

**Briefing - Ireland's Trade policies post Brexit
Delivered to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade
and Defence Committee - 6th April 2017**

Introduction

The UK's notification to leave the EU has now launched a two-year negotiating period with the bloc that will involve the hammering-out of thousands of issues including a review and rewrite of all trade deals. Free trade was guaranteed when the UK was part of the EU and its customs union, but this may not be the case as we negotiations progress.

British PM Theresa May seems to be prioritising securing "full access" for UK companies to the single market, but Proudly Made in Africa has called on her government to prioritise trade deals with developing nations to ensure no worse conditions in market access for some of the world's poorest countries. The UK can significantly reduce uncertainty for traders in sub-Saharan African countries by committing now to maintaining zero tariff / zero quota trade.

If a deal cannot be hammered out, the UK would fall back on World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules and tariffs and value added products (such as beverages, fruit, confectionary and clothing), the products that have the most power to lift communities out of poverty when traded, will be some of the hardest hit in terms of the WTO-set tariffs

Proudly Made in Africa now asserts that Ireland is best-placed to capitalise on these uncertain times by becoming a hub for sub-Saharan imports which would contribute to the state fulfilling its commitments on two-way trade with Africa, advance the SDGs through trade with developing nations and meet its own goal of building new alliances and export markets.

Key messages

1. It is imperative that Ireland uphold its commitment to two-way trade with sub-Saharan Africa – a more cohesive approach in publications such as the Irish Contingency Framework for Brexit and the Ireland Connected strategy is needed pushing for imports as well as driving exports. A focus on non-indigenous imports to Ireland, especially from developing nations like those of sub-Saharan Africa, presents no major competition to Irish exports.
2. A simultaneous focus on imports to as well as exports from Ireland enables our exports to enjoy reduced logistics fees and speedier lead times while increased movement of goods stimulates industry and job growth for both Ireland and its trade partners. For developing nations, increased trade will complement Ireland's aid programme and further progress our development aims sustainably.
3. Brexit now presents an opportunity for Ireland to establish itself as the entry point to the EU and consolidation point to the US for tariff-free goods from sub-Saharan Africa.

Ireland is best placed to be a leader in this area having already established networks of MNCs and receptive Ireland-based diplomatic missions as well as an increasingly broad embassy network in Africa.

4. Targeting growth of African value-added imports to diversify from traditional, basic agricultural exports will enable quicker wealth creation in developing economies through trade of increased-value items, meaning development targets have a chance to be realised.