

EU trade policy digest April–June 2024

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Regulation

European Commission: [Negotiations and agreements](#)

What is changing and why?

EU negotiations with low- and middle-income countries

Indonesia: “Good progress” has been reported at talks held in May on the EU Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), in particular on rules of origin, and on the trade and sustainable development chapters. Indonesian negotiators are reported to be optimistic about completing negotiations in July, but sensitive areas of discussion remain, such as EU rules on palm oil.

Kenya: Following approval by the Council of the EU in June, the EU and Kenya Economic Partnership Arrangement (EPA) enters into force on 1 July 2024. The EPA will remove import tariffs on all goods exported from Kenya to the EU. Kenya will remove import tariffs on the majority of goods over the coming 15–25 years but, notably, agricultural products will be excluded.

Kyrgyz Republic: The EU and the Kyrgyz Republic have signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) in June 2024 to reinforce cooperation in a range of areas, including trade and investment, and sustainable development.

Viet Nam: The EU–Viet Nam Domestic Advisory Group (DAG), which monitors the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two parties, has criticised the a new national security directive (Directive 24) that it claims prevents the formation of independent political organisations, limits freedom of assembly, and increases surveillance of citizens and workers’ unions. The DAG argues that this does not comply with trade and sustainable development commitments included in the FTA, and calls for reinforced monitoring by the European Commission.

Trade policy

EU extends preferential access for Ukrainian products: Until June 2025, the EU has extended full trade liberalisation – zero duties and zero quota limitations – on all goods from Ukraine. The EU can choose to reimpose import tariffs for eggs, poultry, sugar, oats, maize, goats, and honey where imports of a given product threaten to have adverse effects on EU

producers. In June, 2024 import tariffs were reintroduced for oats.

EU sets higher tariffs on Russian and Belarusian grain products: The EU has introduced higher tariffs on cereals, oilseeds, and derived products, as well as beet pulp pellets and dried peas from Russia and Belarus, and has prevented these countries' access to preferential tariff rate quotas on cereals, oilseeds, and derived products.

EU publishes report on Customs cooperation with China: A European Commission study of the EU–China Agreement on Customs Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance (CCMAA) reported the success of the agreement in terms of sharing information and developing dialogue. While the recognition of authorised economic operators has been positive, incomplete IT systems have hindered progress. Meeting in June, both parties expressed their commitment to reinforcing the effectiveness of customs controls.

European Parliament approves Samoa Agreement with OACPS: In April 2024, the European Parliament gave its support to the Samoa Agreement. The Agreement has provisionally applied since 1 January 2024, and will fully enter into force once adopted by EU Member States and two-thirds of Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) members.

“Graduation” of Bhutan from special EBA status: The Commission has confirmed that from January 2028 Bhutan, due to its economic development, will no longer benefit from the Everything But Arms (EBA) special arrangement that currently provides duty-free and quota-free market access to the EU market. Bhutan will still benefit from the general preferential tariff arrangement under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP).

European Commission evaluates EU SADC Agreement: The Commission reported on the increase in trade between the two parties between 2016 and 2021 in spite of the Covid-19 pandemic. The report also found an overall increase in rejections of food consignments from South African Development Community (SADC) States, primarily from Mozambique and South Africa, due to food safety and plant health concerns.

Timeline

Recent developments in EU trade policy, April–June 2024

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