

ACP Sugar Sector Reforms to focus on Sustainable Development

Three decades of privileged cooperation between ACP countries and the European Union on the EU-ACP Sugar Protocol will come to an end on 30th September 2009. No one can deny the advantage and guarantees that this system has provided for ACP countries leading to many development benefits. As from 1st October 2009, exports will continue to take place even though with restricted guarantees in the context of the Economic Partnership Agreements for the countries engaged on that path.

Besides, on 1st October 2009, a new trade era will begin within the framework of the Everything but Arms (EBA) for sugar-exporting Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that will enable them to export as much sugar to Europe without any tariffs paid.

These two events must be approached with the same attention. A number of ACP countries have not been able to respond to the challenges of the newly introduced Sugar Reforms and as a result have been negatively impacted. Following these concerns Ministers and representatives of 22 ACP Sugar producing countries met on the occasion of the 11th Ministerial conference on Sugar in Georgetown, Guyana, from 17-21 May 2009, to ensure that ongoing Reforms and exports continue to serve their interests and to ensure Sustainable Development.

TradeCom contributed to the organization of the Guyana event, as part of its mandate to support the implementation of trade policies and international trade agreements.

Sugar continues to play a multifunctional role in societies and economies of many ACP countries. Today, various new opportunities are opening up to the sugar sector and it is vital to adopt the most appropriate approach to handle them. Once again, choices that will be made will affect not only the Sugar economy but beyond on other related economies with impacts on the environment and even food security.

EPA Services Negotiations: challenges and opportunities for ACP States

Services have become one of the main driving forces of economic growth and development worldwide. ACP States are mindful of this and several have made significant advances in the export of services. Many, however, need to strengthen their capacity to supply services related to their exports, to labour, business, the professions, distribution, finance, culture, construction and related engineering services. To do so, they need to revise and update their legislation, regulations and regulatory systems related to services.

The EPA negotiations provide a challenge and an opportunity for ACP countries and regions to seek support to create an enabling environment, for attracting investment and to find market niches in EU Member States. However, liberalisation of trade in services is much more difficult to achieve than for trade in goods as most services markets are highly regulated and liberalisation, especially where it involves the removal of impediments to foreign services and providers or discriminates against them or cause fears of threats to burgeoning service providers.

But ways must be found to overcome these fears. Developed countries have derived significant benefits from services liberalisation and so too can ACP countries. The competitiveness of manufacturing and exporting industries and agriculture using services as inputs can increase production and exports and encourage domestic and foreign investment. The manufacturing industry around the world is a major user of services. Export-oriented producers of manufactured goods depend on efficient transportation and insurance for their overseas shipments. The same is true for the agricultural and food production sectors. Telecommunications services are a major vector for the development of the ICT sector.

At the same time, potential economic costs of services liberalisation must be taken into account. A balance needs to be struck between the benefits that can be reaped and the costs that may be incurred in the course of liberalisation. Much more work needs to be done by countries and regions participating in the EPA services negotiations to achieve a good balance between their offensive and defensive interests. Trade.Com is working with the Member States of COMESA and the Secretariat on the preparation of schedules of commitments for the EPA services negotiations and has agreed to do so with other regions. We are also supporting the efforts of ACP countries to update their TRIPS legislation in order to create market conditions and economic environments in accordance with their development priorities.

A Training Manual as a guide to the preparation of schedules of commitments in the services sector is available on our website: <http://www.tradecom-acpeu.org>

Background readings in trade in services are also accessible on the website: <http://www.tradecom-acpeu.org/Aboutus/LegalTrainingInformation/SpeakersPresentationMaterials/tabid/2169/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Seminar on legal aspects of trade policy, regional and multilateral trade negotiations for SADC EPA States

The Trade.Com PMU jointly organized with the SADC Secretariat a five day seminar on the legal aspects of trade policy, regional and multilateral trade negotiations for SADC EPA States. The seminar was held from 18 to 22 May 2009 at the Protea Hotel Waterfront Centurion in South Africa.

Experts from academia, international law firms, international consulting firms, think tanks (European Centre for Development Policy Management-ECDFM, Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis-BIDPA) and the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery-CRNM, made presentations, giving insights into specific aspects of international trade law, in particular those pertaining to the SADC-EC EPA and WTO negotiations. The topics dealt with ranged from trade in goods and trade in services, to trade related areas, such as intellectual property, competition policy and investment. The programme also included a session on contentious issues in SADC-EC EPA negotiations as well as a discussion session on the extent to which the EPAs contribute to the process of regional integration in the ACP. The extent to which SADC Interim EPA promotes deeper integration in the SADC region was an issue which was discussed all throughout the week.

The SADC participants in the Seminar were essentially legal and trade experts from the relevant ministries of the 6 SADC EPA Member States and South Africa involved in the negotiations. In addition, representatives of the SADC Secretariat, Brussels based representatives of SADC Member States to the European Union closely involved in the EPA negotiations; hub and spokes designated by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and a few non state actors (e.g. Namibian Agricultural Trade Forum-NAFT) attended the Seminar.

The Seminar stimulated open and lively discussions between participants and speakers and between the participants themselves, allowing a fruitful exchange of opinions and best practices.

The Trade.Com PMU would like to thank all the participants, the speakers and the chair persons for contributing to make the Seminar a success.



The Commonwealth Secretariat and the "Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie" are TradeCom Partners. These two organizations manage the Hubs & Spokes component of the Programme.
<http://www.thecomwealth.org> and <http://www.espace-economique.francophonie.org>

TradeCom Participates in CROSO Regional Planning Workshop

The 14th CROSO (CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality) Meeting and Planning Workshop took place in Kingstown, St Vincent & Grenadines on the 28th April – 2nd May 2009.

CROSO located in Bridgetown, Barbados is an Inter-governmental Agency and the regional centre for promoting efficiency and competitive production in trade and services, through the process of standardization and the verification of quality.

TradeCom currently cooperates with CROSO by providing Technical Assistance to upgrade the Regions' Legislation and Policy in Standards and Metrology to facilitate the CARICOM mandate in the expansion of intra-regional export of goods and services. This is with an objective to promote the harmonization of Metrology systems and Standards and to facilitate the resolution of CARICOM trade disputes where Standards are involved.

The Workshop helped to highlight the strategic importance of the Quality Infrastructure in the region and provided an overview of future developments of the Regional Quality Infrastructure. TradeCom was represented by its Trade Negotiations expert Chris Addy-Nayo.



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