

# News story: UK signs Eastern and Southern Africa trade continuity agreement

A continuity agreement will see British businesses and consumers benefitting from continued trade with Eastern and Southern Africa after we leave the European Union.

Trade Minister George Hollingbery signed the UK-Eastern and Southern Africa agreement in London today (Thursday 31 January) with a number of representative governments.

The news has been welcomed by businesses including Princes Tuna, who say it will help to support over 4000 jobs and ensure they can keep trading without disruption.

This continuity agreement has been agreed as we prepare to leave the EU on 29 March. It replicates the effects of the existing EU Economic Partnership Agreement with Eastern and Southern Africa.

It will allow continued tariff-free imports from Eastern and Southern Africa, and removes the majority of tariffs on British exports to these countries over the coming years.

The agreement ensures that there will be no disruption to our trading relationship with Eastern and Southern Africa as we leave the EU.

Trading on these preferential terms rather than on World Trade Organization terms will deliver significant savings and help to support British jobs.

This will help to further strengthen the trading relationship between the UK and these countries, which was worth £1.5 billion in 2017.

Based on current trade flows, meat and fish exporters in Eastern and Southern Africa could save £30 million a year in tariff charges that could apply if the agreement wasn't in place, while clothing exporters could save more than £10m and sugar exporters could save around £8m.

Consumers in the UK will continue to benefit from more choice and lower prices for products as clothes and tuna from Mauritius.

These agreements are part of the UK government's commitment to supporting developing countries to reduce poverty through trade. It will help to them to grow their economies, create jobs, increase incomes and reduce reliance on overseas aid in the long-term.

Trade Minister George Hollingbery said:

The continuity agreement, signed today, marks our commitment to help developing countries increase trade and boost economies both across Africa and the UK.

The agreement will allow businesses in Eastern and Southern Africa to continue trading with the UK without any tariffs and lays the foundations for our ambitious trade for development agenda.

Africa's long-term success matters to the UK which is why we are investing in, and partnering with African nations for our mutual benefit.

Abdulla Elahee Doomun, Managing Director, Princes Tuna (Mauritius) Limited said:

Princes Tuna Mauritius warmly welcomes this agreement as the UK is the largest market for the tuna products that we manufacture.

Ensuring there is frictionless trade is critical to our long-term business success and to supporting over 4,000 direct jobs in our two factories as well as many other Mauritian businesses that provide us with goods and services.

HM Trade Commissioner for Africa, Emma Wade-Smith said:

Today's agreement will help to keep trade between the UK and nations in Eastern and Southern Africa well on track, providing continuity for businesses, consumers and exporters as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

This deal forms part of the UK government's wider commitment to supporting developing nations and emerging economies worldwide and across Africa. Providing continuity of the trading arrangements with our trading partners will help sustain jobs and further strengthen trade and investment ties between the UK and nations of Eastern and Southern Africa.

The new UK-ESA agreement replicates the effects of existing trading arrangements as far as possible. It will come into effect as soon as the implementation period ends in January 2021, or on 29 March 2019 if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.