

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON
TARIFFS AND TRADE

RESTRICTED

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AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
AND SYRIA

Questions and Replies

The contracting parties were invited (document C/M/122 and GATT/AIR/1395) to communicate to the secretariat any questions they might wish to put concerning the Agreement between the European Economic Community and Syria.¹ In response to this request, a number of questions were received and were transmitted to the parties to the Agreement. The following replies to these questions have been received.

¹Copies of the text of the Agreement were sent to each contracting party with document L/4522.

ANNEX

Questions and Replies

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Question 1

The Agreement makes no mention of the parties' intent to form a free-trade area. Do the parties intend to form an eventual free-trade area, under Article XXIV of the General Agreement, covering substantially all trade between them?

Reply 1

The Agreement, which is of unlimited duration, sets out the arrangements for comprehensive co-operation between the two parties. As indicated in Article 1, the object of the Agreement is to promote trade between the contracting parties, taking account of their respective levels of development and of the need to ensure a better balance in their trade. The Community therefore considered, as far as its own contribution in the matter of trade co-operation was concerned, that the attainment of the aims defined in Article 1 implied appropriate obligations on its part, as the economically more developed party.

Consequently, the Community sees its own obligations as consisting in the introduction of arrangements for free access to its market, as required in the General Agreement for the establishment of a free-trade area.

Question 2

- (a) If the answer to the above question is in the affirmative, what is the parties' view as to the compatibility of the Agreement with Article XXIV:8, since Syria does not have the same obligations with respect to the elimination of customs duties and quantitative restrictions on products imported from the European Economic Community (EEC) as the EEC has on products imported from Syria?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, by virtue of which provisions of the General Agreement do the parties consider that the Agreement can be justified?

Question 3

Is the Agreement intended to be an interim agreement leading to the formation of a free-trade area in the sense of Article XXIV? If so, is there a "plan and schedule", as required under Article XXIV:5(c) for the formation of a free-trade area or customs union "within a reasonable length of time"?

Replies 2 and 3

The fact that Syria is initially allowed, in view of its current development needs, not to enter into obligations, as regards the importation of products originating in the Community, corresponding to the undertakings entered into by the Community, is in accordance with the spirit and letter of Part IV of the General Agreement. This fact in no way calls into question the validity or applicability of Article XXIV as regards the Community, for from the moment of the entry into force of the trade provisions of the Agreement, the Community assumes the obligation to eliminate the customs duties and other trade restrictions on the bulk of its trade with Syria.

On the occasion of the examinations provided for under the Agreement, the parties will look for possible ways of making progress towards the elimination of barriers to trade. The Agreement thus reflects a dynamic attitude to economic development in the context of which the basic rule, namely that expressed in Article XXIV, retains its full value as a guiding principle. For these reasons, the parties to the Agreement are not requesting that it be covered by a waiver.

Question 4

Is the Agreement presented as a request for an Article XXV waiver, pending the parties' consideration of the possibility of a wider association taking the form of a free-trade area covering substantially all their mutual trade, or pending the provision, if it is to be an interim agreement, of "the plan and schedule" for its implementation?

Reply 4

Not applicable.

II. RULES OF ORIGIN

Question 5

The rules of origin contained in the Agreement, because of their restrictiveness, may well divert some amount of Syrian imports towards higher cost suppliers and thereby raise development costs. What measures are contemplated by the parties to offset this negative effect?

Reply 5

The parties to the Agreement cannot accept the assertion that the rules of origin set out in the Agreement are restrictive. These rules are based on objective criteria and are not intended to favour specific suppliers.

Question 6

In the event that the rules of origin have prejudicial effects on the trade interests of third countries, what provisions for modifications?

Reply 6

If prejudicial effects were to arise, the matter would be examined by the parties to the Agreement, who could then agree on the measures to be taken.

III. TRADE COVERAGE

(a) Imports from Syria into the EEC

Question 7

What was the total value of imports into the EEC of products originating in Syria in each of the three most recent years for which statistics are available?

Question 8

What value and percentage of imports into the EEC of products originating in Syria in each of the three most recent years for which statistics are available comprise industrial products?

Replies 7 and 3

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
7. Total imports	245,606	100	464,114	100	649,216	100
of which:						
8. Industrial products	242,047	98.6	460,707	99.3	637,653	98.2

Question 9

What were the values and percentages of total imports of the following categories of imports into the EEC of products originating in Syria in each of the three most recent years for which statistics are available?

- (a) Imports of products which are subject to the elimination of quantitative restrictions and customs duties including levies having equivalent trade effects.
- (b) Imports of products which are subject to the reduction of customs duties and levies.
- (c) Imports of products on which customs duties, levies and charges with equivalent effect will not be imposed. Of these imports, what percentage gain duty-free entry as a result of the EEC scheme under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), and what percentage as a result of the Agreement?
- (d) Imports of products for which customs duties and charges having equivalent effects are to be reduced.
- (e) Imports of products for which quotas or quantitative restrictions are not to be eliminated under the Agreement.
- (f) Imports of products which are not subject to the elimination of tariff quota and quantitative restrictions.

Reply 9

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Total imports	245,606	100	464,114	100	649,216	100
(a) imports in respect of which existing quantitative restrictions are to be removed	245,606 ^{1/}	100	464,114 ^{1/}	100	649,216 ^{1/}	100
(b) imports in respect of which customs duties and levies are to be reduced	1,838	0.7	1,203	0.3	6,497	1.0
(c) imports free of customs duties and levies						
of which:						
1. under the generalized preferences ^{2/}	242,957	98.9	461,407	99.4	638,480	98.3
2. under the Agreement	242,880	98.8	463,056	99.8	645,136	99.4
(d) see Question (b)						
(e) imports subject to quotas or quantitative restrictions	-	-	-	-	-	-
(f) see Question (e)						

^{1/} There is in fact no quantitative restriction on any imports originating in this country.

^{2/} It should be noted, however, that in the case of industrial products, free entry is subject to the application of certain arrangements (notably overall ceilings opened for all the beneficiary countries).

Question 10

What percentage of trade between the parties will be granted entry free of quantitative restrictions and duties as specified in Articles 2 and 3?

Reply 10

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Total imports	245,606	100	464,114	100	649,216	100
Industrial products granted entry free of duties under Articles 2 and 3	242,047	98.6	460,707	99.3	637,653	98.2
Industrial products granted entry free of quantitative restrictions	242,047	98.6	460,707	99.3	637,653	98.2

Question 11

What value and percentage of industrial imports will be free to enter the EEC from Syria without payment of duties or subjection to other restrictive regulations of commerce? Of these imports, what percentage gain duty-free entry as a result of the EEC scheme under the GSP, and what percentage as a result of the Agreement?

Question 12

What value and percentage of industrial imports into the EEC from Syria will be subject to: (a) customs duties? (b) other charges? (c) quantitative restrictions?

Replies 11 and 12

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Imports of industrial products	242,047	100	460,707	100	637,653	100
11. Industrial products allowed duty-free entry						
of which:						
under the generalized preferences scheme	242,047	100	460,707	100	637,653	100
under the Agreement	242,047	100	460,707	100	637,653	100
12. (a) Industrial products subject to customs duties	-		-		-	
(b) Industrial products subject to other charges	-		-		-	
:) Industrial products subject to quantitative restrictions	-		-		-	

Question 13

What percentage of trade between the parties will be affected by the provisions of Articles 10 and 11?

Reply 13

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Total imports	245,606	100	464,114	100	649,216	100
of which:						
Agricultural products on which customs duties are reduced under Articles 10 and 11 of the Agreement	1,838	0.7	1,203	0.3	6,497	1.0

Question 14

What percentage of trade between the parties in agricultural products will be affected by the provisions of these Articles?

Reply 14

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Imports of agricultural products	3,559	100	3,407	100	11,563	100
of which:						
Agricultural products on which customs duties and levies are reduced under the Agreement	1,838	51.6	1,203	35.3	6,497	56.2

Question 15

What value and percentage of imports into the EEC of products originating in Syria comprised agricultural products?

- (a) What was the value of citrus imports from Syria during the last three years?
- (b) What percentages do these represent of the total EEC citrus imports and of citrus imports under preferential tariff agreements?

Reply 15

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Total imports	245,606	100	464,114	100	649,216	100
of which:						
Agricultural products	3,559	1.5	3,407	0.7	11,563	1.8
of which:						
Citrus fruit						
total citrus imports (from outside EEC)	629,752	100	731,575	100	820,246	100
of which: Syria	-		-		-	
total citrus imports under preferential arrangements (from outside the EEC)	486,992	100	544,877	100	659,507	100
of which. Syria	-		-		-	

Question 16

What value and percentage of agricultural imports will be free to enter the EEC from Syria without payment of duties or subjection to other restrictive regulations of commerce such as quantitative restrictions and variable levies? Of these imports, what percentage gain duty-free entry as a result of the EEC scheme under the GSP, and what percentage as a result of the Agreement?

Question 17

What value and percentage of agricultural imports into the EEC from Syria will be subject to: (a) customs duties? (b) other charges? (c) quantitative restrictions?

Replies 16 and 17

	1974		1975		1976	
	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%	EUR'000	%
Imports of agricultural products	3,559	100	3,407	100	11,563	100
16. Imports allowed duty-free entry						
1. under the generalized preferences scheme	910	25.6	700	20.5	827	7.2
2. under the Agreement	833	23.4	2,349	68.9	7,483	64.7
17. Imports subject to:						
1. full customs duties	1,140	32.0	94	2.8	2,464	21.3
2. other charges	-		-		-	
3. quantitative restrictions	-		-		-	

(b) Imports from the EEC to Syria

Question 18

What was the total value of imports into Syria of products originating in the EEC in each of the three most recent years for which statistics are available.

Question 19

What value and percentage of imports into Syria of products originating in the EEC comprised industrial products?

Question 20

What value and percentage of imports into Syria of products originating in the EEC comprised agricultural products?

Question 21

What were the values and percentages of total imports of the following categories of imports into Syria of products originating in the EEC in each of the three most recent years for which statistics are available:

- (a) Imports of products on which customs duties, levies and other charges with equivalent effect will not be imposed.
- (b) Imports of products for which customs duties and charges having equivalent effect are to be reduced.
- (c) Imports of products for which tariff quotas are not to be eliminated.
- (d) Imports of products for which quantitative restrictions are not to be eliminated.

Question 22

What value and percentage of industrial products will be free to enter Syria from the EEC without payment of duties or subjection to other restrictive regulations of commerce?

Question 23

What value and percentage of agricultural products will be free to enter Syria from the EEC without payment of duties or subjection to other restrictive regulations of commerce?

Question 24

It is our understanding that in the Agreement Syria does not grant reverse preferences to the EEC. If our understanding is not correct:

- (a) What value and percentage of industrial imports into Syria from the EEC will be subject to preferential tariffs?
- (b) What value and percentage of agricultural imports into Syria from the EEC will be subject to preferential tariffs?

Replies 18-24

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IV. OTHER QUESTIONS

Question 25

Are the parties prepared to have a re-examination in GATT when the Interim Agreement is succeeded by the Co-operation Agreement? What is to be the duration of the Co-operation Agreement?

Reply 25

The Co-operation Agreement is of unlimited duration. The purpose of the Interim Agreement is the advance implementation of the trade provisions of the Co-operation Agreement pending the completion by the national parliaments of the ratification procedures necessary for its entry into force.

Question 26

Which tariff items are affected by the provisions of Article 4?

Reply 26

United Kingdom customs tariff heading at 1 January 1972	Description
24.01	Unmanufactured tobacco; tobacco refuse: A. Containing 10% or more by weight of moisture B. Other
24.02	Manufactured tobacco; tobacco extracts and essences: A. Manufactured tobacco 1. Cigars 2. Cigarettes 3. Cavendish or negrohead: (a) manufactured in bond (b) other 4. Snuff work (including tobacco dust or powder and ground tobacco) 5. Other

Question 27

What is the nature of and reason for the "fiscal element" of customs duties referred to under this Article?

Reply 27

The "fiscal element" of customs duties referred to in Article 4 is a specific element expressed in £ per lb.

It was included in the customs duties for administrative reasons, in particular to facilitate collection at the frontier. For the same reasons, the United Kingdom was authorized to maintain until 31 December 1977 a total amount made up of a fiscal charge and customs duty. As from that date, the United Kingdom abolished all customs duties of a fiscal nature.

Question 28

The parties in a Joint Declaration to the Agreement declared their readiness to foster, as far as their agricultural policies allowed, the development of agricultural trade for those products not covered by the Agreement. Do the parties intend to add such products to the Agreement in the future?

Reply 28

The purpose of the Declaration is to avoid the difficulties that might arise with regard to trade in agricultural products not subject to the Agreement and not to prejudge the review provided for in the Agreement itself.

The possible extension of the Agreement to include such products depends on the results of the review provided for in Article 43 of the Co-operation Agreement.