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PRESS RELEASE



The European Business Chamber in Trinidad & Tobago (EUROCHAMTT) hosted a luncheon presentation on the status of the EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement (EU-CARIFORUM EPA), on 13th December 2016. The presentation took place at the Alliance Française, 17 Alcazar Street in Port of Spain, which is also the location of the EUROCHAMTT office.

Guest speakers were, Mr. Adam Wisniewski, First Secretary - Trade Affairs Manager and Ms. Carlene Hamilton, both representing the European Commission's Directorate-General (DG) Trade in the European Union Delegation to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, the OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM. This EU Delegation is the office that manages regional affairs and in particular the application of the EU-CARIFORUM EPA.

The EU-CARIFORUM EPA is a comprehensive trade and development binding agreement which entered into force at **a regional level** since 2008. The goal of the Agreement is to improve trade and investment between the two regions and enhance sustainable growth, employment and development. The Agreement as an instrument is aiming to promote regional integration, economic co-operation, sustainable development and good governance thus establishing and implementing an effective, predictable and transparent regulatory framework for trade and investment between the parties. This benefits all business, not just the EU and national operators but all operators investing in Trinidad and Tobago and in the CARIFORUM states

Mr. Adam Wisniewski presented highlights of the Sixth Meeting of the CARIFORUM-EU Trade and Development Committee held on the 24 November 2016 – Jamaica:

Specifically:

- Establishment of the Special Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries. Trinidad and Tobago would have special challenges in meeting for example, the phytosanitary requirements for fish and seafood exports now, where as other Caribbean countries including Belize, Bahamas, Grenada, Suriname and Guyana are already exporting in these categories to the EU.



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- Tariff treatment and the ten years moratorium raised by CARIFORUM regarding tariff reductions on motor vehicles, their parts and components
- Treatment by Trinidad and Tobago of products falling under tariff lines 4802.56, 4802.62 and 4823.90.30 all of which refer to various paper related products
- Update on the CARIFORUM – EU negotiations for Agreement on Geographical Indications and implementation of Article 145. Trinidad and Tobago potential interests in this regard include chocolate, cocoa, and peppers .
- Implementation of Article 238 (Regional Preference Clause). This clause refers to need to provide equal preference treatment regarding tariff rates to all member states in CARIFORUM corresponding to these awarded to products originating from the EU.
- Status of implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement in Trinidad and Tobago. While Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the Agreement since 2008, and while the Agreement has been passed in Parliament since July 02, 2013, provisional application of the EPA commenced December 29th 2008, although the EU had already guaranteed duty free access to CARIFORUM goods into its market since January 1, 2008. Further, the EPA has not yet been fully ratified and incorporated into national legislation. The reasons relate to a desire to address concerns about tariff reductions on motor vehicles, their parts and components and imported paper and related raw materials, as indicated by the Minister Trade & Industry, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon.

Ms Hamilton presented highlights of the 11th EDF Regional Private Sector Development Program which aims at inclusion of various programmes of EU support at macro, meso and micro levels: at macro level – programmes available aim to improve the investment climate and to strengthen trade, innovation and competitiveness policies; at meso level – capacity building and institutional strengthening support is provided to business support organizations (BSOs), chambers of commerce and investment promotion agencies; at micro-level - programmes aim to support the development of SMEs and micro-enterprises, encouragement of transfers of know-how and technologies, or training to improve technical and management skills. EU-funded technical assistance and grant programmes which may be of interest to Trinidad and Tobago include:

- Trinidad and Tobago 11th EDF National Indicative Programme – Support for building competitiveness and innovation. This is expected to start in 2017.
- Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) direct grants to SME s through its calls for proposals. See <http://www.carib-export.com/>
- The Intra – ACP Private Sector Development Programme . See <http://www.acp.int/>
- Trade Com II: <http://tradecom-acpeu.org/index.cfm>

The luncheon meeting was also used as an opportunity to capture market access concerns and barriers to trade. Issues discussed at this Luncheon included the exceptionally high tariffs on wine and spirits and the impact of this on restaurant and hotel food and beverage competitiveness, as compared to other islands and the increasing challenges to access Euro currency. EUROCHAMTT members are invited to submit information on all barriers to trade they may face.



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In attendandance at the Luncheon were:

1. Representatives of the European Union Delegation to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, the OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM **who presented** as well as a representatives from the European Union Delegation to Trinidad and Tobago
2. EUROCHAMTT members involved in trade in goods and services industries
3. Trade attaches/ officers of the German, Dutch and French embassies and the British High Commission
4. Representatives of the Customs Clerks and Customs Brokers Association of Trinidad & Tobago
5. Other invited guests representing EU Brands.

Lunch featured: Tuscan Barley salad from La Tartaruga Restaurant; cold cuts: speck, coppa, mixed affettati, cheese: Gorgonzola dip and olives: cerignola from All Italian; shortbread pecan and cranberry cookies from The Verandah; spinach, lettuce, cranberry and walnut salad with honey and lime dressing and fresh fruit.