

Turning Digital Islands into a Connected World: How to Energise a Paperless Trade World

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With the prospects of further trade agreements dimming, attention has turned to new ways of extracting more out of New Zealand's existing trade agreements. One area that shows real potential is paperless trade. We are aware – at least in theory – of the benefits of paperless trade. Why therefore has been the introduction of paperless trade systems been glacially slow? This paper represents work in progress looking at what we mean by paperless trade and includes examining the challenges of paperless trade, and the actions required to move to a paperless trade environment. The actions required include examining the institutional and governance approach, the importance of automation, the hardware needs, the importance of capacity building, how facilitation of cross border electronic data exchange can occur, the legal basis for operation, and other critical issues. We also look at case studies that illustrate the challenges and opportunities. The tentative conclusions are that we need to be cautious about what we can achieve and in what timeframes. We also have to be mindful that shippers, logistics companies, and some countries are moving quickly on digital trade initiatives.