

While the European Union waits on the U.K. to invoke Article 50 to get the Brexit underway, the bloc continues to advance in international agreements that could spark benefits for some produce companies as almost all customs duties would be scrapped.

Yesterday, the European Commission formally proposed to the EU Council the signature and conclusion of a free trade agreement with Canada.

The EC's methods for pushing through the deal, known as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), have received some criticism as they open up the possibility of potential vetoes from member states.

The commission hopes the deal will be signed at the next EU-Canada Summit in October.

"The trade agreement between the EU and Canada is our best and most progressive trade agreement and I want it to enter into force as soon as possible," said President Jean-Claude Juncker.

"It provides new opportunities for European companies, while promoting our high standards for the benefit of our citizens.

"I have looked at the legal arguments and I have listened to Heads of State or Government and to national Parliaments. Now it is time to deliver. The credibility of Europe's trade policy is at stake."

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström described the agreement as a milestone in European trade policy.

"It is the most ambitious trade agreement that the EU has ever concluded and will deepen our longstanding relations with Canada," she said.

"It will help to generate much-needed growth and jobs while fully upholding Europe's high standards in areas like food safety, environmental protection and people's rights at work."

The EU has also published texts in 11 areas relating to what is known as a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with Tunisia.

One of these areas includes trade in agricultural and fishery products, with the following main elements under negotiation:

- The list of sensitive products

- The treatment of sensitive products, such as the establishment of tariff quotas
- Tariff quota amounts for sensitive products
- Decommissioning timetables, transition periods for Tunisia and the rate of tariff quota increases
- Entry price system adaptation

EU trade relations with Tunisia are currently governed by a trade agreement from 1995, but in 2011 the Council authorized the European Commission to open bilateral negotiations for free trade agreements with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

In a release, Spain's Federation of Fruit, Vegetable, Flower and Live Plant Grower Exporter Associations (FEPEX) highlighted fresh produce exports to the North African country had been remarkable in recent years, rising from 845 metric tons (MT) in 2011 to 4,933MT in 2015.

The value of Spain's Tunisia-bound fresh fruit and vegetable exports have risen from US\$1.2 million to US\$3.8 million over the same period, with onions and garlic as the leading crops.

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