

PRESENTATION BY GUATEMALA – Comments by the United States

- The United States thanks the delegation of Guatemala for their interesting and informative presentation and we look forward to discussing regional integration efforts in greater detail at future meetings.
- This year, The U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration and Commercial Law Development Program will host a series of roundtables with Central American government officials to address transparency reforms aimed to improve and simplify customs and border procedures.
- This initiative will assist four countries - Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica - to develop recommendations and individual country work plans towards fulfilling TFA commitments under Articles 1 and 2.
- The U.S. is now working with Guatemala's Ministry of Economy to host the first workshop in Guatemala in late August, focused on internet publication of information describing the procedures, forms, fees and applied duties and taxes required for importation, exportation and transit.
- The private sector, especially small or new-to-export traders in both the United States and Guatemala, will benefit from the online availability of up-to-date, trade-related information.
- Further, USDA, in partnership with other U.S. agencies, anticipates continuing to collaborate with Central American Customs Union members, including Guatemala, on technical issues affecting regional and international trade. This work, which started in 2017, contributed to an agreement by CACU member countries that Free Sale Certificates will no longer be required as an export document, removing a trade barrier inconsistent with international standards, and a significant outcome in implementing TFA article 1.1
- In 2018, USDA anticipates that collaboration will focus on risk-based protocols for sampling, inspection processes for raw and processed agricultural products, and the use of risk-based inspection protocols at ports-of-entry

- Furthermore, USAID Regional Mission in El Salvador and the USAID's Office of Trade and Regulatory Reform in Washington will be working on a trade facilitation project starting in August 2018 that will have three components. The first will provide continuing education of border officers to raise awareness of the commitments on trade facilitation in various agreements, including the Central American Union. The second, will focus on product registration, addressing a longstanding barrier for US companies importing into Central America. Third, the International Trade Center in Geneva will be providing workshops and studying informal traders in the primary area of a border crossing. This area is normally considered a controlled access zone, but informal micro businesses have long staked a claim. The trade effort is to help these informal businesses to nudge them to formality and help them relocate from the controlled access zone. These efforts combine the support of USAID, USDA, FDA, CBP and ITC.
- We look forward to our continued work with Guatemala.