

ABOUT THE CCJ RULING

TCL Group / Arawak respectfully disagrees with the recent (Aug 6) ruling by the CCJ (Caribbean Court of Justice). As a significant contributor to our regional economies, the company continues to uphold the values of fair trade and ethical practice.

After careful review of the court's decision, the Group holds to its original position that the imported cement product, has been wrongfully classified and therefore, the applied tariff is incorrect!

It would appear that the court was more concerned with the role of COTED in the region than the aforementioned fundamental point. To say that the issue of tariff setting is not for classification, and is a matter of policy for COTED to decide the level of safeguarding, goes against the tenets of the Common External Tariff (CET) system of the Caribbean Community.

We must also state that the ruling does not augur well for:

1. The safeguarding of our CARICOM industries and products....which could lead to the mothballing of remaining factories giving rise to more imported goods. This will result in further FOREX consumption and the protection of jobs outside the CARICOM region at the expense of local jobs.
2. The economy(s) as a whole... changing regional rules would adversely affect the way foreign investors will take decisions about investing in our markets.

It is very challenging for local industries to compete and survive against duty-free products coming from larger and low-cost countries; it is a question of scale and competitiveness, and about the kind of country(s) we want for our future generations.

Essentially, the CCJ's decision has the potential of inadvertently preserving extra-CARICOM industry and labor, while putting our investments in manufacturing and our workforce at considerable risk.

While we recognize CCJ's recommendation that COTED should make an appropriate study to determine the protection to be given to cements and, the implementation of a project to harmonize the CET, the company will be seeking further clarification from the court on the ruling.

TCL Group / Arawak Cement remains committed to the future of our region and CARICOM markets, and will continue to stand for all local manufacturing and to serving all our customers.



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STRONGER
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