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Barbara Khol

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## **Caribbean Community Member-nations Postpone Common Tariff Implementation**

*by Barbara Khol*

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On Oct. 11, a senior trade official from the Georgetown-based Caribbean Community (Caricom) secretariat, told Inter Press Service that Belize, St. Lucia, St. Kitts/Nevis and Antigua/Barbuda have not yet implemented the common mutual tariff, and have passed all deadlines. The new tariff structure, to be applied to imports from outside the region, ranges from 5 to 45%. The tariff is part of a movement toward implementing a single Caricom market by 1994. Caricom members include 13 English-speaking states: Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua/Barbuda, St. Kitts/Nevis, Montserrat, Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Belize, Grenada, St. Lucia, and the Bahamas. The Bahamas, however, is not a member of the common market scheme, and thus, has no obligation to implement the new tariff structure. The only member-nation to meet the Jan. 1, 1991 implementation deadline was Trinidad and Tobago. Since then seven other island nations have complied with the tax structure for non-regional goods. Another unidentified Caricom official said the government of St. Lucia, among others, believes the new tariffs "will have a negative impact on their cost of living and so are reluctant to implement it." Percival Marie, trade director of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), says the new tariffs would raise the cost of living in St. Lucia a maximum 0.5%. Antigua/Barbuda is expected to implement the common tariff by year-end. Secretariat officials say Belize and St. Kitts/Nevis appear to be bogged down by administrative problems. At mid-year, Jamaica, in compliance with the new tariff regime, imposed a 30% tariff on US rice imports, which had previously entered duty-free. After a five-year hiatus, rice imports from Guyana are once again competitive in Jamaica. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 10/11/91)

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