



CARIFORUM-EU EPA

A Partnership that Counts



The WTO provides Market Information for MSMEs

The Covid 19 pandemic has caused supply chain problems, shipping logjams, rising inflation, increased freight rates and labour shortages that are disrupting global trade. The conflict in Ukraine is also negatively affecting global trade as the markets for grains, metals and energy products have been severely disrupted. Supply chain disruptions weigh negatively on the post-pandemic recovery. Smaller firms have been affected particularly hard, given their narrower margins and more limited financial resources. These firms either risk being pushed out of global value chains, or may find it even harder to break into them. It's been a devastating two years for small businesses and current events suggest an even more difficult period ahead.

The World Trade Organization's Informal Working Group on Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) provides a forum for CARIFORUM States and the EU to collaborate to address these aforementioned issues. This Working Group was launched in December 2017 at the Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference with the mandate of exploring ways in which WTO Members could better support MSMEs' participation in global trade. Its work focuses on identifying "horizontal and non-discriminatory measures" that can help MSMEs trade internationally and benefit from trade rules through the sharing of good practices and by developing recommendations to help MSMEs trade. Participation in the Working Group is open to all WTO Members. 91 Members, representing around 80% of world exports and 65% of global gross domestic product (GDP) currently participate. The EU and nine CARIFORUM States number are amongst the participants.

An important initiative of the Working Group is the recently launched Trade 4 MSMEs platform (<https://trade4msmes.org/>). This platform contains short guides providing information on, *inter alia*, the steps that companies need to follow before exporting or importing goods or services, contractual and intellectual property issues, available logistics and transport options, how to access trade finance, how to make the best use of digital tools and how to deal with potential trade disputes. Trade4MSMEs also provides information for policymakers and government officials, outlines important issues for MSMEs and highlights best practices. The platform provides information on international and regional initiatives aimed at MSMEs and contains links to MSME data sources which are available for analytical purposes. CARIFORUM States are encouraged to make effective use of this platform as they continue to devise and implement policy measures to support MSMEs.

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