What is a HS Code..??

HS Code, you would have seen this terminology across many documentation or correspondences.. What does this code really mean and who uses it and what is it used for..??

HS Code stands for Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System..

This is the common standard worldwide for describing the type of commodity.. Every commodity that enters or crosses most international borders have to be declared to customs by means of this code.. This helps in standardizing the codes worldwide..

You can now access the HS Code search via this blog's sidebar.. Check on the right side under HS CODES..

Here is the definition according to WCO website,

The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System generally referred to as "Harmonized System" or simply "HS" is a multipurpose international product nomenclature developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).

It comprises about 5,000 commodity groups; each identified by a six digit code, arranged in a legal and logical structure and is supported by well-defined rules to achieve uniform classification.

The system is used by more than 200 countries and economies as a basis for their Customs tariffs and for the collection of international trade statistics. Over 98 % of the merchandise in international trade is classified in terms of the HS.

The HS contributes to the harmonization of Customs and trade procedures, and the non-documentary trade data interchange in connection with such procedures, thus reducing the costs related to international trade.

It is also extensively used by governments, international organizations and the private sector for many other purposes such as internal taxes, trade policies, monitoring of controlled goods, rules of origin, freight tariffs, transport statistics, price monitoring, quota controls, compilation of national accounts, and economic research and analysis.
The HS is thus a universal economic language and code for goods, and an indispensable tool for international trade.

The Harmonized System is governed by "The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System". The official interpretation of the HS is given in the Explanatory Notes (5 volumes in English and French) published by the WCO. The Explanatory Notes are also available online and on CD-ROM, as part of a database which groups all the available HS Tools, by adding to the information on the Nomenclature, the Compendium of Classification Opinions and the Explanatory Notes, that relating to the Alphabetical Index and the Brochure on Classification Decisions taken by the Harmonized System Committee.

The maintenance of the HS is a WCO priority. This activity includes measures to secure uniform interpretation of the HS and its periodic updating in light of developments in technology and changes in trade patterns. The WCO manages this process through the Harmonized System Committee (representing the Contracting Parties to the HS Convention), which examines policy matters, takes decisions on classification questions, settles disputes and prepares amendments to the Explanatory Notes. The HS Committee also prepares amendments updating the HS every 5 – 6 years.

Decisions concerning the interpretation and application of the Harmonized System, such as classification decisions and amendments to the Explanatory Notes or to the Compendium of Classification Opinions, become effective two months after the approval by the HS Committee. These are reflected in the amending supplements of the relevant WCO Publications.

Below are the basic sections and chapters..

For broader info, visit http://www.cargoinfo.co.za/customs/customstree.asp..

The standard categories are upto 6 digits Example 6401.10 - Footwear incorporating a protective metal toe-cap.

Depending on the various countries they can add more digits making it 8 or 10 digits..

SECTION I: LIVE ANIMALS; ANIMAL PRODUCTS

Chapter 1
Live animals

Chapter 2
Meat and edible meat offal

Chapter 3
Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates
Chapter 4
Dairy produce; birds eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included

Chapter 5
Products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included

SECTION II: VEGETABLE PRODUCTS

Chapter 6
Live trees and other plants; bulbs, roots and the like; cut flowers and ornamental foliage

Chapter 7
Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers

Chapter 8
Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons

Chapter 9
Coffee, tea, maté and spices

Chapter 10
Cereals

Chapter 11
Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten

Chapter 12
Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruits; industrial or medicinal plants; straw and fodder

Chapter 13
Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts

Chapter 14
Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included

SECTION III: ANIMAL OR VEGETABLE FATS AND OILS AND THEIR CLEAVAGE PRODUCTS; PREPARED EDIBLE FATS; ANIMAL OR VEGETABLE WAXES

Chapter 15
Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products prepared edible fats; animal or vegetable waxes

SECTION IV: PREPARED FOODSTUFFS; BEVERAGES, SPIRITS, AND VINEGAR; TOBACCO AND MANUFACTURED TOBACCO SUBSTITUTES
Chapter 16
Preparations of meat, of fish or of crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic invertebrates

Chapter 17
Sugars and sugar confectionery

Chapter 18
Cocoa and cocoa preparations

Chapter 19
Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; bakers' wares

Chapter 20
Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants

Chapter 21
Miscellaneous edible preparations

Chapter 22
Beverages, spirits and vinegar

Chapter 23
Residues and waste from the food industries; prepared animal feed

Chapter 24
Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes

SECTION V: MINERAL PRODUCTS

Chapter 25
Salt; sulfur; earths and stone; plastering materials, lime and cement

Chapter 26
Ores, slag and ash

Chapter 27
Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral waxes

SECTION VI: PRODUCTS OF THE CHEMICAL OR ALLIED INDUSTRIES

Chapter 28
Inorganic chemicals; organic or inorganic compounds of precious metals, of rare-earth
metals, of radioactive elements or of isotopes

Chapter 29
Organic chemicals

Chapter 30
Pharmaceutical products

Chapter 31
Fertilizers

Chapter 32
Tanning or dyeing extracts; dyes, pigments, paints, varnishes, putty and mastics

Chapter 33
Essential oils and resinoids; perfumery, cosmetic or toilet preparations

Chapter 34
Soap, organic surface-active agents, washing preparations, lubricating preparations, artificial waxes, prepared waxes, polishing or scouring preparations, candles and similar articles, modeling pastes, "dental waxes" and dental preparations with a basis of plaster

Chapter 35
Albuminoidal substances; modified starches; glues; enzymes

Chapter 36
Explosives; pyrotechnic products; matches; pyrophoric alloys; certain combustible preparations

Chapter 37
Photographic or cinematographic goods

Chapter 38
Miscellaneous chemical products

SECTION VII: PLASTICS AND ARTICLES THEREOF RUBBER AND ARTICLES THEREOF

Chapter 39
Plastics and articles thereof

Chapter 40
Rubber and articles thereof

SECTION VIII: RAW HIDES AND SKINS, LEATHER, FURSKINS AND ARTICLES THEREOF; SADDLERY AND HARNESS; TRAVEL GOODS, HANDBAGS AND SIMILAR CONTAINERS;
ARTICLES OF ANIMAL GUT (OTHER THAN SILKWORM GUT)

Chapter 41
Raw hides and skins (other than furskins) and leather

Chapter 42
Articles of leather; saddlery and harness; travel goods, handbags and similar containers; articles of animal gut (other than silkworm gut)

Chapter 43
Furskins and artificial fur; manufactures thereof

SECTION IX: WOOD AND ARTICLES OF WOOD; WOOD CHARCOAL; CORK AND ARTICLES OF CORK; MANUFACTURERS OF STRAW, OF ESPARTO OR OF OTHER PLAITING MATERIALS; BASKETWARE AND WICKERWORK

Chapter 44
Wood and articles of wood; wood charcoal

Chapter 45
Cork and articles of cork

Chapter 46
Manufactures of straw, of esparto or of other plaiting materials; basketware and wickerwork

SECTION X: PULP OF WOOD OR OF OTHER FIBROUS CELLULOSIC MATERIAL; WASTE AND SCRAP OF PAPER OR PAPERBOARD; PAPER AND PAPERBOARD AND ARTICLES THEREOF

Chapter 47
Pulp of wood or of other fibrous cellulosic material; waste and scrap of paper or paperboard

Chapter 48
Paper and paperboard; articles of paper pulp, of paper or of paperboard

Chapter 49
Printed books, newspapers, pictures and other products of the printing industry; manuscripts, typescripts and plans

SECTION XI: TEXTILE AND TEXTILE ARTICLES

Chapter 50
Silk

Chapter 51
Wool, fine or coarse animal hair; horsehair yarn and woven fabric
Chapter 52
Cotton

Chapter 53
Other vegetable textile fibers; paper yarn and woven fabric of paper yarn

Chapter 54
Man-made filaments

Chapter 55
Man-made staple fibers

Chapter 56
Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns, twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof

Chapter 57
Carpets and other textile floor coverings

Chapter 58
Special woven fabrics; tufted textile fabrics; lace, tapestries; trimmings; embroidery

Chapter 59
Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use

Chapter 60
Knitted or crocheted fabrics

Chapter 61
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, knitted or crocheted

Chapter 62
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted

Chapter 63
Other made up textile articles; sets; worn clothing and worn textile articles; rags

SECTION XII: FOOTWEAR, HEADGEAR, UMBRELLAS, SUN UMBRELLAS, WALKING STICKS, SEATSTICKS, WHIPS, RIDING-CROPS AND PARTS THEREOF; PREPARED FEATHERS AND ARTICLES MADE THEREWITH; ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS; ARTICLES OF HUMAN HAIR

Chapter 64
Footwear, gaiters and the like; parts of such articles
Chapter 65

Headgear and parts thereof

Chapter 66

Umbrellas, sun umbrellas, walking sticks, seatsticks, whips, riding-crops and parts thereof

Chapter 67

Prepared feathers and down and articles made of feathers or of down; artificial flowers; articles of human hair

SECTION XIII: ARTICLES OF STONE, PLASTER, CEMENT, ASBESTOS, MICA OR SIMILAR MATERIALS; CERAMIC PRODUCTS; GLASS AND GLASSWARE

Chapter 68

Articles of stone, plaster, cement, asbestos, mica or similar materials

Chapter 69

Ceramic products

Chapter 70

Glass and glassware

SECTION XIV: NATURAL OR CULTURED PEARLS, PRECIOUS OR SEMIPRECIOUS STONES, PRECIOUS METALS, METALS CLAD WITH PRECIOUS METAL, AND ARTICLES THEREOF; IMITATION JEWELRY; COIN

Chapter 71

Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad with precious metal and articles thereof; imitation jewelry; coin

SECTION XV: BASE METALS AND ARTICLES OF BASE METAL

Chapter 72

Iron and steel

Chapter 73

Articles of iron or steel

Chapter 74
Copper and articles thereof

Chapter 75
Nickel and articles thereof

Chapter 76
Aluminum and articles thereof

Chapter 77
(Reserved for possible future use)

Chapter 78
Lead and articles thereof

Chapter 79
Zinc and articles thereof

Chapter 80
Tin and articles thereof

Chapter 81
Other base metals; cermets; articles thereof

Chapter 82
Tools, implements, cutlery, spoons and forks, of base metal; parts thereof of base metal

Chapter 83
Miscellaneous articles of base metal

SECTION XVI: MACHINERY AND MECHANICAL APPLIANCES; ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT; PARTS THEREOF; SOUND RECORDERS AND REPRODUCERS, TELEVISION IMAGE AND SOUND RECORDERS AND REPRODUCERS, AND PARTS AND ACCESSORIES OF SUCH ARTICLES

Chapter 84
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof

Chapter 85
Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles

SECTION XVII: VEHICLES, AIRCRAFT, VESSELS AND ASSOCIATED TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT

Chapter 86
Railway or tramway locomotives, rolling-stock and parts thereof; railway or tramway track fixtures and fittings and parts thereof; mechanical (including electro-mechanical) traffic signalling equipment of all kinds

Chapter 87
Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof

Chapter 88
Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof

Chapter 89
Ships, boats and floating structures

SECTION XVIII: OPTICAL, PHOTOGRAPHIC, CINEMATOGRAPHIC, MEASURING, CHECKING, PRECISION, MEDICAL OR SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS AND APPARATUS; CLOCKS AND WATCHES; MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS; PARTS AND ACCESSORIES THEREOF

Chapter 90
Optical, photographic, cinematographic, measuring, checking, precision, medical or surgical instruments and apparatus; parts and accessories thereof

Chapter 91
Clocks and watches and parts thereof

Chapter 92
Musical instruments; parts and accessories of such articles

SECTION XIX: ARMS AND AMMUNITION; PARTS AND ACCESSORIES THEREOF

Chapter 93
Arms and ammunition; parts and accessories thereof

SECTION XX: MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES

Chapter 94
Furniture; bedding, mattresses, mattress supports, cushions and similar stuffed furnishings; lamps and lighting fittings, not elsewhere specified or included; illuminated sign illuminated nameplates and the like; prefabricated buildings

Chapter 95
Toys, games and sports requisites; parts and accessories thereof

Chapter 96

Miscellaneous manufactured articles

SECTION XXI: WORKS OF ART, COLLECTORS' PIECES AND ANTIQUES

Chapter 97

Works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques

SECTION XXII: SPECIAL CLASSIFICATION PROVISIONS;

Chapter 98

Special classification provisions