

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND TRADE

PRESS STATEMENT

START OF TRADE UNDER THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA) AGREEMENT

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement came into effect on the 1st January 2021 following a signing and ratification process by AU Member States, with an overall plan of boosting intra Africa Trade. The AfCFTA is the largest free trade area in the world that is set to give products access to a market of more than 1 billion people, with a combined GDP of over US\$3.4 Trillion.

I am happy to announce that Eswatini is set to commence trade under the AfCFTA Agreement from the 31st January 2024, following the issuance of a Gazette issued by the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC), on behalf of the five (5) SACU Member States, including Eswatini. A copy of this Gazette will be made available on request. This Gazette has the information pertaining to rules conferring origin of products traded under the agreement. These rules are agreed to avoid trade diversion, where products from outside the continent are imported into the continent and further sold within the continent as if they were manufactured in the continent, thus displacing African products.

The Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade has already engaged traders to take advantage of this great opportunity to penetrate the African market. As a tool to enhancing trade under the AfCFTA Agreement, Eswatini has since joined other AfCFTA Partner States that are part of the Guided Trade Initiative (GTI). Under this initiative, the AfCFTA Secretariat assists in connecting businesses and products for import and export amongst the Partner States. Currently Egypt, Kenya, Cameroon, Rwanda, Ghana, Mauritius, Tanzania and Tunisia are trading under this initiative and Eswatini is amongst the countries that are set to join the second phase of the programme. Eswatini traders have registered their interest in being part of the initiative and the International Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat, Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) and the Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) will be engaging with these traders to assist them with increasing their market in the continent.

The Ministry is also engaged in discussions with key exporting companies namely The Rhodes Food Group, CONCO, Eswatini Sugar Association (ESA), The Fridge Factory just to name a few. These are some of the companies already exporting in the continent and are looking into expanding their exports into the rest of the continent. We will be reaching out to more traders including SMMEs and Women and Youth owned businesses which are set to benefit from utilising this agreement. The Ministry is ready to support traders to identify areas where they can utilize the preferences. The Ministry together with ERS is currently planning an event to unpack this agreement amongst other agreements which have been signed by Eswatini, to ensure that traders have all the information on accessing the African market.

It also gives me great pleasure to announce that the Ministry, through support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has recently concluded the

AfCFTA Implementation Strategy. The ultimate vision of this strategy is making Eswatini one of the Top 10 intra-regional exporters of value added goods and services.

Traders are encouraged to contact the following for more information on the Agreement;

1. Ms Lungile Dlamini - Director

International Trade Department

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2. Ms Khetsiwe Dlamini – Senior Trade Policy Analyst

International Trade Department

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Traders can also visit the International Trade Department offices on Gwamile Street between Eswatini Bank and The Deputy Prime Minister's office. They can also visit Eswatini Revenue Service Headquarters in Ezulwini for the issuance of certificates of origin and Eswatini Investment Promotion offices at Sibekelo Building Mbabane.

HON. MANQOBA KHUMALO (MP)

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade

25 January 2024