

March 2011

The Trade Policy Unit consults with Intellectual Property officials

Intellectual property was the subject of a recent meeting that The Trade Policy Unit and the Geneva Mission convened with officials on 28th March 2011. The purpose of the meeting was to update trade and intellectual property officials on the status of intellectual property rights negotiations in the WTO and to formulate positions on a multilateral register for Geographical Indications (GIs).

A Geographical Indication is a sign used on goods that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities, reputation or characteristics that are essentially attributable to that place of origin. Most commonly, a geographical indication includes the name of the place of origin of the goods e.g. champagne which is a region in France. Agricultural products typically have qualities that derive from their place of production and are influenced by specific local factors, such as climate and soil. Whether a sign is recognized as a geographical indication is a matter of national law. Geographical indications may be used for a wide variety of products, whether natural, agricultural or manufactured.

The meeting agreed to thoroughly review the draft text on the GI Register and to provide guidance for the formulation of an OECS position, provide responses to questions posed by the chairman of the WTO TRIPS Council, and provide information on national processes for granting protection of GIs and Trademarks by April 13, 2011, or as soon as possible thereafter. It was also agreed that the next consultation will be held in May or June depending on outcome of the next meeting of the TRIPS Council and developments in the evolution of the draft text.

The negotiations on intellectual property are important to service providers, manufacturers and farmers in the OECS because they are about drafting the rules for the protection of their creative work.

The OECS continues coordination for the CARICOM- Canada negotiations

The Trade Policy Unit and the ECCB collaborated to convene a coordination meeting with investment and services officials on 16th March in advance of the technical meeting of CARICOM officials which was held in Barbados during the week of 21st March. OECS officials discussed the latest version of the CARICOM text on investment as well as other matters that require attention such as the preparation of national investment offers.

CARICOM officials regularly meet to prepare the region's position on the subjects being negotiated with Canada that will be included in the CARICOM- Canada Free Trade Agreement.

The new agreement will set out the conditions under which OECS manufacturers, farmers and service providers will trade with Canada. The next negotiating round with Canada will be held during the first week of April 2011 in Ottawa, Canada.

If you have questions about trade policy issues:

Email contact: tpu@oecs.org (<mailto:tpu@oecs.org>)

An Update from the OECS Trade Policy Unit on Trade Matters of Importance to the Sub Region