



FTA
Foreign Trade Association

Brussels, 29.08.2012

TRADE AND CUSTOMS POLICY

- Russia becomes 156. WTO member – Laos and other countries will follow
- FTA organises discussion on 'Trade Facilitation' at the WTO Public Forum in Geneva (25 September 2012)
- Vietnam – FTA submitted detailed input in framework of EU public consultation

TRADE SAFEGUARD MEASURES

- FTA members meet Commission in Hearing to discuss anti-dumping investigation on ceramic tableware

TRADE AND CUSTOMS POLICY

Russia becomes 156. WTO member – Laos and other countries will follow

Russia officially joined the WTO on 22 August 2012, one month after President Putin signed the accession agreement (see Circular 15/2012). Only two days later, Vanuatu, a small island state in the Pacific, became the 157th member of the trade organisation. Earlier this year, Montenegro and Samoa had already adhered to the WTO which is now representing significantly more than 90 per cent of world trade flows.

These accessions demonstrate that the WTO remains a dynamic and attractive organisation, especially as the world economy goes through troubled times. Currently, more than 20 countries are negotiating to join the WTO – among these are Algeria (which applied 25 years ago), Belarus, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos (which should become a member until the end of the year), Libya and Serbia. Once a country entered the WTO, retailers profit from lower

tariffs, a better investment environment and more legal stability.

An interesting case is Laos, a country that is enjoying one of the highest GDP growth rates in the world (7.9% in 2011). Laos has similar resources and strengths than Burma and is strategically located between China and the big booming ASEAN countries. The combination of these qualities with both the on-going internal reform process and the successful WTO accession talks make Laos potentially an interesting sourcing country for European retail.

Pierre Gröning

FTA organises discussion on 'Trade Facilitation' at the WTO Public Forum in Geneva (25 September 2012)

On 25 September 2012 (16.15 to 18.15) will take place a panel discussion at the WTO Public Forum in Geneva on the topic 'Trade facilitation 2012: What can the WTO still deliver to economic operators?'. FTA and EuroCommerce, jointly organising the event, invited high-ranking speakers such as Vital Moreira, Chairman of the International Trade Committee at the European Parliament, Paolo Garzotti, Head of Unit at DG Trade, and Olivier Ganne from the FTA member company Oxyrane/Decathlon to present their views on trade facilitation (i.e. how to reduce costs and maximise efficiency at the customs) and cutting red tape at the border.

The WTO Public Forum takes place every year in September and serves as a platform to discuss current developments in world trade. This year, the sessions organised at the Public Forum (24 to 26 September) are about 'Is Multilateralism in Crisis?'. Last year, more than 1,500 participants took part representing the WTO and other international organisations, WTO member states, business and civil society.

More information about the programme, the registration and the venue is available on: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/public_forum12_e/public_forum12_e.htm. Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information or with any request concerning this event.

Pierre Gröning

Vietnam – FTA submitted detailed input in framework of EU public consultation

Official negotiations for a free-trade agreement between the EU and Vietnam will be launched in October (see Circular 8/2012 and FTA strategy email from 10 July). In preparation of the talks, the European Commission asked stakeholders to provide information about trade obstacles in business relations with Vietnam.

Based on input from several members, FTA took part in the public consultation by handing in a comprehensive response which includes a list of challenges and a number of recommendations. Major concerns refer to the administrative situation in Vietnam (weaknesses of legal system, slow procedures, inconsistent rules, corruption, lack of transparency, ...) and the lack of cooperation in the field of IPR, standards and technical requirements.

With regard to the importance of Vietnam as a sourcing country, it is a top priority for the FTA to closely follow the bilateral negotiations to defend the interests of European trade in this process. Within the next months, FTA will design a position paper and meet with both negotiating parties.

Pierre Gröning

TRADE SAFEGUARD MEASURES

FTA members meet Commission in Hearing to discuss anti-dumping investigation on ceramic tableware

On 22 August, a group of 12 companies met with Commission officials directly responsible for the investigation that is currently running against imports of ceramic tableware and kitchenware from China. The Hearing, which was organised by the FTA, lasted for two hours during which time each of the representatives were able to put their specific views and arguments to the four Commission officials present. A meeting was held at the FTA offices before the Hearing in order to coordinate the participation of each of the companies and to ensure that their participation had the maximum impact.

The Hearing itself was an important opportunity to show the Commission that many companies are already affected by the investigation and will be seriously affected if duties are imposed. It was particularly important to show the Commission the variety of companies that will be affected; from small importers to large retailers. Issues raised included: the confidential protection of the EU producers names; the pre-selection of the sample of those producers; the fact that, unlike China, EU producers are unable to produce both the volume and variety of product desired by the EU consumer; the overly wide scope of the PCNs assigned to the imports; the difference in cost between the (mainly) high-end EU product and the Chinese product and the loss of variety to the EU consumer if duties are imposed.

As was expected in an on-going investigation that contains many aspects considered to be confidential, the Commission officials did not give precise feedback. However, they did confirm that the analogue country had been changed from Russia (a choice to which the FTA had filed an objection) to Brazil and requested information regarding the cost differences between the imported and EU produced product, differences in quality within the range of the imported product and loss of employment that may be caused by the imposition of duties. They also promised to follow on the issues raised by the participants – and the FTA will follow their progress in this regard.

All the FTA members who participated appreciated the opportunity afforded by the Hearing which should prevent the Commission from claiming, as it often does at the conclusion of anti-dumping investigations, that input from retailers and importers was lacking.

The FTA will continue to be actively involved in this investigation and will update FTA members as soon as any developments are known.

Stuart Newman

The information contained herein is restricted solely to FTA Members. Further distribution is strictly forbidden unless authorisation has been granted by the FTA.

IMPRESSUM / CONTACT

FTA - Foreign Trade Association
172, Av. De Cortenbergh
B-1000
Bruxelles

Fax:+32 2 741 64 78
Internet:www.fta-eu.org

PERSONS TO BE CONTACTED

Jan Eggert, jan.eggert@fta-eu.org
Tel: 0032-2-741 64 02
Stefan Wengler, stefan.wengler@fta-eu.org
Tel: 0049/221/92.18.34.13
Lorenz Berzau, lorenz.berzau@fta-eu.org
Tel: 0032-2-741 64 07
Stuart Newman, stuart.newman@fta-eu.org
Tel: 0032-2-741 64 04
Flavia Bernardini, flavia.bernardini@fta-eu.org
Tel: 0032 2-741 64 03