

Implementation of the SACU-EFTA Free Trade Agreement - 1 May 2008 – Joyce Letswalo

The [SACU-EFTA Free Trade Agreement](#) will be implemented on 1 May 2008. This has been confirmed by EFTA, after all parties have ratified and deposited their instruments of ratification. The DTI will issue a statement informing all stakeholders of this. The SACU¹-EFTA² FTA provides for a formal trading relationship between SACU and EFTA States. The agreement was signed in 2006. The Agreement provides for tariff concessions on processed agricultural products. Trade in processed agricultural products is covered in an [Annex](#) to the main Agreement. Trade in *basic* agricultural products is covered by arrangements concluded bilaterally between each EFTA State and SACU ([Iceland](#), [Norway](#), [Switzerland](#)). These agreements, which form part of the instruments establishing the free trade area, offer asymmetrical tariff phase-down, in SACU's favour.

Ministerial trade mission to Argentina – Helieh Konstant

The Department of Trade and Industry is planning a Ministerial trade mission to Argentina under the SA-Argentina Bi-national Commission from 14 to 16 July 2008. The program includes a trade seminar, business-to-business meetings, site visit and a small expo. This mission is followed by a trade mission to Chile from 21 to 23 July 2008 with the same program. Agricultural export industries and agro-processing industries and businesses are invited and encouraged to participate. Applications for [EMIA](#) has to reach the DTI; [Ms Nuraan Alli](#) at or before 8 May 2008.

Agro exporters wanted: to join in national pavilions in China – Singita Maswanganye

Join us in the 3 cities of Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai from 2 to 14 October 2008 as we celebrate 10 years of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong 2-3 October 2008, Beijing 8-9 October 2008, Shanghai 13-14 October 2008. The closing date for applications is 15 April 2008. The DTI offers to cover the cost of most expenses of successful candidates. Contact: [Samuel Maboane](#) 012-394 1357, Fax: 012-394 2357. [>>>More info..](#)

Special farming event with the focus on Africa: Big Seven trade exhibition – Ezra Steenkamp

This year the event will have a special exhibition room for farm production inputs as well as finance institutions. It will also focus on bringing buyers from Africa. A two day agricultural conference will take place parallel to the Big Seven exhibition. Mr. John Purchase from the Agricultural Business Chamber will be the keynote speaker. For more information on participating in the agricultural side events, you could contact [Agrifica](#)

¹ SACU comprises of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland

² EFTA (European Free Trade Association) member countries are Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. Switzerland and Lichtenstein constitute a customs union.

+27-12-8049729. Africa's Big Seven plays a hugely successful role in bridging the gap between buyers and sellers. The Big Seven is a unique portal into Africa. Gallagher Estate, Sunday July 15 to Tuesday July 17. [>>>More info...](#)

AgriBEE Sector Charter on Black Economic Empowerment launched

The AgriBEE Charter was launched in Pretoria on 4 April 2008 by Minister Lulu Xingwana. [Government Gazette Vol. 513, 20 March 2008, No. 30886](#)

The world grain crisis affecting the USA – Dr. Siphwe Mkhize, Washington

The American Bakers Association and Bakers from across the USA on 12 March 2008, in Washington DC, sent a clear message to US Congress and the Bush Administration that immediate action is required to alleviate the commodity crisis that severely impacts the baking industry. The crisis has developed as a result of the USA engagement on bio-fuel with many farmers concentrating on maize for ethanol thus abandoning maize for food and feed, and many farmers abandon their advantage crops because of the incentives involved in maize for ethanol.

South Africa imported 464 649 tons of wheat from the USA in 2007. The Northern Hemisphere will only start harvesting June/July 2008 and shortages will remain.

Stevia, the sweetest herb on earth? - Ezra Steenkamp

Stevioside, the main sweet component in the leaves of the Stevia plant, is about 300 times sweeter than table sugar. Could Stevia be the next generation of sweeteners? Stevia has been used in Japan for roughly 30 years with no reported negative effects and have captured over 40% of the Japanese sweetener market. Major multinational food companies like Coca Cola and Beatrice foods, convinced of its safety, use stevia extracts to sweeten foods for sale in Japan, Brazil, and other countries where it is approved. Stevia and stevioside have been permitted as food additives in Brazil, Korea, Japan and China. China has been the largest stevioside supplier in the world in recent years, exporting about 81% of its Stevia. Sales of Stevia and medicinal tea with added Stevia total approximately US\$ 15 million. Fifty hectares of Stevia could produce sweetener equivalent to US\$ 1 million of sugar which would require 240 hectares of cane to grow, i.e. productivity in terms of sweetness equivalent per hectare is high. Stevia is not yet allowed as sweetener in South Africa. Information could be found on several internet sites e.g. [www.stevia.com](#)

Directorate: International Trade

Tel: +27 12 319 8452

Fax: +27 12 319 8001

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