

Trade between the EU and Zimbabwe set to increase after the ratification of the iEPA

After the recent ratification by Zimbabwe on 13th of March, 2012 of the interim EU-ESA Economic Partnership Agreement and the official communication to the Council, the iEPA finally started provisional application on 14th May, 2012.

The interim Agreement, signed by Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Zimbabwe and the EU in 2009, is the first Economic Partnership Agreement to be implemented in Africa.

The interim Agreement establishes a stable and predictable trade partnership for the development of our partners in the region. The interim EPA consolidates the duty-free, quota-free market access which the EU offers to all exports from the four ESA States. The ESA countries involved will gradually open their markets to EU exports over 15 years, with some exceptions for products that ESA countries consider sensitive. Zimbabwe decided to liberalise its market to EU imports 80% and decided to exclude the following sensitive products from liberalisation: products of animal origin, cereals, beverages, paper, plastics and rubber, textiles and clothing, footwear, glass and ceramics, consumer electronic and vehicles.

The interim Agreement also contains provisions concerning rules of origin, development cooperation, fisheries, trade defence instruments and dispute settlement.

This Agreement constitutes a stepping stone to a wider and comprehensive deal currently under negotiation between the EU and the Eastern and Southern African region, taking into account the development dimension for the ESA signatory countries. The areas potentially covered by the full EPA go beyond trade in goods and will include services and investment, and trade-related areas such as sustainable development, competition, Trade Facilitation as well as further improvement in trade in goods and rules of origin.