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PRESS RELEASE

UK Confirms Sugar Quota Policies, Securing Key Benefits for Belize's Sugar Industry and Cane Farmers

Belmopan, November 5, 2024.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is pleased to announce a positive development for Belize's sugar industry following the UK's recent decision to maintain its current Autonomous Tariff Quota (ATQ) for raw cane sugar. There will be no increase in access for suppliers who are not part of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). This decision, shared by the British High Commissioner, preserves critical market access for Belize's sugar exports in 2025, providing substantial benefits for the country's sugar sector, especially Belize's dedicated cane farmers.

Under the confirmed 2025 ATQ policy, the UK will continue to allow 260,000 tonnes of raw cane sugar to enter its market at a 0% tariff rate, and Belize's sugar exports will retain duty-free, quota-free access under the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). This stable access is essential for Belize, where sugar is the leading export product and a significant contributor to the national economy, supporting around 12,000 direct jobs and sustaining nearly 50,000 Belizeans in the northern districts.

Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Dr. the Hon. Osmond Martinez, highlighted the impact of this decision: "The UK's commitment to preserving this vital access reaffirms the importance of Belize's cane farmers, whose contributions support not only the economy but the livelihoods of thousands of Belizean families. This ensures that Belize remains competitive in one of its primary export markets, offering stability to rural communities and contributing to the nation's foreign exchange earnings."

Despite the challenges posed by global sugar market shifts and increased competition, the decision to maintain this ATQ level for 2025 provides Belize's cane farmers with a valuable opportunity to continue exporting raw cane sugar to the UK without additional tariff costs. The industry remains a vital economic pillar in Belize, accounting for approximately 41% of the nation's foreign exchange earnings.

This outcome is a direct result of Belize's proactive engagement in the UK's public consultations on sugar tariffs, during which Belize outlined the social and economic significance of the sugar industry and the potential repercussions of market changes. The Ministry acknowledges the valuable role of all stakeholders, including local farmers, industry representatives, and trade partners, who contributed to this process and supported Belize's case in these critical discussions.

The UK government has committed to future consultations with CARIFORUM countries to review policies for 2026 and beyond, ensuring that decisions continue to consider the needs of developing countries like Belize. The Ministry will maintain active engagement in these discussions, working to safeguard long-term market stability for Belize's sugar exports.

For more information on Belize's trade relations with the UK and future updates on sugar industry developments, the Ministry encourages stakeholders and the public to follow official announcements.

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