
Canada Welcomes First Round of Free Trade Negotiations with Morocco

A Canada-Morocco trade agreement would be Canada's first with an African country

(No. 297 - October 11, 2011 - 6:50 p.m. ET) The Honourable Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, and the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, today welcomed the first round of free trade negotiations with Morocco. The first round of talks continues until October 14, 2011, in Ottawa.

"Canadians understand that increasing trade creates jobs," said Minister Fast. "After all, one in five Canadian jobs depends on trade. That is why our government is committed to protecting and strengthening the financial security of hard-working Canadians by deepening our trading relationships around the world. A trade agreement with Morocco will help Canadian businesses across a range of sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, and services industries. It will also create jobs, prosperity and opportunity for families who rely on these sectors for their livelihood."

In 2010, Canada-Morocco bilateral merchandise trade totalled \$328.2 million. Morocco is already an important export destination for Canadian merchandise exports, importing \$186.9 million in Canadian goods in 2010. With a population of about 32 million, Morocco is expected to see its economy grow by almost 5 percent this year and next.

"These negotiations are really important for Canadian farmers since agriculture products, especially wheat and pulses, dominate our current trade with Morocco," said Minister Ritz.

"While Canada and Morocco already enjoy long-standing cultural and linguistic ties, closer economic ties will deepen this relationship and enhance trade and investment opportunities in both countries," said Minister Fast. "I am particularly pleased that a free trade agreement with Morocco would be Canada's first with an African country. Our government will continue its transparent and collaborative approach during the trade negotiations to ensure that any agreement reached is in the best interest of Canadians."

In less than six years, Canada has concluded new trade agreements with nine countries, and is currently in discussions toward many more agreements, including with the European Union and India—two of the largest markets in the world.

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