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Suriname

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By Ivan Cairo, Correspondent at Caribbean Net News Suriname

PARAMARIBO, Suriname: The year-long so-called 'butter dispute' between Suriname and Jamaica has finally come to an end. Kingston was objecting the to import of certain Surinamese butter and margarine brands claiming that Suriname is not known to be a dairy producing country.

Trade minister Clifford Marica told parliament Friday that Jamaican authorities have finally granted a Jamaican company permission to import the products that were barred fro entering the Jamaican market.

Suriname raised this issue again at the last meeting of CARICOM's Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) in November 2006, in Georgetown, Guyana, stating that Jamaica has no reason to reject the Surinamese products since the same items were being exported to other CARICOM member states already.

Minister Marica considers the permission as a significant step for Suriname to get a foothold in the CARICOM market and further integration in the regional economy.

On bilateral level the Suriname government strongly protested against the Jamaican boycott, which was based on invalid arguments. "We have treated the butter issues as a very serious matter. This is the way we deal with our position in the CARICOM market, because this is also our own market," said the trade minister.

Kingston was boycotting the brands Anchor Spreadable Butter and Tasty Margarine produced under licence of Jamaican company Fonterra World Brands. Jamaica maintained the refusal, claiming that these products have milk fat as ingredient and Suriname is unknown as a dairy producing country.

After the Margarine and Fats Factory on May 31, 2005, exported a container with butter and margarine to Jamaica, the shipment was retained for over three months at the port facilities and eventually released. In November 2005, Fronterra sought permission to import the same products again from Suriname, but was rejected by the Jamaican authorities.

According to Surinamese government officials and managers of the Surinamese firm, several letters were sent to the Jamaican authorities to clarify the matter, but to no avail.

Although, in September, Marica had communicated on this issue with his Jamaican counterpart, the problems were not solved. Eventually, at the last COTED meeting, CARICOM officials promised to take action in order to come to a satisfactory solution for both parties.

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