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Minister of International Trade welcomes first round of negotiations with Mercosur countries in Ottawa

Ottawa, March 20 2018

International trade is a key driver of economic growth, contributing to a prosperous middle class. Expanding and diversifying Canada's trade with large, fast-growing markets such as Mercosur – a trading bloc comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay – is a priority for the Government of Canada and a key part of its progressive trade agenda and diversification strategy.

Following the announcement made on March 9, 2018 in Asuncion, Paraguay, to launch negotiations toward a comprehensive Canada-Mercosur free trade agreement (FTA), the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of International Trade, is pleased to welcome the first round of formal negotiations in Ottawa from March 20 to 23, 2018.

Preferential access to this market has the potential to create more opportunities for world-class Canadian goods and services, and provide Canadian consumers and businesses enhanced access to goods and services from Mercosur countries. For example, a comprehensive and ambitious FTA with Mercosur could reduce the tariffs of up to 35% that currently apply to Canadian forestry, automotive and chemical-plastic products.

The Government of Canada is committed to advancing a progressive trade agenda, in recognition that trade policies need to respond and contribute meaningfully to overall economic, social and environmental priorities. As a part of the Mercosur negotiations, Canada is committed to expanding the impact-assessment process beyond the environment to include, for example, labour and gender considerations.

Quotes

“The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that a Canada-Mercosur trade agreement will include provisions aimed at sharing the benefits of trade among all, including women, youth, Indigenous people, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the middle class.”

- François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of International Trade

Quick facts

- In 2017, Canada and Mercosur exchanged \$8.9 billion in trade.
- Mercosur accounts for more than two-thirds of all economic activity in South America.
- With a combined population of 260 million and a GDP of over \$3 trillion, Mercosur is the world's fourth-largest trading bloc.
- The South American trade bloc of Mercosur is a customs union established by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in 1991.