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OECS officials discuss further liberalization of agriculture and industrial goods

Trade and Customs officials from OECS-WTO Member States met on 4-5th July in Grenada to discuss and agree on an approach for reducing tariffs on agriculture and non agricultural products as part of the ongoing negotiations in the World Trade Organisation. In 2007, WTO Members agreed on the modalities or rules for tariff reduction for different groups of countries including small vulnerable economies of which the OECS Member States are part. OECS countries have to apply these modalities to their national tariff schedules taking into account important issues as food security, domestic production and government revenue. The rate and pace of tariff reduction is of particular relevance to farmers and manufacturers in the Member States.

The officials agreed that due to the existence of the OECS Economic Union all Member States would seek to reduce tariffs on agriculture and non- agricultural products in the same manner and that tariff reduction will be linked to that being extended to Canada for the CARICOM-Canada trade agreement. It was also agreed that the Hub and Spokes Project would provide Member States with assistance to undertake the tariff reduction exercise.

Funding for this market access scheduling workshop was provided by the European Union under the Caribbean Integration Support Programme.

The Sixteenth Meeting of the TNG meets in Grenada

The Trade Policy Unit convened the sixteenth meeting of the Trade Negotiations Group (TNG) on July 5-6th in Grenada. The TNG agreed that Member States would as far as possible reduce tariffs on the same items in the CARICOM-Canada negotiations. Member States would await the findings of a market study in order to prepare requests for additional market access to Canada. Member States will continue to participate in the WTO negotiations and prepare for the upcoming Ministerial Meeting in December 2011.

With respect to the CSME, the TNG agreed that Member States should undertake national consultations on the study that reviewed the operation of the Common External Tariff and rules of origin. Member States would participate actively in a meeting to discuss programmes for Less Developed Countries such as the OECS to integrate more easily into the CSME. This meeting was scheduled for 10-11 July 2011.

The TNG endorsed the proposal to contract a coordinator to assist the Secretariat to establish a regime for free circulation of goods in the Economic Union.

The TNG is comprised of trade officials and private sector representatives of Member States and the Secretariat. Financial resources to convene the meeting were provided by the Inter American Development Bank under a trade capacity building project.

If you have questions about trade policy issues: Email contact: [tpu@oecs.org](mailto:tpu@oecs.org) ( <mailto:tpu@oecs.org> )

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