

How to Obtain a Petroleum Export License: For Exporting Refined Petroleum Products in Nigeria (2026 Complete Guide)

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1. Overview of Petroleum Export Licensing in Nigeria

Exporting refined petroleum products in Nigeria is controlled to ensure:

- Product quality compliance
- Revenue tracking
- Environmental & safety standards
- Accurate measurement of exported volumes

Under current regulations, **export activities are tracked per shipment and per quarter**, not just via a one-time license.

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According to NMDPRA guidelines, companies must:

- Apply for **export permits quarterly**
- Obtain approvals through the **IMPEX portal**
- Secure **vessel clearance and cargo documentation**

2. Regulatory Authorities & Legal Framework

Key Regulators

1. Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA)

Primary regulator responsible for:

- Licensing
- Export permits
- Product quality and measurement
- Facility compliance

2. Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment (FMITI)

- Issues **final export permit approval** after NMDPRA review

3. Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC)

- Issues COQ (for some export operations)

Legal Framework

Export licensing is governed by:

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- Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021
- Midstream & Downstream Petroleum Regulations
- NMDPRA Export & Supply Guidelines

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3. Types of Licenses Required for Export

You need a **combination of licenses**, not just one.

License / Permit	Purpose	Issuing Authority
Wholesale Petroleum Liquids Supply License (WPLSL)	Allows trading/export operations	NMDPRA
Export/Evacuation Permit	Authorises actual export shipment	NMDPRA → FMITI
IMPEX Permit	Online processing & documentation	NMDPRA
Certificate of Quantity (COQ)	Confirms volume exported	NMDPRA/NUPRC
Certificate of Quality	Confirms product meets standards	NMDPRA

Export cannot happen without **all of the above combined**.

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4. Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for petroleum export licensing in Nigeria, your company must:

Corporate Requirements

- Be registered with CAC
- Operate within the downstream/midstream sector
- Maintain proper corporate governance

Technical Requirements

- Access to refinery or licensed supplier
- Storage facility or depot agreement
- Logistics capability (vessels, trucking, etc.)

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Financial Requirements

- Proven financial capacity
- Bank reference letter confirming capability

Regulatory Requirements

- Tax Clearance Certificate (3 years)
- Compliance with HSSE standards

5. Requirements & Documentation (Full Table)

Below are the **core documents required based on NMDPRA portal guidelines**:

Requirement	Details
Certificate of Incorporation	CAC registration documents
Tax Clearance Certificate	Minimum of 3 years

Requirement	Details
Bank Reference Letter	Confirming financial capability
Evidence of Product Source	Refinery or supply agreement
Storage License / Agreement	Approved depot or tank farm
HSSE Documents	Safety and environmental compliance
Technical Capability	Staff CVs and operational experience
Application Letter	Formal request for permit
Vessel & Logistics Info	For shipment approval
Previous Transaction Records	Required for renewals

These are uploaded through the NMDPRA portal during application

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6. Step-by-Step Process to Obtain a Petroleum Export License

Step 1: Company Incorporation & Readiness

- Register company with CAC
- Set up operational structure
- Secure storage or refinery agreement

Step 2: Register on NMDPRA Licensing Portal

You must create an account on:

- NMDPRA **CELPS / IMPEX portal**

This is mandatory for all applications

Step 3: Apply for Wholesale Petroleum Liquids Supply License

This license allows:

- Buying
- Selling
- Exporting petroleum liquids

Without this, export is **illegal**.

Step 4: Apply for Export Permit (Quarterly)

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Export permits are **not permanent**.

- Must be applied for **every quarter**
- Covers volume and shipment plan

“Application for export permit shall be submitted on a quarterly basis”

Step 5: Submit Application via IMPEX Portal

- Select export category
- Enter product details
- Upload documents

Step 6: Pay Application Fees

- Payment via Remita
- Fees depend on volume and product type

Step 7: NMDPRA Review & Inspection

The regulator will:

- Review documents
- Assess compliance
- Possibly inspect facilities

Step 8: Forwarding to FMITI

Once approved:

- Application is sent to FMITI
- Export permit is issued

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“Application shall be forwarded to FMITI for issuance of export permit”

Step 9: Obtain COQ & Shipping Documents

Before export, you must provide:

- Certificate of Quantity
- Certificate of Quality
- Bill of Lading
- Cargo manifest

Step 10: Vessel Clearance & Export Execution

You must submit:

- Tanker details
- Loading schedule
- Cargo specifications

Required vessel data includes:

- IMO number
- Quantity loaded

- Destination
- Vessel owner

7. Export Workflow (Operational Process)

Here’s how export actually happens:

1. Apply for export permit
2. Submit tanker schedule
3. Get NMDPRA clearance
4. Load product
5. Obtain COQ
6. Final clearance
7. Vessel departs

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8. Costs & Fees Breakdown

Important: Fees are **not fixed publicly** and depend on:

- Product type
- Volume
- License category

Typical Cost Components

Cost Type	Description
Application Fee	Non-refundable
Processing Fee	Based on permit
License Fee	WPLSL cost
Vessel Clearance Fee	Per shipment
Documentation Cost	COQ, quality checks

All payments are made electronically via NMDPRA systems

9. Timeline for Approval

Stage	Duration
Portal Registration	1–2 days
Document Preparation	1–3 weeks
Review & Approval	2–6 weeks
Export Permit Issuance	1–2 weeks

Total timeline: **4–10 weeks**

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10. Compliance & Operational Obligations

Once licensed, you must:

- Submit regular reports to NMDPRA
- Track volumes exported
- Maintain HSSE compliance
- Follow measurement standards

Exporters must also:

- Maintain full shipping documentation
- Adhere to product quality standards
- Submit tanker schedules monthly

11. Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Thinking one license is enough

You need **multiple approvals**.

2. No storage facility

This is a major rejection factor.

3. Weak financial documentation

Bank reference must be strong.

4. Incomplete documentation

Most delays happen here.

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5. Ignoring quarterly permits

Export approval is not permanent.

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12. Frequently Asked Questions (People Also Ask)

1. What license is required to export petroleum products in Nigeria?

You need:

- Wholesale Petroleum Liquids Supply License
- Export Permit
- COQ and quality certification

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2. Can a foreign company export petroleum products?

No. Only **Nigerian-registered companies** can apply.

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3. How long does it take to get approval?

Typically **4–10 weeks**, depending on compliance.

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4. Is export permit permanent?

No. It is issued **quarterly**.

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5. Do I need a refinery?

No, but you need:

- Supply agreement
- Licensed depot or storage facility

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6. Can I apply online?

Yes. All applications are processed via:

- NMDPRA portals

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7. What happens without a license?

You risk:

- Seizure of cargo
- Fines
- Criminal liability

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13. Common Misconceptions

“There is one export license”

Reality: Multiple approvals required

“Once approved, you can export anytime”

Reality: Permits are **quarterly and shipment-based**

“You don’t need storage”

Reality: Storage access is mandatory

“Process is manual”

Reality: Fully digital via NMDPRA portals

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14. Expert Insights (What Most People Don’t Know)

- Export is **tracked per vessel and cargo**
- Government monitors:
  - Quantity
  - Quality
  - Destination
- You must submit **advance tanker schedule monthly**
- Measurement discrepancies can **stop export clearance**

Conclusion

Obtaining a petroleum export license in Nigeria is not a one-step process, it is a **structured regulatory system involving multiple approvals, technical compliance, and continuous monitoring**.

To succeed, you must:

- Get the right licenses (WPLSL + Export Permit)
- Use the NMDPRA IMPEX portal correctly
- Maintain strong documentation
- Ensure full compliance with export procedures

If done properly, this positions your company to operate legally in Nigeria's **multi-billion-dollar petroleum export market**.

Category

1. Industry Insights

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