

Land Fact Sheet

Belize has a fixed exchange rate because a stable currency is considered necessary for sustainable growth and development. The Exchange Control Regulations are essential for protecting the fixed exchange rate regime. Compliance with the Exchange Control Regulations ensures that foreign currency inflows are pooled and made available to meet the needs of the general public. Each resident contributes to safeguarding the fixed exchange rate through obedience to the law.



LAWS GOVERNING LAND TRANSACTIONS

Section 40 of the Exchange Control Regulations, Revised Edition 2003, stipulates that Central Bank's permission must be obtained where a non-resident is involved in any transaction relating to the transfer by way of sale, exchange, gift or mortgage of any land, buildings or other hereditaments situated in Belize. This includes:

- a. Any purchase of land situated in Belize from a resident to a non-resident, foreign national residing in Belize or a foreign company
- b. Any purchase of land situated in Belize by a resident from a non-resident

EXCHANGE CONTROL REQUIREMENTS FOR PERMISSION TO OWN LAND IN BELIZE

The letter of application for the purchase of land in Belize should be sent to the Central Bank addressed to the Director of the Research Department and should contain the following information:

- a) Names and addresses of buyers and sellers
- b) Description of property being transferred
- c) Type of transfer
- d) If sale, state currency and sale price of property
- e) When land is being sold to a non-resident, indicate the payment arrangement for the land, explaining how the foreign currency from abroad will be channelled to an authorised dealer.

The following documents must be attached to the letter of application:

1. **If the transferee or transferor is a natural person:**
 - a. Certified true copy or notarized copy of a valid passport of each person
2. **If the transferee or transferor is a legal entity (usually a company):**
 - a. For a foreign legal entity:
 - i. Notarized or certified true copy of a valid passport of its ultimate beneficial owners
 - ii. Company formation documents
 - iii. In the case of an Overseas Company registered to conduct business in Belize, a copy of the certificate of incorporation that shows the foreign company's registration as an Overseas Company in Belize.
 - b. For a resident legal entity:
 - i. Its most current annual returns which has a listing of its directors and shareholders
 - ii. Notarized or certified true copy of a valid passport of its directors and shareholders

3. Copy of land documents

The Central Bank reserves the right to request any additional information deemed necessary for the processing of the application. The processing time for an application is five working days, once ALL required information is submitted.

PAYMENT FOR PURCHASE OF LAND BY NON-RESIDENT FROM A RESIDENT

Non-residents are expected to pay for land purchased from residents with foreign currency sourced outside Belize and brought into the domestic banking system through an authorised dealer.

Failure by the seller to surrender the foreign currency sales proceeds to the authorized dealer is a contravention of Exchange Control Regulation 2, unless approved by the Central Bank.

REGISTRATION OF FOREIGN INVESTMENTS (LAND) IN BELIZE

Non-resident investors are advised to register their investments in land with the Central Bank in order to facilitate the repatriation of funds when the land is sold.

Registrations can be done through a domestic bank in Belize, which will submit an application to register the foreign investment (inflows of funds from abroad) in Belize on behalf of the non-resident client.

The following does not require Central Bank permission to transfer land in Belize:

- * A resident transferring land to a Belizean resident
- * A non-resident transferring land to another non-resident

Residents of Belize include:

- (a) Belizean nationals who live and/or work permanently in the country.
- (b) Belizean nationals who are studying abroad, are serving Belize's diplomatic missions abroad or have been residing abroad for less than one year.
- (c) Nationals of other countries who have permanent resident status or have work permits and have been residing in Belize for at least one year.
- (d) All enterprises located and conducting business in Belize, including the unincorporated branches of foreign companies.

Non-residents include:

- (a) Nationals of other countries who have not resided in Belize for at least one year, are studying in Belize or are permanently residing outside Belize
- (b) Belizean nationals who have been residing outside Belize for at least one year
- (c) Official diplomatic and consular offices and military establishments of foreign governments, non-Belizean personnel and their dependents
- (d) Enterprises incorporated under the International Business Companies Act, Chapter 270, Revised Edition 2011

Authorised Dealers are appointed by the Central Bank to assist in conducting foreign currency transactions.

The following domestic banks are **Authorised Dealers**:

- Atlantic Bank Limited
- Heritage Bank Limited
- National Bank of Belize Limited
- Scotia Bank (Belize) Limited
- The Belize Bank Limited

EXCHANGE CONTROL REGULATION ACT

- * Part VII Section 40 (1) and (2) of the Exchange Control Regulation sets out certain prerequisites before the sale of property between resident persons, foreign nationals residing in Belize and non-resident persons or companies incorporated in foreign countries can legally take place. *Exchange Control Regulation Act – Revised Edition 2003.*
- * It is unlawful, except with Central Bank of Belize permission, for any resident of Belize to transfer any land situated in Belize by way of sale, exchange, gift or mortgage to a non-resident person, foreign national residing in Belize or company incorporated in a foreign country. *Exchange Control Regulation Act, Section 40 (1) Revised Edition 2003.*
- * It is unlawful, except with Central Bank of Belize permission, for any non-resident to transfer land situated in Belize by way of sale, exchange, gift, or mortgage to any person resident in Belize. *Exchange Control Regulation Act, Section 40 (2) – Revised Edition 2003.*
- * Any resident who obtains or receives foreign currency, and is not an authorised dealer, must surrender such foreign currency to an authorised dealer, unless Central Bank's permission was obtained to retain the foreign currency. *Exchange Control Regulation Act, Section 2 (1) – Revised Edition 2003.*
- * Payment for the Transfer of Land, Buildings or Other Hereditaments Situated in Belize can be made as follows;
 - (a) In Belize dollars from an External Account;
 - (b) From funds eligible for credit to an External Account; or
 - (c) From the proceeds of foreign currency sold to a domestic bank in Belize.

Exchange Control Direction Number 15/2014 - Revised December 2014.



For further clarification or queries contact the following:

Approvals Manager
Phone: 223-6194 extension 126

Remittance Service Provider Manager
Phone: 223-6194 extension 379
Or email: cbbrrsh@btl.net

For more information visit the Bank's website at:
<https://www.centralbank.org.bz/laws-regulations/exchange-control-act>
Or you can send questions to:
research@centralbank.org.bz