TRADE NEWSLETTER Q2 2026



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

PROPOSED SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGE (SSB) LEVY

The government of Antigua and Barbuda has proposed a new Sugar Sweetened Beverage (SSB) Levy on sugary drinks.
See below for the latest updates:

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Applies to beverages containing added sugar
- Includes sodas, juices, energy drinks, etc.
- Government is currently engaging with stakeholders
- No fixed timeline was provided on its implementation



LATEST UPDATE

The TTMA is closely monitoring this levy and will continue to provide updates to its members.

PROPOSED SCHOOL NUTRITION GUIDELINES

Background: Since 2017, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, has taken steps to improve the food and drink available in schools by prohibiting sugar-sweetened beverages.

Effective of the school term 1 2026/2027, the MoE has proposed a listing of approved and unapproved foods and beverages:

APPROVED FOODS & BEVERAGES

- Plain water
- Unsweetened coconut water
- 100% fruit juices
- Milk or plant-based milk substitutes
- Milk products; with 13g total sugar or less

NOT APPROVED FOODS & BEVERAGES

- Sweetened beverages, including: soft drinks, flavored waters with added sugar, juice with added sugar, energy/sport drinks, tea with added sugar and caffeinated beverages
- Pre-packaged snacks: >200 kcal, >13g total sugars, >30% of calories from fat, >200mg sodium
- Foods without a Nutrition Facts label in English
- Fruit preserved in sugar or salt
- Products with sugar substitutes (eg: stevia, etc.)



TTMA UPDATE

TTMA submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Education on this proposal as manufacturers who supply schools with foods and beverages will be affected. Updates will be provided to members accordingly.

TTMA 70TH ANNIVERSARY PROUDLY T&T

COUNCIL FOR TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COTED)

WHAT IS THE COTED?

The Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) serves as the principal CARICOM body for deliberating regional trade and economic issues. Its routine agenda encompasses the movement of goods, the common external tariff (CET), the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), regional standards, international trade negotiations, the free movement of community nationals and external CARICOM policies.

HOW OFTEN DOES COTED TAKE PLACE?

The COTED takes place bi-annually (May/June and October/November).

WHY IS THE COTED IMPORTANT?

COTED meetings allow member states of the community to provide their strategic positions on trade-related priorities and concerns, facilitate coordinated policy responses, negotiate common approaches to tariffs and technical barriers that affect the region's competitiveness. It serves as a platform for sharing intelligence, aligning national frameworks for easier trade, and advancing collective negotiation strategies for external trade.

WHO ATTENDS THE COTED?

Governments of member states represent their countries at the COTED. For example: for T&T - the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism is the main Ministry that represents T&T. Additionally, selected private sector associations, like the TTMA, are also invited to observe discussions.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 62ND MEETING OF THE COTED IN RELATION TO PRIVATE SECTOR INTERESTS

APPROVAL OF REQUESTS FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE CET:

MEMBER STATE WHO REQUESTED CET SUSPENSION	HS CODE AND PRODUCT	ORIGINAL CET	PROPOSED CET	TIME PERIOD	COTED DECISION
St. Kitts and Nevis	HS 8702.40; 8703.80 and 8704.60 - Fully Electric Vehicles	10%	0%	July 1, 2026 – June 30th, 2027	APPROVED
Trinidad and Tobago	HS 8415.90.00 - Air Conditioning and Parts	5%	20%	July 1, 2026 – June 30th, 2027	APPROVED
Trinidad and Tobago	HS 8548.40; 3824.99; and 2404 - Vaping Devices and Refills	0% to 15%	20%	July 1, 2026 – June 30th, 2027	APPROVED
Antigua and Barbuda	List of Basic Food Items	0% to 40%	0%	July 1, 2026 – June 30th, 2027	APPROVED; except for items produced regionally
St. Lucia	List of Basic Food Items	0% to 40%	0%	July 1, 2026 – June 30th, 2027	APPROVED; except for items produced regionally

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COUNCIL FOR TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COTED)

CONTINUATION OF HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 62ND MEETING OF THE COTED

ALTERATION OF THE CET ON PAINTS AND VARNISHES

At the 60th COTED held in June 2025, the community agreed to raise the CET to 35% on Paints and Varnishes classified under HS 3208.10, 3208.20, 3208.90, 3209.10, 3209.90, 3210.00, 3214.10 and 3214.90 effective July 1st, 2026.

T&T POSITION AT 62ND COTED: The government of the Republic of T&T advised that it is not in a position to implement the measure by the effective date



SAFEGUARD MECHANISM IN RELATION TO EXTRA-REGIONALLY SOURCED WHITE REFINED SUGAR

Trinidad and Tobago requested the continuation of trade support mechanisms of white refined sugar, given the absence of regional supply at this time. Belize, agreed to facilitate the grant of Safeguard Certificates to importers of extra-regional Refined Sugar of HS 1701.99.90 until December 31st, 2026.



REGIONAL SUPPLY OF FROZEN CONCENTRATE ORANGE JUICE

Trinidad and Tobago requested the immediate suspension of the CET on FCOJ and the conduct of independent testing of FCOJ originating from Belize. In response, Belize presented a counter proposal to consider the suspension of the CET on appropriate quantities of the product required by manufacturers. T&T is currently engaged with Belize bilaterally to advocate for the continuation of the CET suspension and safeguard arrangements, until December 31st, 2026.



NEGOTIATIONS ON EXPANSION OF PREFERENTIAL MARKET ACCESS UNDER THE CARICOM-COLOMBIA AGREEMENT

CARICOM Secretariat reported that an addendum for Ministers will be circulated to member states, including the joint report of the 3rd round of negotiations, offers and requests from both parties. A brief summary of the 3rd round of negotiations were reported:

- Advanced discussions with the inclusion of the participation of Suriname and Haiti.
- 4th and final round of negotiations to take place by the 3rd quarter of 2026.
- Signing of the final agreement to take place no later than August 2027.
- Market access strategies employed by both parties.
- Addendum and joint report of the 3rd round of negotiations to be circulated to member states.

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TRADE MISSION UPDATES

INTERNATIONAL: INDIA

TTMA's trade mission to India served as a strategic platform for strengthening commercial relations between Trinidad and Tobago and one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

The mission hosted 17 companies and a delegation of 23 persons; providing companies with opportunities to explore the new untapped market, establish business connections, and gain valuable insights into India's manufacturing, technology, and distribution sectors.

Companies such as RHS Marketing, HADCO and Declorite Concrete signed deals for packaging items, construction and raw materials for final products.

[redacted]

[redacted]

REGIONAL: GUYANA & SURINAME

The TTMA recently concluded its trade mission to Guyana and Suriname, which brought together a delegation of 58 participants representing 38 companies from a diverse range of sectors.

Most participating companies reported promising outcomes from the mission:

Steve and Associates Ltd established new commercial connections that are expected to generate opportunities in the construction and industrial sectors.

Chatak secured strong interest in its product offerings and explored avenues for long-term collaboration with buyers.

Luxam Industries recorded a successful mission, strengthening relationships with existing clients and identifying prospective business opportunities that could support future growth.

[redacted]

[redacted]

These early successes underscored the value of the mission in facilitating meaningful business engagement and reinforcing Trinidad and Tobago's position as a key supplier of quality goods and services within the region.

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REGIONAL UPDATES:

MARTINIQUE AND FRENCH GUIANA JOINS CARICOM

On **July 5th, 2026,** Martinique formally became as Associate Member of the Caribbean Community, while French Guiana also became an Associate Member on **July 7th, 2026.**



MARTINIQUE



FRENCH GUIANA

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Associate membership in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) allows non-sovereign territories and dependencies to engage in CARICOM activities without the full responsibilities and privileges of full membership.

RIGHTS OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

- Participation in Meetings
- Access to Programs and Services (can access the CARICOM travel document, etc)
- Economic Cooperation
- Technical Assistance
- Observer Status

OBLIGATIONS OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

- Adhere to Relevant Policies
- Make Financial Contributions

KEY DIFFERENCES FROM FULL MEMBERSHIP:

Limited Voting Rights:
Associate members typically do not have voting rights in CARICOM's main decision-making bodies.

No Full Participation in the CSME:
Associate members are not full participants in the CSME – a key component of CARICOM integration for full members.

HOW CAN T&T MANUFACTURERS BENEFIT?

Expanded market reach into the French Caribbean – creating new demand for locally made goods and services.

Increased chances for joint ventures and distribution agreements in the private sector.

Stronger regional bargaining power; regional manufacturing cooperation is already being framed to improve resilience, scale and competitiveness.



MARTINIQUE

FRENCH GUIANA

OTHER ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF CARICOM:

Anguilla | Bermuda | British Virgin Islands | Cayman Islands | Turks and Caicos Islands | Curacao

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