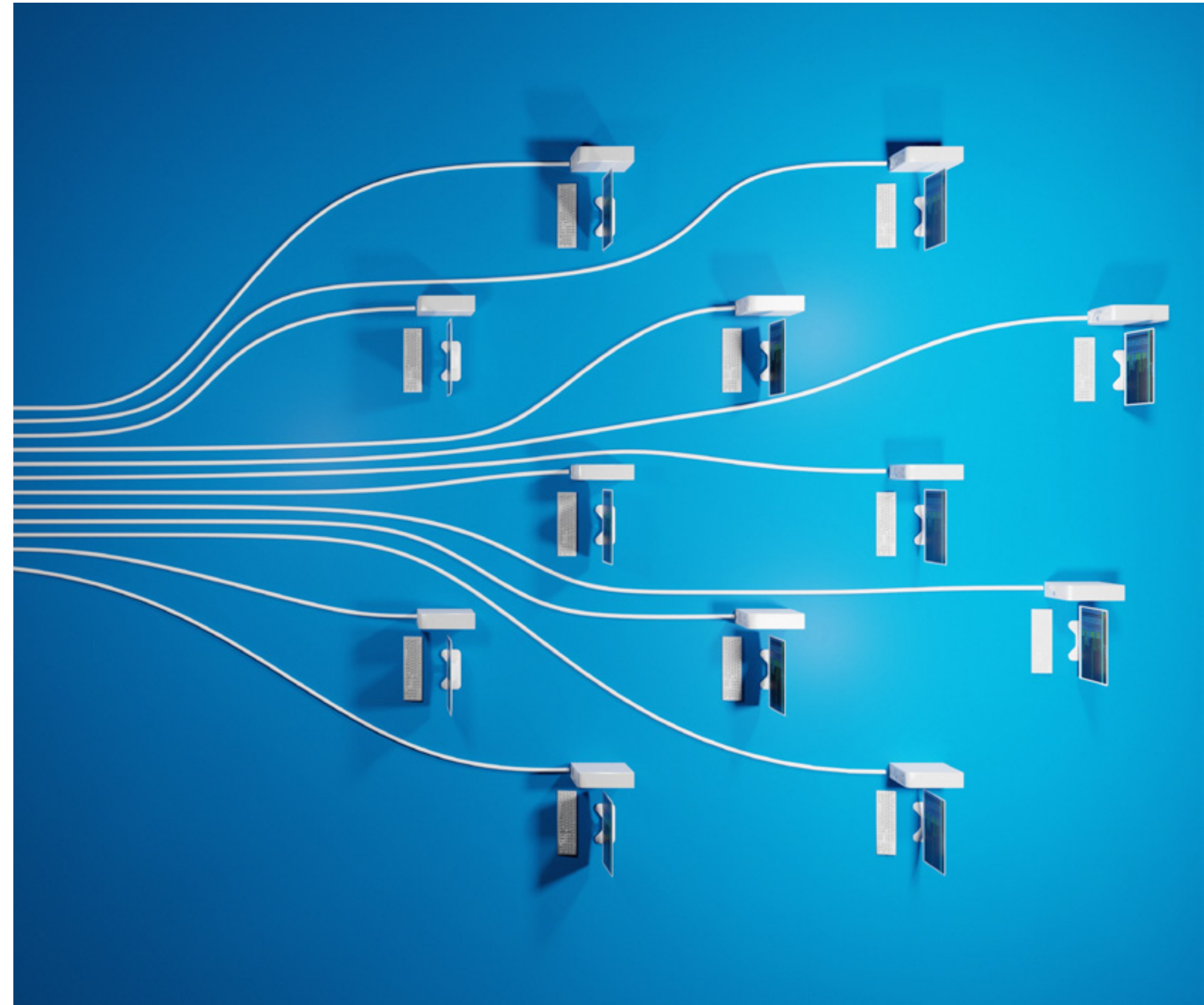
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Digitalisation will not happen unless we all play a role in making it happen. The purpose of this section is to set out practical actions for government and business to ensure UK trade is able to realise the benefits that digitalisation will deliver.

The following action plans are divided into roles and responsibilities under three categories:

- ➔ Incentivise — for Government to do**
- ➔ Catalyse — for ICC United Kingdom/ International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation (iC4DTI) to do**
- ➔ Lead — for buyers and sellers (cargo owners) to do**



Incentivise

Recommendations to government



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Motivate

Messaging and convening

Prioritise digitalisation within the UK trade strategy, promote a clear message about what the government is doing to digitalise the trading environment and rally companies to transition to a data-driven trading system.

Champion alignment and action through G7/20, WTO, UN and regional blocs

Continue to be an advocate for legal alignment and data standards interoperability through multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral networks including UNCTAD, UNESCAP, G7, G20, the World Trade Organization and Commonwealth.

Support The Commonwealth Legal Reform and Digitalisation programme — full legal and data standards interoperability by 2027.

Support the FCDO funded ASEAN Economic Integration Programme; Open Trade Pillar – full legal and data standards interoperability by 2027.

Increase the level of ambition

Set an ambition to digitalise 60–80% of UK retail, food and drink, manufacturing and pharmaceutical trade by the end of the parliamentary term — in line with ICC's ambition to digitalise 60–80% world trade.

Support and build on the work of the ICC United Kingdom Corporate Digitalisation Taskforce to scale up the digitalisation of UK trade including global supply chains.

Empower

Align government research and innovation funding to support the implementation of the Electronic Trade Documents Act

Address the misalignment of government and ensure government research, development and innovation funding is being effectively channelled to the right organisations to deliver cross border trade digitalisation, the implementation of the Electronic Trade Documents Act and FTA trade digitalisation provisions.

Better leverage ODA funding to support digitalisation across the emerging economies

Replicate the success of the ASEAN Economic Integration Programme; Open Trade Pillar in Africa, the Caribbean, Commonwealth and other emerging markets where the UK needs to increase trade.

Educate and upskill the workforce

Develop trade digitalisation education and awareness campaigns, promote best in class training, guidance and case studies through the Department for Business and Trade Academy and FCDO Centres of Excellence programme.

Solve

Remove regulatory barriers to reduce bureaucracy

Support the ICC/C4DTI-Barclays-DBT Trade Digitalisation Taskforce to establish a regulatory sandbox environment for trade finance to empower trade banks to test and scale fully interoperable, digital finance ecosystems including:

- Use of e-transactions and benefits enabled by the ETDA.
- Reducing Know Your Customer bureaucracy to speed up onboarding/processing times from 6 months to 24/48 hours through smarter use of technology and digital infrastructure.
- Leveraging the Tees Valley Combined Authority/DSIT funded Tees test bed centre — full multi-jurisdictional simulation environment across air, sea, customs, supply chain and finance.

Establish an international best practice model for cross border company verification and location (pin the map)

Support the work of the International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation, Companies House, Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF), Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology (CFIT) and GS1 to establish a scalable verification and authentication model for global supply chains.

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Provide cross government leadership

Ensure the benefits of the Electronic Trade Documents Act are fully leveraged to help deliver the government's mission to increase growth and productivity.

Lead by example

Build on, and scale up, the Ecosystem of Trust, Border Demonstrator, ETDA pilot approach to deliver the world's most effective border by the end of the parliamentary term.

Mandate the government procurement office to set a deadline for all government procurement to implement the Electronic Trade Documents Act (e-transactions) and all cross-border procurement to utilise Legal Entity Identifiers to help drive digital transformation across the economy.

Ring fence a proportion of UK Export Finance funds to promote e-transactions to help incentivise ETDA adoption.

Empower

Establish global precedents for fully interoperable trade corridors — UK-EU, Maritime Silk Route

Establish a 'sandbox' environment where there is political, legal, regulatory alignment i.e. France, Germany, India, Singapore, UAE, agree common data fields/formats across all trade ecosystems and deliver a fully joined up, interoperable e-customs, e-finance, e-payments, e-signatures and e-transactions trade environment.

Ensure all trade corridors are aligned and promoting trade digitalisation in line with international best practice i.e. the UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement.

Set a deadline to mandate the use of e-invoices

Ensure the UK is aligned to the EU in establishing the right digital infrastructure to drive behaviours and incentives to digitalise trade.

Solve

Reduce tax evasion and prevent fraud

Promote and support a more collaborative, problem-solving relationship between industry, government, Financial Conduct Authority and related authorities to prevent and reduce fraud in trade.

Introduce API connectivity between appropriate Law Enforcement Agency, Government Department e.g. HM Revenue and Customs and financial institutions to reduce the £9 billion VAT tax gap and better identify and remove fraudsters from the system.

Improve trade and trade finance coordination

Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury to appoint a Minister responsible for trade finance to remove regulatory barriers to growth and productivity, improve policy coherence and support joined up e-transaction, e-finance, e-payment solutions.

Catalyse

For ICC United Kingdom/International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation to do



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Educate

Coordinate #SayNoToPaper campaign
Raise awareness of opportunities of ETDA.

Better inform companies on the direction of travel

Develop and maintain the UK Roadmap to Digitalise UK Trade — review, update annually.

Promote, curate, publish case studies on regular basis

Publish and/or promote 10–20 practical case studies per annum on the ic4DTI website.

Develop and publish practical B2B guidance on how to digitalise trade

Help companies make practical steps towards digitalised trade.

Share international best practice

Provide seminars and event opportunities.

Upskill public/private sector workforces

Promote ICC Certificate on Digital Trade Strategy.

Facilitate

Provide a public, private partnership mechanism to deliver digitalisation at pace and scale

International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation to provide a focal point to align efforts.

Prioritise engagement with buyers/sellers

Scale up action through the ICC Corporate Digitalisation Taskforce.

Support the government in developing modern, digitalised trade corridors — ‘superhighways’

Promote and help make the case for fully interoperable trade corridors including publishing case studies and best practice (econtracts, ecustoms, epayments, esignatures, etransactions).

Promote innovative data solutions

Work with regulators, government and industry to utilise the Teesside Digital Trade Test Centre as a sandbox facility.

Solve

Develop a scalable, trusted, low-cost interoperability framework

Work with Teesside University and IMDA and industry partners to build on lessons learnt and enable SMEs to benefit.

Make the case for interoperable cross border digital identities

Work with Companies House, GLEIF, GS1, Office for Digital Identities and Attributes, Financial Conduct Authority, City of London Corporation, Ordnance Survey and Government to establish a scalable, cross border identify framework.

Reduce Know Your Customer process times

Work with Government, regulators and industry to develop practical solutions through the Trade Digitalisation Taskforce

Develop a scalable model for legal reform

Work with ASEAN and the Commonwealth to implement legal and standards infrastructure at pace and scale.

Lead

For buyers and sellers to do



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Empower

Become a champion

Participate and promote best practice through the ICC United Kingdom-Department for Business and Trade-Association of Corporate Treasurers 'Corporate Digitalisation Taskforce'.

Work with others to drive change through the system

Say no to paper in trade and leverage the power of business organisations and sector associations to set out what needs to change to unlock growth and increase productivity.

Help rally others to signal change to the market

Build on the FIT Alliance approach and set/publish public targets and ambitions for digitalising trade processes and deadlines when changes will happen.

Support the FIT Alliance to remove all paper bills of lading by 2030

Work with carriers and solution providers to remove paper bills of lading from trade.

Engage

Nominate a corporate finance/treasury representative

To coordinate and lead digital transformation and data connectivity across internal trade operations.

Engage with suppliers

Identify paper-heavy processes that can be replaced by electronic alternatives.

Develop end-to-end solutions

Work with banks, carriers and solution providers to digitalise finance and physical shipment processes.

Simplify and transform processes

Leverage the ETDA, Corporate Digitalisation Taskforce, research institutions and innovation facilities i.e. Tees Test Centre to remove unnecessary processes, friction and red tape.

Seek support

Leverage ic4DTI expertise to build the internal business case for digitalising trade systems, incorporate trade digitalisation into company strategy.

Prepare

Review trade systems to identify data connectivity and integration opportunities

Prioritise connecting data systems between treasury/finance, compliance/reporting, procurement/supply chain management to improve transparency and reduce risk.

Ensure systems solutions are using ICC approved international common data standards

Enable data to flow across systems and jurisdictions.

Align investment and systems upgrades to roadmap

Align investment and systems upgrades to the ICC Digital Standards Initiative five-year plan and this UK roadmap.

Improve the work environment

Digitalise trade operations to help retain and attract talent — replace administrative roles with high-quality technology-led jobs. Invest in educating and training the workforce for future trade.



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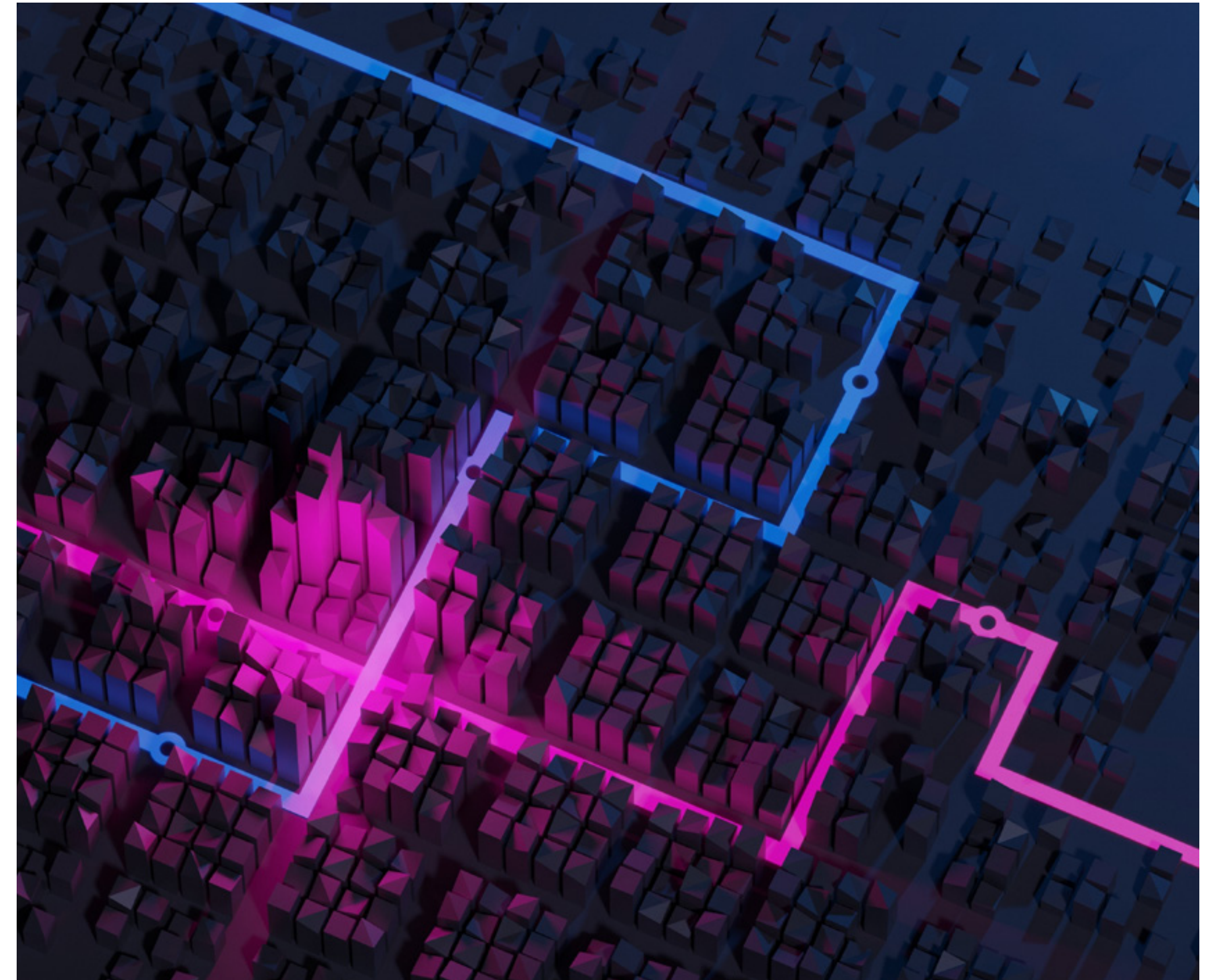
The purpose of this section is to highlight which trade corridors companies can undertake e-transactions under public law.

Transactions on commercial law can take place in all corridors through existing solutions providers.

The slides show where UK companies can e-transact under the Electronic Trade Documents Act and/or Free Trade Agreements. Where both the UK and corresponding government accept e-transactions under public law. Information on the value of UK exports to these countries is also provided.

Note the information provided is intended to demonstrate the scale and pace of change to legal infrastructure over the next three years.

🔗 [For accurate, up to date legal information check the ICC/UNESCAP MLETR Tracker](#)



2024 countries with no legal barriers

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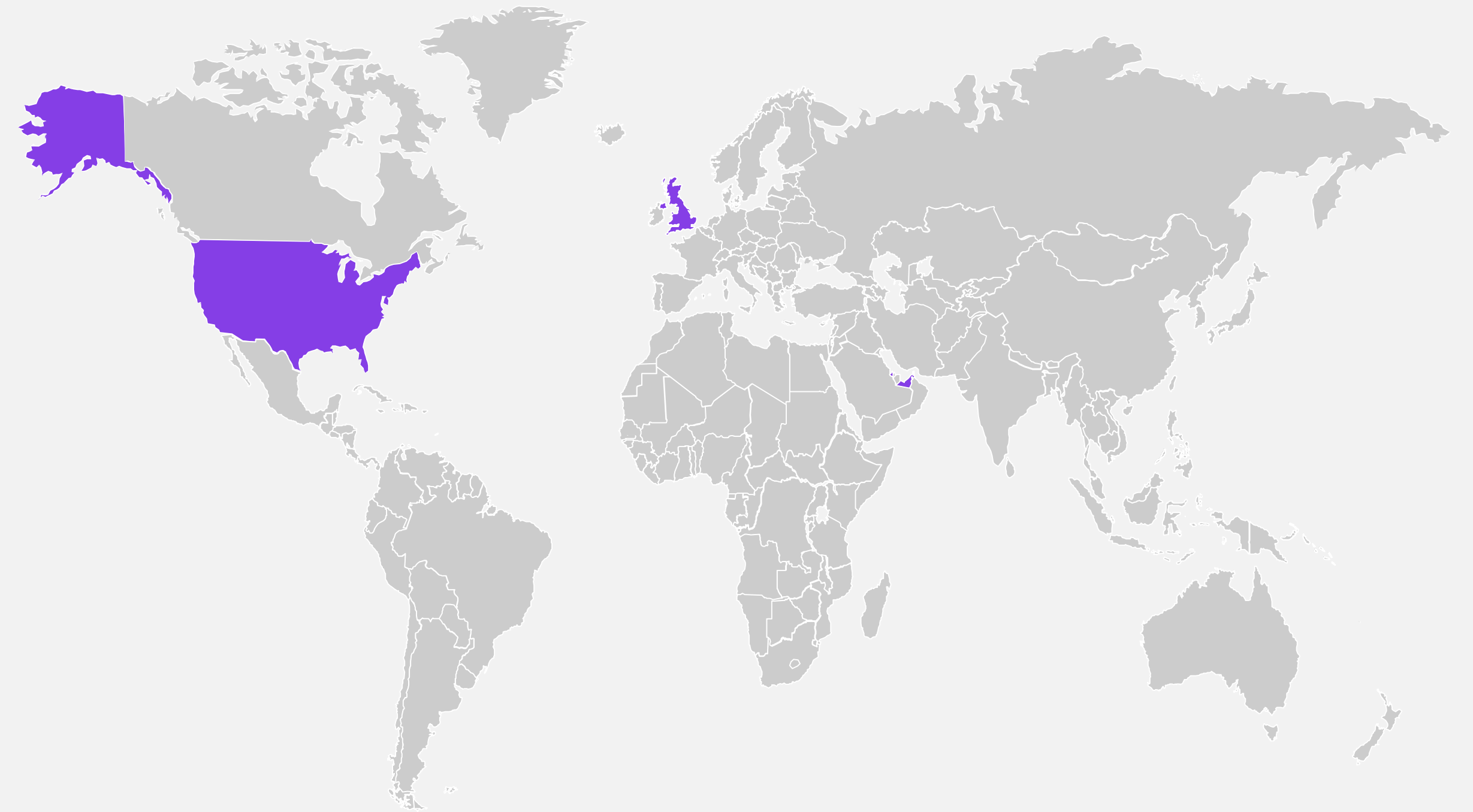
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Export category	Value to UK economy
Total exports	£75,469m
Commodities	£538.27m
Food/drink	£3,996m
Manufacturing	£41,700.5m
Pharmaceuticals	£9,221.3m
Retail	£9,909.2m



Source: Office for National Statistics, Trade in goods: country by commodity: time-series.

Note: Belize, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay are also aligned to MLETR.

2025 countries with no legal barriers

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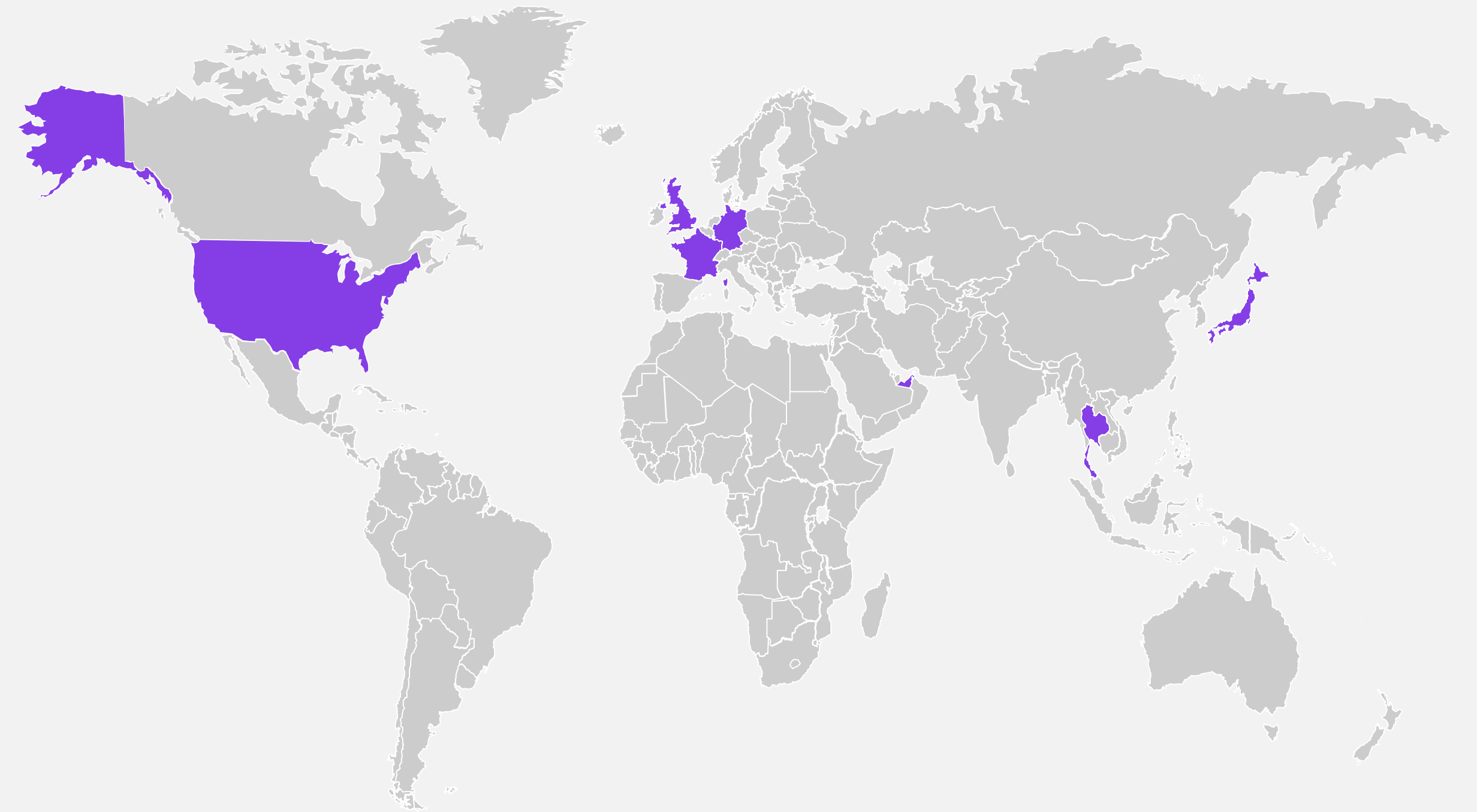
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Export category	Additional value to UK economy
Total trade	£66,426m
Commodities	£1,060.8m
Food/drink	£4,933.7m
Manufacturing	£39,482.9m
Pharmaceuticals	£3,945.2m
Retail	£7,779.9m



Source: Office for National Statistics, Trade in goods: country by commodity: time-series.

Note: Countries aligning national laws to MLETR in 2024.

2026 countries with no legal barriers

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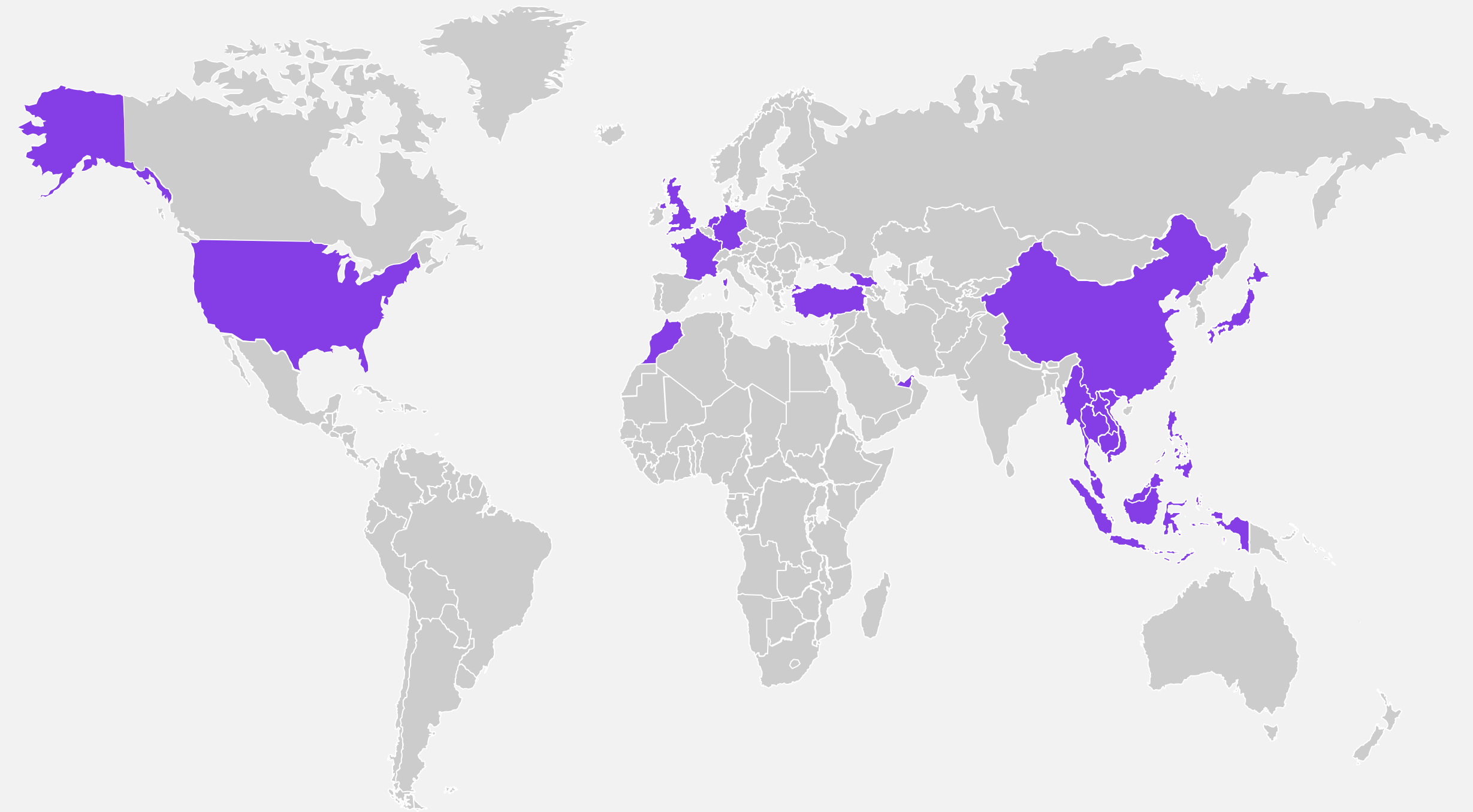
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Export category	Additional value to UK economy
Total trade	£71,944m
Commodities	£2,338.9m
Food/drink	£4,524.9m
Manufacturing	£32,539.4m
Pharmaceuticals	£3,150.8m
Retail	£5,771m



Source: Office for National Statistics, Trade in goods: country by commodity: time-series.

Note: Countries aligning national laws to MLETR in 2025. United States: Delaware law and the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) are aligned to MLETR. For the latest update on which States are aligned to the UCC, see the ICC/UNESCAP MLETR Tracker.

2027 countries with no legal barriers

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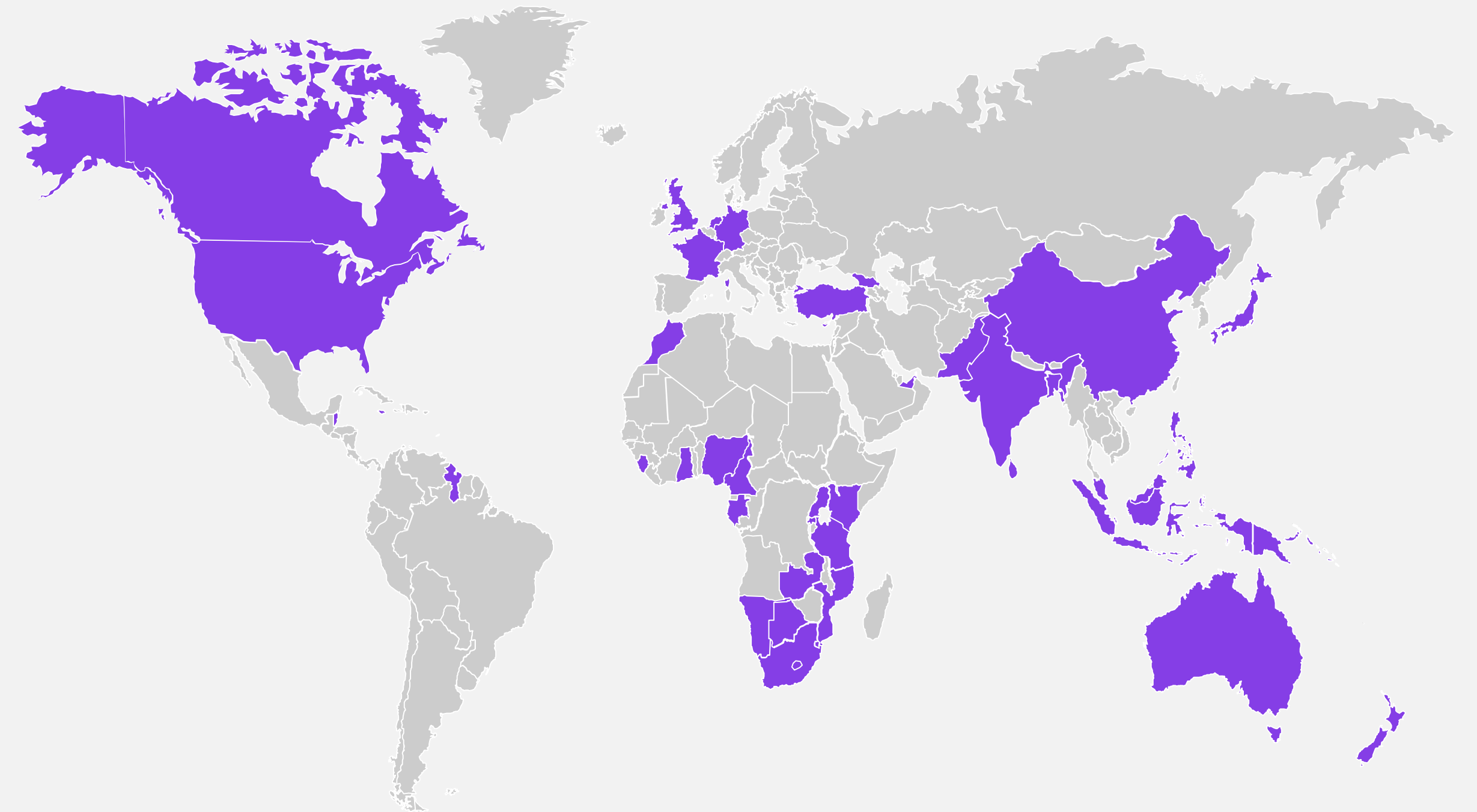
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Export category	Value to UK economy
Total trade	£35,278m
Commodities	£2,261.8m
Food/drink	£3,150.4m
Manufacturing	£20,346m
Pharmaceuticals	£1,374.7m
Retail	£3,039m



Source: Office for National Statistics, Trade in goods: country by commodity: time-series.

Note: Countries aligning national laws to MLETR in 2026.

WTO ecommerce agreement

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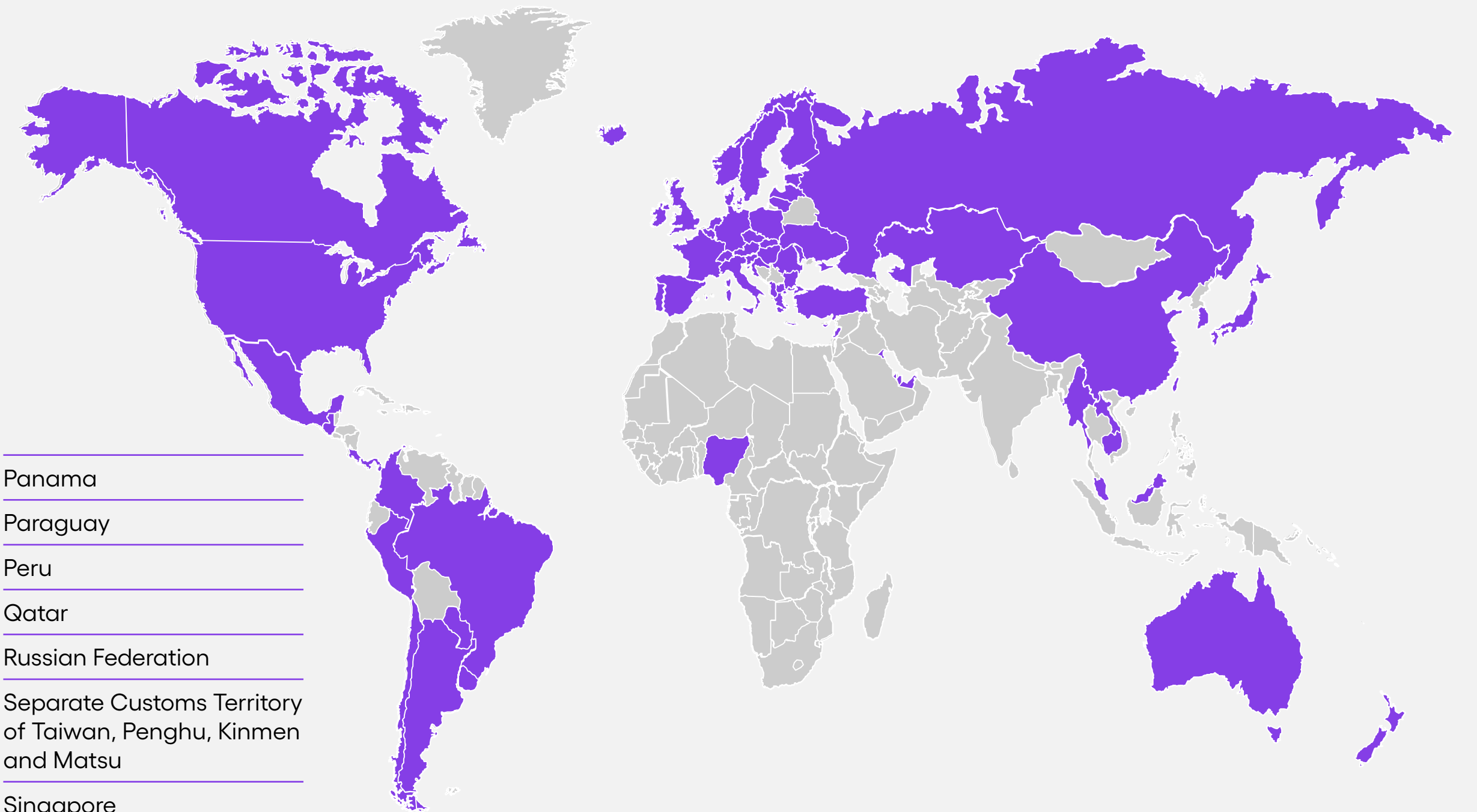
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Over 80 countries are signatories to the 2024 WTO Ecommerce Agreement, representing 80% of world trade. The agreement commits all signatories to remove legal barriers to enable e-transactions and includes a non-discriminatory clause providing companies with greater legal certainty when e-transacting.



Albania	Israel	Panama
Argentina	Japan	Paraguay
Australia	Kazakhstan	Peru
Bahrain	Korea, Republic of	Qatar
Brazil	Kuwait	Russian Federation
Brunei Darussalam	Lao PDR	Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu
Cambodia	Liechtenstein	Singapore
Canada	Malaysia	Switzerland
Chile	Mexico	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Colombia	Moldova, Republic of	Turkey
Costa Rica	Montenegro	Ukraine
European Union	Myanmar	United States
Guatemala	New Zealand	Uruguay
Hong Kong, China	Nigeria	
Iceland	Norway	

Value of UK trade with signatories of WTO ecommerce agreement

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No.	Country	Exports from UK (£m)	Imports to UK (£m)	Total Trade Value (£m)
1	Albania	£9.76	£8.95	£18.71
2	Argentina	£49.22	£98.05	£147.27
3	Australia	£1,750.22	£1,124.94	£2,875.16
4	Bahrain	£219.8	£12.29	£232.09
5	Brazil	£281.29	£681.4	£962.69
6	Brunei Darussalam	£45.88	£0.03	£45.91
7	Cambodia	£15.56	£555.71	£571.27
8	Canada	£820.74	£400.37	£1,221.11
9	Chile	£106.37	£161.14	£267.51
10	Colombia	£121.5	£11.52	£133.02
11	Costa Rica	£25.33	£9.84	£35.17
12	European Union	£35,403.82	£64,947.58	£100,351.4
13	Guatemala	£7.44	£16.46	£23.9
14	Hong Kong, China	£2,821.62	£2,269.64	£5,091.26
15	Iceland	£112.07	£8.36	£120.43
16	Israel	£270.65	£441.27	£711.92
17	Japan	£947.56	£663.61	£1,611.17
18	Kazakhstan	£62.81	£0.52	£63.33
19	Korea, Republic of	£1,072.92	£476.8	£1,549.72
20	Kuwait	£142.58	£3.44	£146.02
21	Lao PDR	£1.89	£2.63	£4.52
22	Liechtenstein	£5.28	£4.46	£9.74

No.	Country	Exports from UK (£m)	Imports to UK (£m)	Total Trade Value (£m)
23	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	£9.06	£91.35	£100.41
24	Malaysia	£275.38	£724.37	£999.75
25	Mexico	£331.75	£178.49	£510.24
26	Moldova, Republic of	£6.54	£25.33	£31.87
27	Montenegro	£5.3	£0.01	£5.31
28	Myanmar	£3.29	£229.83	£233.12
29	New Zealand	£261.68	£333.65	£595.33
30	Nigeria	£115.96	£11.35	£127.31
31	Norway	£530.01	£259.52	£789.53
32	Panama	£89.88	£10.44	£100.32
33	Paraguay	£15.09	£0.5	£15.59
34	Peru	£47.79	£7.21	£55
35	Qatar	£1,486.05	£52.62	£1,538.67
36	Russian Federation	£270.76	£7.32	£278.08
37	Singapore	£975.83	£356.15	£1,331.98
38	Switzerland	£2,857.76	£3,691.36	£6,549.12
39	Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu	£607.33	£713.92	£1,321.25
40	Turkey	£652.83	£2,954.62	£3,607.45
41	Ukraine	£106.26	£76.09	£182.35
42	United States	£13,549.98	£7,238.63	£20,788.61
43	Uruguay	£45.78	£12.2	£57.98



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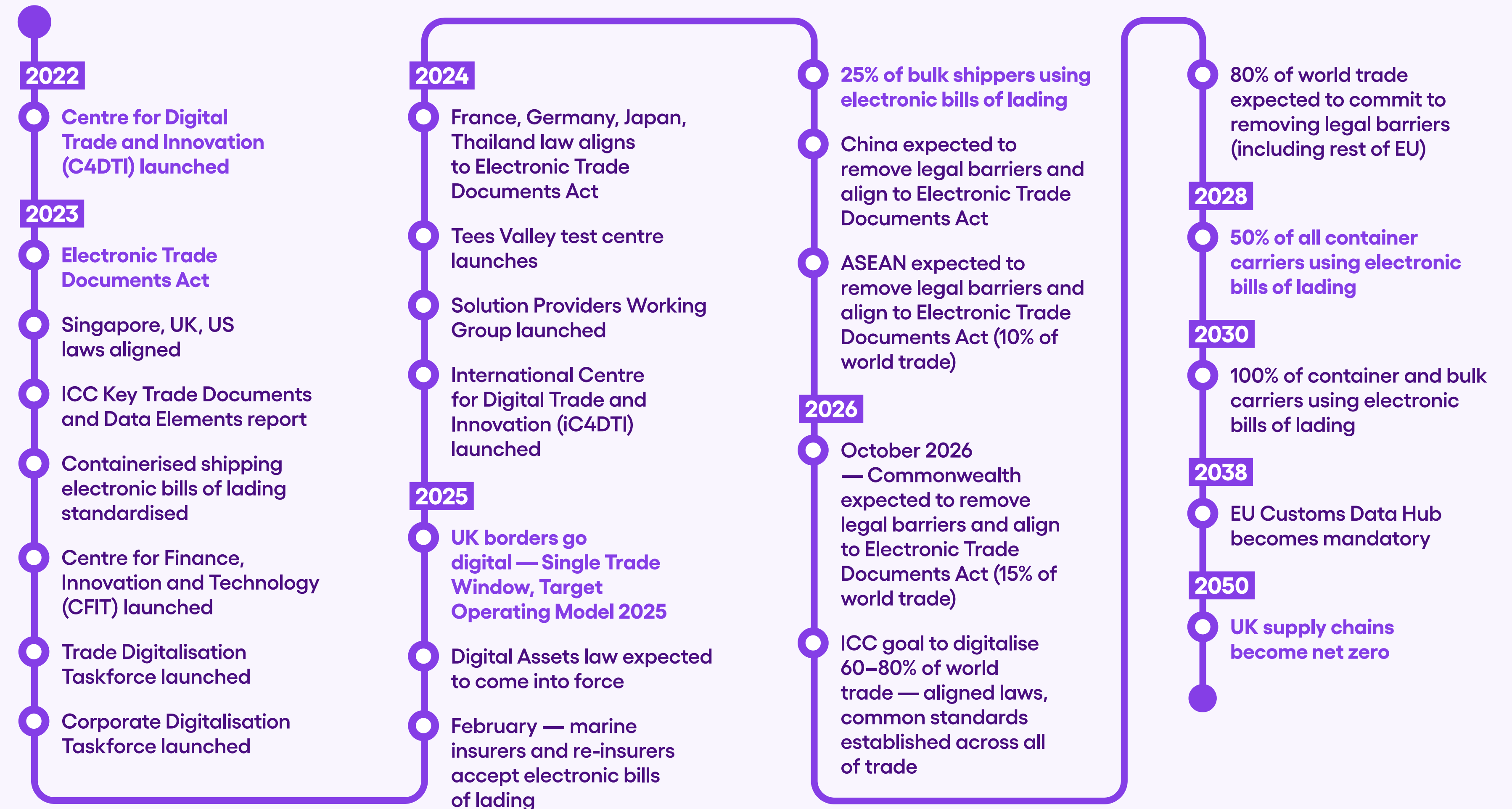
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The following information can be hard to find so this is intended to make it easier to understand what is happening and when to make it easier to know what decisions should be made and when.





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Is digitalised trade different from traditional trade?

Yes. Digitalised trade enables companies to trade in a cheaper, faster and simpler way. It removes much of the bureaucracy and friction associated with trade, caused by unnecessary paperwork, and enables companies to move to safer, data-driven systems and that provide more transparency and better, more accurate management information.

Is the global system ready to trade digitally?

The whole trading system is moving towards being digitalised. Most of the large economies and many of the regional trade blocs are working on removing barriers and putting in place a common, legal and data standards infrastructure in place for digitalised trade. Over the next three years, 60–80% of world trade will be enabled to digitalise trade.

Is English law the only law that accepts electronic transactions?

No. You can keep up to date in the latest legal changes worldwide on the ICC/UNESCAP MLETR Tracker at digitalizetrade.org/mletr

Can I transact electronically if another country does not have a law that recognises electronic transactions?

Yes. To date, there is no evidence of another country not accepting electronic transactions. Electronic transactions have been undertaken with a range of countries who do not yet have legislation in place including Australia, China, Chile and Mexico.

Will this benefit small companies (SMEs)?

Yes. Small companies are disproportionately impacted by the friction and bureaucracy associated by paper in trade so this group is the main beneficiary of digitalisation which is predicted to deliver a 35% efficiency gain for SMEs.

Do I need special software, are there large upfront costs or a need to invest in a new IT systems?

No. Using the listed providers in this guide does not require a change in IT systems and there is no upfront cost. Costs are covered within the costs of the transaction. Our advice, at this point, is to get familiar with technology solutions available and the benefits this brings. This may, at a later date, lead to IT investment.

Is trade digitalisation dependent upon use of blockchain technology?

No. Blockchain is an important type of technology used in trade but not the only technology available. Some solutions use blockchain, others don't.

Will an electronic transaction be undertaken in a secure environment?

Yes. Digitalised trade reduces the risk of fraud, delay and loss of paper in the system and is no more open to cyber threats than any other activity in the digital environment.

Will this reduce friction on EU trade?

Yes. Digitalisation will reduce friction on all trade. The EU is also committed to remove legal barriers to trade digitalisation through the WTO Ecommerce Agreement 2024.

Is digital trade linked to AEO status?

Yes. Trading digitally will, in time, enable all systems to connect and information to flow in standard formats across government and the private sector. Transactional data will connect with AEO systems, track and trace solutions, single trade windows and customs agencies to provide a more secure and effective trading system with efficiency benefits to government and business.

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Will digital trade align and flex with new EU customs and import requirement such as Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and requirements to provide sustainability data on supply chains?

Once transactional documents are digitalised, all trade data will be able to integrate with sustainability data giving companies more transparent, accurate management information and the ability to reduce ESG risk.

Do UK companies need to be registered as preferred exporters with HMRC before they can trade digitally?

Companies need to be registered with HMRC if requested to do so by HMRC. This is separate from digitalising trade transactions which are commercial B2B processes.

Will tax authorities be happy to accept just digital corroboration or need paper back up?

Tax requirements are unchanged by digitalised trade. Companies will be expected to follow tax rules as requested by tax authorities.

Are all banks supporting digitisation of trade?

UK-based trade banks support this initiative.

How long does it take to implement?

Electronic bills of lading, bills of exchange, promissory notes, warehouse receipts and other documents of title enabled by the Electronic Trade Documents Act can be implemented with immediate effect.

What do I need to do to get started?

In the short term, we recommend keeping it simple and becoming familiar with existing technologies that support digitalised trade transactions and using solutions providers with a proven track record in handling electronic bills of lading, bills of exchange, promissory notes etc. A list of these can be accessed in the Solution Providers Directory.

We also recommend engaging with suppliers to identify the most significant pain points in the trade transaction process. For instance, bills of lading and trade finance and starting with digitalising these processes.

Longer term, we recommend companies engage with ERP providers and systems integrators to ensure all trade data is fully interoperable, portable and usable across internal IT systems.



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ICC United Kingdom is the representative office of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in the UK. Our role is to ensure that UK trade policies and systems are aligned to international best practice, UK based companies have a seat at the table to shape global rules and work with government and industry to develop practical solutions to improving the trading environment. ICC United Kingdom co-Chair/host three forums to help companies scale initiatives; Trade Digitalisation Taskforce, Corporate Digitalisation Taskforce, Solution Providers Working Group.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the largest world business organisation, representing 45 million companies of all sizes and sectors, employing 1 billion people across 170 countries. We are specialists in trade, the business focal point to the UNFCCC on climate negotiations, a G20 Network Partner, strategic partner to the World Trade Organization and the international focal point for coordinating the digitalisation of world trade through the ICC Digital Standards Initiative. ICC is an advocate for open, cross border trade, a global rule maker and standard setter with \$25 trillion of global trade governed under ICC rules and play a leading role in helping States and companies settle international disputes through the ICC International Court of Arbitration.

iccwbo.uk | info@iccwbo.uk



The International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation (iC4DTI) is the public/private sector mechanism to align efforts and coordinate action. It is an impartial, community interest company for the public good with a mission to accelerate the digitalisation of world trade. iC4DTI is an international centre of excellence, born from experience in removing policy and legal barriers, establishing interoperable systems and digitalising borders, trade corridors and global supply chains. Its purpose is to provide the implementation capability to deliver at pace and scale and ensure all companies and economies benefit, especially MSMEs and emerging economies.

The team at iC4DTI has played a leading role on the ICC Digital Standards Initiative Legal Reform Advisory Board, The Commonwealth Legal Reform and Digitalisation programme, UK/Singapore Digital Economy Agreement, helped secure the G7 and Commonwealth ministerial commitments to remove legal barriers to digitalise 60–80% of world trade and instigated the Electronic Trade Documents Act, enabling 60% of global trade finance, 80% of bills of lading and the marine, insurance and shipping industries to digitalise trade.

ic4dti.org

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We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of the roadmap.

A special thank you to the members of the Trade Digitalisation Taskforce.

Trade Digitalisation Taskforce

The Trade Digitalisation Taskforce was established in 2023 as a multistakeholder forum to enable trade growth and productivity through smarter regulatory frameworks, fraud prevention, digitalisation and streamlining compliance processes.

The Taskforce is co-chaired by ICC United Kingdom, Barclays and the Department for Business and Trade. Members include international institutions, the Department for Business and Trade, His Majesty's Treasury, business organisations and trade experts. ICC United Kingdom acts as the secretariat for the taskforce.

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