

Quarterly SACU Customs Bulletin April to June 2013

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1. SACU REGIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT MEETING**
- 2. SACU ADVANCES IMPLEMENTATION OF SACU PREFERRED TRADER PROGRAMME**
- 3. SACU CONTINUES TO IMPLEMENT REGIONAL IT CONNECTIVITY**

1. SACU REGIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT MEETING

The SACU region is currently implementing a regional customs development programme in collaboration with the WCO. The programme is supported financially by the Swedish Government through the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Among other components of the programme is the governance structure which consists of the Steering Committee, the Regional Programme Manager and the 5 National Project Managers from each of the 5 SACU Customs Administrations. The programme commenced implementation in 2009.

In an effort to ensure that the implementation of the programme is effective, the SACU Secretariat in collaboration with the WCO held a 4 day project management workshop from 2 to 5 April 2013 in Maseru Lesotho. The main objective of the workshop was to

allow for a regional dialogue among the 5 National Project Managers from SACU Customs Administrations, the Regional Programme Manager and the WCO with the aim of ensuring smooth implementation of the programme. Another key discussion during the workshop was the development of the proposal for the extension of the SACU regional Customs Development programme. The current phase of the programme comes to an end in December 2013 and the region aspires for the renewal of the support of the programme by the Swedish Government.

2. SACU ADVANCES CUSTOMS RISK MANAGEMENT AND PREFERRED TRADER PROGRAMME



SACU Risk and Preferred Trader Workshop

As SACU continues to implement the regional preferred trader programme there are key initiatives that are needed to support of this programme. One such supporting initiative is an approach on how SACU members address customs risks in a wider context. In realizing the collaborative support needed from

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other areas, the SACU region held a joint meeting of the preferred trader, risk management and enforcement working groups. The meeting was held from 22 – 26 April 2013 in Johannesburg. The purpose of the meeting was to undertake an evaluation of the successes and challenges of the joint Customs “Operation Auto” which was executed in December 2012. These results would then be used for identification of regional risks associated with the implementation of the preferred trader programme, particularly the benefits for the regional pilot programme. The joint meeting was supported by the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) for East and Southern Africa, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs.

As an outcome of the meeting, the region agreed to launch a regional preferred trader pilot in September 2013. Of priority is the engagement with the private sector entities that would be earmarked for participation in the regional pilot as well as capacity building for the customs administrations. Another key outcome of the meeting was an agreement to conduct another joint customs enforcement operation.

3. SACU CONTINUES TO IMPLEMENT REGIONAL IT CONNECTIVITY

In February 2012, the SACU region embarked on a regional IT connectivity roadmap for Customs information and data exchange as part of implementing the WCO Globally Networked Customs (GNC) initiative. It has been noted that in the SACU region, four of the customs administration are involved in piloting information and data exchange. The one pilot started in the Trans Kalahari Corridor and is supported by the Southern Africa Trade Hub. This initiative is between Botswana and Namibia customs administrations. The second pilot is between South Africa and Swaziland Customs Administrations.

In an effort to implement the international connectivity standards, the GNC, the SACU region further engaged on the development of utility blocks for data exchange. The working sessions were attended by the Customs and IT experts from SACU countries, the WCO and Asycuda experts from United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and took place from 28 to 31 May 2013.

Among other outcomes of the working session, the experts developed standards against which assessment of the current regional pilots should be undertaken. The standards are drawn largely in compliance with international



Quarterly SACU Customs Bulletin April to June 2013

standards such as those of the WCO Data Model version 3 among others.

SACU Member States are continuing to implement the pilot and efforts are underway to fulfill the regional aspiration of a paperless environment and connectivity between regional customs services and the trading community nationally and regionally.

Work has started between SACU and the WCO Secretariats in order to undertake an independent assessment of the 2 regional IT connectivity pilots. It is envisaged that the assessment will pave the way for a discussion on the various Customs IT connectivity options in the region.

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