

A Customs Declaration Form Witnesses the Development Story of “1039”

20 Years of Yiwu Development Experience” • Imprints of Time

A customs declaration form dated “November 1, 2014”, bears the words “ People ’ s Republic of China Customs Export Goods Declaration Form” and a barcode at the top. Most notably, the ‘Customs Supervision Mode’ field is clearly marked with the code “1039.” It is better known by another name — “Market Procurement Trade”.



This was the “first customs declaration form in China under the Market Procurement Trade Mode”. It was not only a customs clearance document, but also a vivid footnote to the “Yiwu Development Experience.” At that time, it recorded the trade information of one container. More than 40 kinds of products from different suppliers, after enjoying the facilitation measures brought by the new trade mode, were shipped to overseas markets thousands

of miles away. Looking back more than ten years later, what it records is an institutional innovation that changed the export model of China's small and micro foreign trade enterprises, initiating a trade facilitation reform that transformed "single-product customs declaration" into "multi-variety consolidated export."

Why was this business first launched in Yiwu? The answer lies in Yiwu's unique practical needs.

At the beginning of the 21st century, after China joined the WTO, Yiwu's small commodities industry became increasingly diversified, and its foreign trade volume continued to rise. "At that time, my colleagues and I were fighting against piles of customs declaration forms every day," recalled "Chen Huaxiao", head of "Yiwu Hongcheng Customs Brokerage Co., Ltd.", who has been in the industry for 20 years. Problems such as slow customs clearance, cumbersome inspection procedures, and difficulties in foreign exchange settlement had long troubled small and micro enterprises and discouraged many merchants who wanted to engage in foreign

trade. In 2005, Customs attempted to address these issues through the “Tourist Shopping” (Code 0139) model. Although it achieved certain results, bottlenecks remained, and the related regulatory challenges were not fundamentally resolved.



Photo by Li Chongrong, Special Photographer of Yiwu Release

Reform became the only way to break through the impasse. In March 2011, the State Council approved the “Overall Plan for the Comprehensive Reform Pilot of International Trade in Yiwu City,

Zhejiang Province”, making it the first national-level comprehensive reform pilot carried out in a county-level city in China. In April 2013, the Ministry of Commerce and seven other ministries jointly issued a letter approving the pilot implementation of the “ Market Procurement Trade Mode” in Yiwu. The following year, the first customs declaration form under the Market Procurement Trade Mode in China was officially issued in Yiwu, giving birth to an export supervision model tailor-made for small commodities.

“For Chen Huaxiao, this customs declaration form was like a “golden key” to solving long-standing problems. “Under the new approach, if a single declaration form contains more than five types of commodities, enterprises can choose the simplified declaration method and do not need to declare each category separately,” she said. This measure greatly matched the characteristics of small commodity exports, which involve a wide variety of products.

“ Work that previously required five or six people can now be handled efficiently by just one person.”

The changes went beyond efficiency. The new model provided a systematic solution for small and micro enterprises to participate in international trade, enabling enterprises that previously “could not engage in foreign trade” to easily participate in global commerce. The value of Yiwu’s Market Procurement Trade increased from “RMB 13.8 billion in 2014” to “RMB 471.76 billion in 2024”, representing an increase of more than “33 times” over ten years.

Reform was only the starting point, not the end point. With the rise of new business formats such as cross-border e-commerce, China-Europe Railway Express services, and international postal routes, the Market Procurement Model has continued to evolve. Chen Huaxiao has deeply felt these changes.

“Before 2024, when an export container carried cargo from seven or eight different suppliers, once it was selected for inspection, all

cargo had to be unloaded for verification and then reloaded, often causing vessels to be missed.”

To address this industry pain point, in 2024 Yiwu took the lead nationwide in piloting the ‘Inspection Before Loading’ supervision model. Under this model, Customs inspection is completed before cargo is loaded into containers, after which the containers are sealed and shipped. This successfully resolved the long-standing challenges of “container unloading for inspection” and “inspection difficulties” in consolidated cargo exports, increasing export efficiency by “30%”.

Today, customs declaration procedures no longer require repeated trips between offices. With the help of paperless and intelligent systems, users can simply log into the system on a computer and complete, with just a few clicks, processes that once took an entire day in only a few minutes.



Photo by Lou Hainan

Continuous institutional innovation has led to sustained market expansion. In the first quarter of this year, Yiwu’s total import and export value reached “RMB 209.37 billion”, a year-on-year increase of “25%”, surpassing “RMB 200 billion” one month earlier than the same period last year and setting a record high for the corresponding period in history. Among this total, exports through the Market Procurement Trade Mode reached “RMB 144.22 billion”, up “20.1%”, accounting for “80.7%” of total exports.

More importantly, over the past decade, the small “1039” code shown on China’s first Market Procurement Trade customs declaration form has not only taken root and flourished in Yiwu, but has also been replicated and promoted in “39 specialized markets nationwide”, becoming an important measure for stabilizing the growth of China’s foreign trade.

This small first customs declaration form is far more than a simple customs clearance document. It is proof of Yiwu’s institutional innovation and its embrace of the global market. As one of the most direct embodiments of the “Yiwu Development Experience,” the Market Procurement Trade Mode has enabled countless small and micro enterprises to realize the possibility of “buying and selling globally.” It has become a vivid witness to Yiwu’s development journey of “creating something out of nothing, turning the impossible into the possible, and transforming stones into gold.”