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EU launches on-line helpdesk for developing countries

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Approved by:

Christine Strossman

U.S. Mission to the European Union, Brussels

Prepared by:

Hilde Brans

Report Highlights:

The European Commission has launched a new on-line helpdesk to facilitate developing country access to EU markets. With the launch of this helpdesk, the EU hopes to counter some of the criticism about the damaging effect their market access policy has on developing countries.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
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EU launches on-line helpdesk for developing countries

The European Commission has launched a new on-line "Expanding Exports Helpdesk" to facilitate developing country access to EU markets. The first phase of the helpdesk provides relevant information to developing country exporters interested in exporting to the EU on EU import tariffs, customs documentation, rules of origin and trade statistics. An on-line forum to establish a dialogue between exporters and EU importers is also available. A second phase will be developed in 2004 and will cover internal taxation (VAT and excise duties) in the EU member states and product specific import requirements such as sanitary and phytosanitary requirements. The stated aim of the helpdesk is "to increase the benefit for developing countries of the terms of access which they have now to the EU market and of the improved terms which are being negotiated both in the WTO as well as at a bilateral level." With the launch of this helpdesk, the EU hopes to counter some of the criticism from the U.S. and other WTO members about the damaging effect the EU's market access policy has on developing countries.

Forty percent of total EU imports (incl. agriculture) come from developing countries. In 2002, total EU imports from developing countries benefiting from the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) amounted to EUR 53.2 billion; total EU imports from countries benefiting from the "Everything but Arms (EBA)" scheme, a particular type of GSP, amounted to EUR 2.2 billion; total EU imports from ACP countries benefiting from preferences under the Cotonou Agreement amounted to EUR 31 billion. The launch of the new helpdesk was one of the suggestions included in the European Commission's Action Plan "Trade and Development: assisting developing countries to benefit from trade", adopted in September 2002.

The on-line helpdesk may be a helpful tool not only for exporters in developing countries but also for other users interested in the EU market. Its customs duties database allows easy access to the Most Favored Nation (MFN) import duties as well as preferential rates of duty, tariff quotas and other applicable measures. Its statistical database allows fast access to EU import data from all third countries covering a period of three calendar years.

The on-line helpdesk's webaddress is <http://export-help.cec.eu.int>.

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