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You are here: [Home](#) > [WTO, EU, ACP to host a two-day workshop](#)

WTO, EU, ACP to host a two-day workshop

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The World Trade Organisation (WTO), together with European Union (EU) and Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) will this week host a two-day workshop in Harare aimed at improving Zimbabwe's economic performance.

Business Reporter

In a joint statement, the organisations yesterday said the two-day workshop would provide an overview of its Technical Barriers to Trade programme (TBT) agreement to enable Zimbabwean companies to export products and services and to ensure producers meet demands of the target markets in terms of quality, safety, reliability, environmental compatibility and hygiene.

"The workshop aims to help Zimbabwean stakeholders to clarify how to pursue their own national policy objectives without creating unnecessary barriers to trade for other countries, while at the same time developing their competitiveness and expanding their exports in regional and international markets," the statement read.

The WTO's agreement on TBT as a preventive instrument was to ensure that such measures do not result in discrimination or arbitrary restrictions on international trade.

Zimbabwe is a signatory to the WTO while the EU and ACP would assist the country to effectively exercise its membership rights and fulfil its obligations under the agreement as well as facilitating trade by utilising the mechanisms

for the removal of unnecessary trade barriers that have become available as a consequence of the TBT agreement.

"Effective implementation of the provisions of the TBT agreement requires members like Zimbabwe to have a minimum institutional infrastructure that includes a National Standards Body, an Enquiry Point and a Notification Authority. The national institutions have specific roles and it is most desirable that they function in a coordinated manner with each other and also with the arm of government responsible for trade," the statement read.

The significance of technical barriers to trade has increased considerably over the past years, as tariffs steadily declined and governments worldwide introduced more and more regulatory requirements to address, inter-alia, health, safety or environmental concerns.

"The TBT agreement is therefore an important tool with which Zimbabwe can tackle technical barriers to trade in an international forum," the statement said.