

NEWS: Caribbean partnerships deepened to back EPA implementation

NEWS: Caribbean partnerships deepened to back EPA implementation

St George's, 31 October 2013/ CARICOM: A recently convened meeting of CARIFORUM States and regional partner institutions has been lauded as a significant step forward in deepening partnerships, in relation to the implementation of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

The Second Meeting of National EPA Coordinators and Heads of National EPA Implementation Units and Like Entities, convened in St George's, Grenada on 17-18 October, provided insight into matching resources allocated to regional partner institutions with EPA implementation priorities and needs of regional States.

The Meeting, organized by the CARIFORUM Directorate based in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, was made possible through funding from the European Union (EU).

The engagement was attended by representatives of fourteen of the fifteen signatory CARIFORUM States to the EPA. The regional partner institutions represented at the Meeting were the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export), the Caribbean Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the West Indies Rum and Spirits Producers' Association (WIRSPA) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat.

The broad aim of the Meeting was to provide for an exchange of views on how partnerships could be deepened at the strategic and programmatic levels between CARIFORUM States and regional partner institutions that, under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Caribbean Regional Indicative Programme (CRIP), are supporting the implementation of the EPA in CARIFORUM.

The Meeting was held against the backdrop of efforts by the CARIFORUM Directorate to ensure that regional partner institutions and CARIFORUM States scale up collaboration, as the regional bloc seeks to confront the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities associated with EPA implementation.

In his keynote address at the opening, Dr Patrick Antoine, the Chief Policy Advisor to the Ministries of Finance and Economic Development, Trade, Planning and Cooperatives of Grenada said the Meeting provided the opportunity for participants "to shape EPA implementation dialogue and actions which can make a true mark on growth, development and poverty alleviation in the Region." In this context, he characterized National EPA Coordinators as being at the forefront of the implementation of the EPA.

During the Meeting, representatives of CARIFORUM States placed strong emphasis on some common priority areas, for which capacity-building is required. These include the need to strengthen the productive and competitive capacity of economic operators. The discussions underscored the use of geographical indications (GIs) as a tool for increasing the competitiveness of CARIFORUM products.

The Meeting addressed issues in relation to Services, in particular cultural and creative industries, and endorsed the support being provided in this regard to build the capacity of the private sector.

The Meeting also emphasized the importance of support in the areas of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). Rules of Origin (RoO) related capacity-building and training was also the focus of attention.

Participants also placed particular emphasis on the importance of market intelligence support and, in that regard, the provision of actionable information to private sector operators. Participants stressed the need for outreach to be informed by market intelligence, so that smaller private sector operators in particular can be effectively positioned to make inroads into extra-regional markets. In this regard, the French Caribbean Outermost Regions (FCORs) were the subject of discussion.

The link was also made, in deliberations, between the outreach aiding in the type of buy-in necessary from private sector stakeholders regarding compliance-oriented monitoring as well as monitoring for 'impacts', in the medium- to long-term with respect to the EPA.

Regional partner institutions sought to call attention to their EPA-related work programmes, to date, and the scope for continued support to help address supply-side constraints at the national level that stymie translating market access into market penetration.

The fifteen signatory CARIFORUM States to the EPA are the independent CARICOM Member States and the Dominican Republic.

Tags: [News articles](#) ^[1]

Source URL: <http://acp.int/content/news-caribbean-partnerships-deepened-back-epa-implementation>

Links:

[1] <http://acp.int/category/story-type/news-articles>