

Statement on the impact of the new EC regime

The EC's new single tariff regime and the accompanying reform measures are highly damaging for the Windward Islands. The likely price deterioration and instability and the loss of assured duty free entry because of the intended phasing out of the historical licensing system would be unjustified and a disaster. These small islands produce bananas under difficult conditions on small family owned farms that are the bedrock of their stable economies and social fabric. Hitherto the regulation of the market has ensured a decent and fair livelihood for farmers and their families, despite their relatively high costs reflecting the fair wages paid to workers and the challenges of small scale production. But this could all disappear if they have to pay duty. It is imperative that the EC does not compound the terrible damage already done to these Islands by taking any further measures that could unfairly deny duty-free entry to their bananas.

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