



Press Release

Dateline: St John's Antigua. Thursday 31st August 2023

The Customs and Excise Division (CED) of the Ministry of Finance as part of the World Customs Organisation Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion Programme for Customs, is hosting a series of meetings. These are being held to Support the Modernization and Implementation of the Customs Modernization Plan and spanned the entire week 28th August to 1st September 2023.

The series of meetings include training for the CED, as well as providing updates on the progress achieved so far with the country's commitment to the articles signed with the WTO's National Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Facilitators were:

Mr. Dwane Martin - Mercator Programme Advisor (MPA) Expert

Mr. Wagner Castro – Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Expert, supported by

Mr. George Brown – CED's Director of Research and Development

While different groups held meeting with the facilitators, today's (Thursday 31st August 2023) session was targeted at members of the Freight Agents Association and the Chamber of Commerce.

Members of the private sector were brought up to date on the progress being made on the various Articles of the National Trade Facilitation Agreement by Antigua and Barbuda, such:

- Article 1 Publication and Availability of Information, which requires countries to publish the rules for matters such as procedures for importation; applied rates of duties and taxes; fees and charges imposed by governmental agencies; etc.
- Article 7 Release and Clearance of Goods, which includes agreements on matters such as Pre-Arrival Processing; Electronic Payment; Separation of Release from Final Determination of Customs Duties, Fees and Charges; Risk Management; Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorised Economic Operators

Albeit it was the consensus that more needs to be done to address the cost of doing business, and given the country's heavy dependence on imported goods, it was felt that attention needed to be placed on related or other factors which provide upward pressure on costs.

Issues raised included:

- The protracted implementation of the Single Window, with the attendant effect on multiple contacts by brokers/merchants with government officials taking place over several days, thus causing the incurrence of added costs which would be passed on to consumers.
- Costs of checking containers generally, and specifically after hours.
- Generally, unnecessary time being spent in obtaining forms or approval of various types of imported goods.
- Apparent lack of necessity to obtain licenses for certain goods, given their perceived safe sources.
- Lack of use of scanners to check certain goods.



- Apparent inconsistencies between customs clearance requirements advertised as opposed to practiced. This was made in the context of clearing motor vehicles.
- Unnecessary imposition of licenses for some items since they are not being manufactured locally.
- Lack of efficiency: a current requirement for submission of hard copies of for example Environmental Levy Forms, when the more efficient option of electronic filing which was used during the pandemic, has been discontinued.
- An apparent lack of coordination between the CED and Port Authority.
- A from one merchant that Antigua and Barbuda may have some of the “Highest Port charges in the Caribbean”.

Those present were pleased at the presentation and thanked all the presenters, also noting that the recent establishment of the National Trade Council should provide a vehicle to help to address some of the issues raised.

The meeting was held in the conference room at the Antigua Port Authority building which also houses the CED, started at 09:00 and ran for approximately 2 hours.

Martin Cave
Executive Director
Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Commerce

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