

EU TRADE POLICY JULY–SEPTEMBER 2026

TRADE DIGEST 2026/4



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EU TRADE POLICY JULY–SEPTEMBER 2026

TRADE DIGEST 2026/4

AGRINFO prepares regular briefings on the latest developments in European Union (EU) trade negotiations and trade policy that concern low- and middle-income countries, and on other developments in the policy-making arena that may have an impact on trade of agri-food products. These briefings are designed to highlight topics of current interest, in particular for policy-makers and public authorities. Links are given to resources where more detailed information can be found, including the official EU website on trade negotiations and agreements.

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KEY POINTS

EU trade negotiations with low- and middle-income countries

Armenia: The EU has approved temporary trade liberalisation measures for Armenian products in response to recent Russian trade restrictions.

Côte d'Ivoire: The European Commission has launched negotiations for a bilateral Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) between the EU and Côte d'Ivoire. Building on the joint Sustainable Cocoa Initiative, discussions under the SIFA will also aim to strengthen cooperation on sustainable investment, traceability, and resilient cocoa value chains.

India: The European Commission has submitted proposals, including details of tariff reductions and tariff rate quotas, to EU Member States for formal approval of the EU–India Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Philippines: The EU and the Philippines have now reached substantial agreement in their negotiations for an FTA.

Trade policy

Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) procedures: The European Commission has adopted two Regulations setting out procedures for countries to apply for GSP+ status, and procedures for withdrawing preferences and establishing safeguards under the new GSP Regulation [2026/1395](#).

GSP review: A Commission report on trade under the GSP shows that in 2024, 88.8% of trade was carried out making use of preferential tariffs. The rate was higher for less developed countries benefiting from zero tariffs under the Everything But Arms (EBA) Agreement, at 94.5%. For countries with GSP+ status, the rate was 87.3%.

EU forced labour product ban: The European Commission has published new Guidelines to help stakeholders implement the Forced Labour Regulation [2024/3015](#), which will apply from 14 December 2027.

Public procurement: The Commission has adopted a proposal to modernise and simplify the EU's public procurement framework, including rules on participation in public procurement by non-EU stakeholders.



EU TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

Armenia

The European Parliament and Council of the EU have approved temporary trade-liberalisation measures for Armenian products in response to recent Russian trade restrictions on Armenian exports. The new arrangement will liberalise approximately 80% of Armenian exports to the EU. The measures will apply for 2 years [1].

Specifically, the EU will lift *ad valorem* tariffs on a wide range of animal products, fruit, vegetables, cereals, oilseeds and processed products. In addition, *ad valorem* duties will be lifted for a limited volume (quota) of cucumbers, grapes, pears, apricots, cherries, peaches, plums and strawberries. To benefit from this improved market access, Armenia must comply with the applicable rules of origin, engage in administrative cooperation with the EU, not introduce new trade restrictions on EU imports and respect the essential elements of the [EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership](#), including democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights. The new arrangement includes safeguard provisions, which would allow the EU to take action where increased imports cause, or risk causing, adverse effects on EU producers [2].

The new measures will enter into force on the day after publication of the Regulation (expected in October 2026).

1. Council of the EU (2026) Council backs temporary trade measures to support Armenia. Press release, 2 September.
2. European Commission (2026) [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on temporary trade-liberalisation measures applicable to Armenian products](#).

Côte d'Ivoire

On 17 July 2026, the European Commission launched negotiations for a bilateral Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement (SIFA) between the EU and Côte d'Ivoire. Building on the joint [Sustainable Cocoa Initiative](#), discussions under the SIFA will also aim to strengthen cooperation on sustainable investment, traceability, and resilient cocoa value chains [3].

During an exchange on the SIFA between the European Commission and the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA) on 2 September 2026, Members of the European Parliament broadly backed the negotiations but warned that overly strict traceability rules could push Ivorian cocoa exports toward China, the United States, or Canada [4]. Others indicated that any investment must translate into local value creation, not just extraction, and should reinforce the existing Sustainable Cocoa Initiative rather than duplicate it. It was also emphasised that the deal must not become a tool for the EU to simply secure more cocoa. The Parliamentarians pressed the Commission to publish a firm negotiating calendar covering the sectors involved and the deal's likely impact on small businesses and farmers

3. European Commission (2026) [EU and Côte d'Ivoire work on Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement](#). News, 17 July.
4. European Parliament (2026) [Committee on International Trade Ordinary meeting](#), 2 September.



India

The European Commission submitted proposals to the Council of the European Union on 11 September 2026 for the signature and conclusion of the EU–India Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The EU and India already trade more than €180 billion in goods and services annually [5], and India exports around €4.5 billion of agri-food goods [6].

The EU will reduce tariff lines for many agricultural products either immediately when the agreement enters into force, or gradually over a period of 4–8 years. For some more sensitive products for which full liberalisation could not be negotiated, new tariff rate quotas are established (see Table 1).

Table 1: Tariff rate quotas for agri-food products

Products (CN chapters 1–22)	Quantity (metric tonnes)	In-quota duty
Swine meat	1,000	0
Sheep meat	3,500	50% base rate
Goat meat	500	50%
Turkey meat	500	50%
Ghee	1,000	50%
Sweetcorn	1,800	No <i>ad valorem</i> duty
Cucumbers/gherkins (CN code 0711 40 40)	25,000	0
Cucumbers/gherkins (CN code 2011 10 00)	35,000	0
Dried onions	15,000–25,000*	9.30–7.68% †
Table grapes ‡	85,000	0
Maize starch	600	€159.96 per 1,000 kg to €99.60 per 1,000 kg †
Other starches	500	60%
High sugar-content processed products	200	0
Molasses rum	4,000 hectolitres	0
* Quantity rises gradually over an 11-year period. † In-quota tariff is reduced gradually over an 11-year period. ‡ Imported between 1 January and 20 July, and between 1 and 31 December. Source: European Commission, Schedules of Tariff Commitments.		



The EU excludes some sensitive agricultural products from tariff reductions, including beef, chicken, rice, sugar, milk powder, honey, bananas, soft wheat, garlic, and ethanol. These products are marked “X” in the tariff schedules [7], [8].

As a result of this agreement, India will be removed from the EU’s standard Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) once the FTA comes into effect. For products where the GSP tariff is lower than the tariff negotiated under the new agreement, the former tariff will continue for a period of 3, 5, or 7 years after the agreement enters into force. This is the case for many types of Indian fruits and vegetables.

The FTA will require approval from the European Parliament and the Council of the EU (Member States) to be formally concluded and to enter into force, while India will proceed with its own ratification process [5].

5. European Commission (2026) [Commission presents landmark India trade deal to Council for signature](#). Press release, 11 September.
6. European Commission (2026) [Agri-Food Trade Statistical Fact Sheet: European Union – India](#).
7. European Commission (2026) [Schedules of Tariff Commitments](#), Annex 2-A.
8. European Commission (2026) [Tariff schedule of European Union](#), Appendix 2-A-1.

Philippines

On 22 September 2026, the EU and the Philippines reached “substantial agreement” in their negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) intended to deepen economic ties. The two sides agreed to liberalise over 94% of tariff lines, covering more than 97% of goods on both sides. Bilateral trade in goods amounted to €17.6 billion in 2025, while trade in services reached €10.3 billion in 2024 [9]. The Philippines’ agri-food exports to the EU were valued in 2025 at €1.4 billion [10]. The detailed final concessions have not yet been made public.

The Philippines currently benefits from preferential market access to the EU under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) [11]. Once concluded and implemented, the FTA will replace the GSP+ as the framework governing EU–Philippines trade preferences [12].

9. European Commission (2026) [Substantial agreement on EU-Philippines trade deal](#). Press release, 22 September.
10. European Commission (2026) [Agri-Food Trade Statistical Fact Sheet: European Union – Philippines](#).
11. European Commission (2026) [Joint Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the Generalised Scheme of Preferences covering the period 2023-2025](#).
12. European Commission (2026) [Questions & Answers on the new EU Generalised Scheme of Preferences](#).



TRADE POLICY

Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) procedures

On 10 September 2026, the European Commission adopted two Regulations, still to be published, setting out procedures under the new GSP Regulation [2026/1395](#) which was adopted on 17 June 2026 [\[13\]](#), [\[14\]](#).

The first new Regulation establishes the procedure for countries to apply for GSP+ status, including the documentation that countries need to provide for the Commission to consider the request. This includes full details on the country's ratification of the extended list of conventions now included in the GSP Regulation (Annex VI). The Commission must examine and decide on any GSP + request within 6 months.

The second Regulation sets out a procedure that allows EU to temporarily withdraw GSP or GSP+ status and adopt general safeguard measures. Preferential trade arrangements can be withdrawn if the EU considers that a country has demonstrated serious or systematic shortcomings in its obligation to readmit nationals who have been denied the right to remain in the EU. This Regulation sets out the procedure for partner countries and third parties to submit relevant information. Any country whose preferences have been withdrawn may request to be reinstated if the reason for the withdrawal is no longer justified. The same Regulation also sets out investigation procedures for EU producers that consider imports are causing, or may cause, disturbance to the EU market. Complainants must submit information on the volumes and prices of imports, and the conditions for producers that have led to the complaint. Exporters' associations will be kept informed of any safeguarding investigation, and will have the opportunity to provide information to the European Commission. The Commission can also carry out verification visits to exporting countries. Any interested party can request the reinstatement of tariff preferences if there is evidence that the conditions that led to the removal of preferences no longer apply.

These two Regulations are expected to be published in late 2026, ahead of the new GSP that takes effect on 1 January 2027.

13. European Commission (2026) [Draft](#) Commission Delegated Regulation establishing rules related to the procedure for granting the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance (GSP+).
14. European Commission (2026) [Draft](#) Commission Delegated Regulation establishing rules related to the procedure for the temporary withdrawal of preferential arrangements and the adoption of general safeguard measures.

GSP review

In a report on trade under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), published in July 2026, the European Commission analysed how countries that have benefited from the GSP used those preferences in the period 2023–2025 [\[15\]](#). The report notes that many of the countries that have the opportunity to trade using reduced tariffs do not always do so. Overall in 2024, 88.8% of trade from countries benefiting from the GSP was completed using reduced tariffs. The rate for least developed countries (LDCs) benefiting from zero duty under the Everything But Arms (EBA) Agreement was higher, at 94.5%; for countries with GSP+ status it was 87.3%. The Commission identifies several reasons for non-utilisation, including insufficient awareness of the system, administrative shortcomings, and the coexistence of alternative trade arrangements. The report concludes that the EU and its Delegations must strengthen communication and dialogue on the GSP, including increasing the visibility, awareness, and uptake of EBA, particularly in Africa.



The report also highlights that GSP status is not permanent for all beneficiaries. Countries can graduate from the scheme as their economy develops, or when they enter into an EU Free Trade Agreement. For LDC exporters, graduation from LDC status can also result in a transition from EBA duty-free access to the standard GSP, unless the country qualifies for GSP+. The Commission expects that the number of countries benefiting from the GSP will continue to decline.

Exporters are advised to carefully track changes to their country's GSP status and assess how any change could affect the tariffs and competitiveness of their products in the EU market.

15. European Commission (2026) [Joint Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the Generalised Scheme of Preferences covering the period 2023-2025](#).

EU forced labour product ban

In September 2026, the European Commission published new [Guidelines](#) on the application of Regulation [2024/3015](#) (the Forced Labour Regulation), which will apply from 14 December 2027. This Regulation prohibits operators from placing products made using forced labour on the EU market, and the export of such products from the EU. The Guidelines are not legally binding (only the Regulation itself is legally binding) and are intended to help stakeholders comply with the new rules. For further information, see [Guidelines on the EU Forced Labour Regulation](#).

Public procurement

On 9 September 2026, the European Commission proposed to simplify the EU's public procurement framework to support effective investments in public services and infrastructure in line with the EU's policy objectives. This proposal replaces three existing procurement Directives with a single Regulation [\[16\]](#).

The proposal makes the best price–quality ratio (BPQR) the standard method for awarding contracts. This means that quality criteria represent at least 30% of the criteria taken into account (rising to 50% for labour-intensive contracts). The aim is to ensure that choices are consistent with EU's environmental and innovation policy objectives, including promoting eco-labels, life-cycle costing, and performance standards. The proposed Regulation allows public buyers to apply “European preference requirements” that the Commission considers to be fully aligned with the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA). This would allow contracting authorities to restrict participation in public tenders to economic operators from the EU and those trading partners with whom the EU has established procurement arrangements under the GPA or an FTA.

The proposal also clarifies which suppliers must be permitted to tender in public procurement due to the EU's commitments under FTAs or the GPA. The Commission proposes to use its [Access2Markets](#) web portal to help businesses determine which operators are eligible. The Commission will also be able to exclude operators in non-EU countries from public procurement if it has been demonstrated that those countries have failed to allow EU operators to participate in their own public procurement. Restrictions will also be possible where the EU needs to avoid supply dependency for reasons of security including economic security [\[17\]](#).

The proposed Regulation will be negotiated by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU before its adoption and entry into force.

16. European Commission (2026) [Commission proposes simpler and more strategic Public Procurement rules](#). Press release, 9 September.
17. European Commission (2026) [Proposal](#) for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on public contracts and concessions.



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