

*EPA Flash News*  
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**Central Africa: Cameroon**

On December 17 the European Commission initialled a stepping stone Economic Partnership Agreement with Cameroon. The agreement enables Cameroon to benefit from significantly improved market access to the EU as from 1 January 2008. This will be an immediate boost for investment and growth in these countries. Negotiations on a similar stepping stone EPA are ongoing with other Central African countries. In any event, negotiations on a full EPA covering all Central African countries and covering also trade in services, investment and trade related rules, will continue in 2008.

*Goods Covered*

The stepping stone EPA allows for 100% liberalisation by value by the EU as of 1 January 2008, with transition periods for rice and sugar. It allows for 80% liberalisation by Cameroon over a time period of 15 years.

*Goods Excluded*

Certain agricultural as well as non agricultural processed goods are excluded from liberalisation by Cameroon. The main criterion of these exclusions is the desire to protect certain existing industries or infant industry and maintain fiscal revenues.

*Other features*

The Agreement contains a title on Development Cooperation covering priority areas of development cooperation for accompanying the implementation of this Agreement. The main areas identified are the reinforcement and upgrading of productive sectors, cooperation in respect of fiscal adjustment, and the implementation of trade rules contained in the Agreement. The parties agree to cooperate in these areas notably in the context of the Cotonou Agreement.

The agreement also contains a detailed dispute settlement mechanism. New and improved rules of origin will be annexed to this Agreement in the near future.