

Meeting between the Trade Mission Delegation of Belize and the Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financing Associations (CACIF), the Guatemalan Chamber of Agriculture (CAMAGRO) and the Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce (CCG)

**Guatemala City
August 26th, 2024**

The Belize Trade Mission delegation held meetings with the President of the Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financing Associations (CACIF), the Executive Director of the Guatemalan Chamber of Agriculture (CAMAGRO), the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala and the Director of International Trade for the Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce (CCG) along with their respective delegations.

Belize's delegation comprised of the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), the Business Chamber for Spanish Lookout, Belize Hotel Association (BHA), Belize Livestock Producers' Association (BLPA) and other key private sector entities Annexed to this brief supported by Ambassador of Trade, Emile Mena, along with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Trade of Belize.

CACIF/ CAMAGRO Meetings – Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala

At the meeting with the CACIF and CAMAGRO, which was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, the private sector delegation of Belize identified and discussed key interests and challenges relating to their respective industries particularly to the sourcing of input materials and packaging materials, payment facilitation, import requirements and permits, investment initiatives, production capacity, and possible exchange of best practises. Belize's Chamber of Commerce and Industry also discussed the benefits of Guatemala having deeper business relations with Belize due to Belize's unique geographic location allowing for trade through the different modes of transportation and further access into the CARICOM market and North American markets.

The delegation emphasized the need to utilize and expand the current Partial Scope Agreement between Belize and Guatemala to further benefit both countries since the Agreement not only takes into account tariff liberalization for goods, but addresses Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and land transportation issues and the facilitation of investments and export promotion through the respective Technical Groups and Committees established by the Administrative Commission of the PSA. The CAMAGRO informed that they have interest in the PSA and have been working closely with the Ministry of Economy of Guatemala (MINECO) to emphasize interest from their producers in exporting products such as bananas, frozen and processed meats, cheeses and other dairy products, all of which are key sensitive products for Belize. There is also interest from Guatemala to import vegetable products.

Belize stated that both countries have their own local and regional sensitivities and emphasized that its trade with Guatemala cannot displace, or disadvantage Guatemala's producers based on the limited amount of goods Belize produces in comparison to Guatemala and on the export and import trade data between the two countries.

In relation to the current payment system between the two countries, which does not allow for direct transactions from Belize to Guatemala without a third-party corresponding Bank, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala informed that they would arrange a meeting with their financial sector to understand the degree of the current payment issues and discuss possible solutions. Recommendation was also given for a joint Belize-Guatemala banking sector meeting to discuss how transactions and payments can be best facilitated for both Belizean and Guatemalan enterprises in the interim.

The delegation identified 3-4 issues to begin addressing in the first instance. These issues include:

1. The possible expansion of the PSA
2. Import requirements and its challenges
3. Investment opportunities
4. Payment mechanisms

Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce (CCG) – CCG Office

The Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce presented the opportunities available to enter the Guatemalan market and to expand opportunities for Belizean producers and exporters. Likewise, Belize's Chamber also presented opportunities for Guatemalan businesses.

Within the CCG, there is a specific department for foreign trade who is responsible for providing advice on import and export processes, B2B's/ Business Agenda, participation in international trade fairs, trade missions, providing updates on trade issues and business opportunity generation. The CCG is responsible for over 10,000 business members (with presence in all 11 departments of Guatemala) with majority being importers with a few exporters and services companies.

With respect to their role on import and export requirements, the CCG provides contact information and the specific entities responsible for requirements based on the goods and services of interest. Both the BCCI and CCG agreed to establish a Chamber-to-Chamber relationship to facilitate the exchange of information and to ultimately streamline the process of trading between countries.

With respect to payment facilitation, a representative of Casa Hermes, a Guatemalan business present in the meeting, informed the delegation of the challenges faced in receiving payments from Belizean businesses before shipment of goods can be processed. He emphasized the urgent need to have this problem resolved. Presently, some Belizean businesses have had to cross over into Guatemala through

the Melchor de Mencos border to make direct deposits to accounts at the BANRURAL bank in Melchor de Mencos – informalizing and adding unnecessary red tape to what could be a simple trading process.

The meeting resulted in the agreement of the following:

1. Upon the invitation of the BCCI, the Guatemalan Chamber agreed to organize a Trade Mission to Belize in 2025
2. The CCG agreed to address the issues of payment facing both Belizean and Guatemalan businesses to their CEO for onward communication to their Minister of Finance

Update:

Following the meetings with CICIG and CAMAGRO, the BCCI informed the Belize delegation that it intends to meet and develop possible MOUs with these entities. The BCCI will be providing an update on this proposed initiative.

Other Meetings: BELCAR and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA)

BELCAR has interest in exporting yellow corn for human consumption to Guatemala by utilizing the preferential treatment granted to Belize for corn under the current PSA. Under the PSA, Guatemala grants to Belize 100% immediate duty-free access for yellow corn on a quota basis of 20,000 MT with a 3% annual increase for five years. Currently, Belize has access to export 23,000 MT of yellow corn duty free that it has been unable to benefit from.

During the meeting with MAGA, BELCAR explained its challenges with obtaining the import permit for corn at 23,000 MT duty free and its future interest in exporting soybean. MAGA informed that any product being imported into Guatemala requires that an exporter has a focal point in Guatemala, either an individual person or a business, to apply for both the SPS certificate and import license from MAGA. MAGA went on to demonstrate how their application processes can be accessed and carried out via their online portal and further informed that an annual SPS transport permit must be obtained to transport the good into Guatemala. To date, MAGA has set in place requirements for the importation of corn, beans and rice from Belize.

BELCAR's challenge is primarily on accessing the permit for the duty-free access granted in the PSA. MAGA informed that it is the Ministry of Economy (MINECO) who is responsible for issuing the permit, which allows for tariff preference on a quota basis and its implementation.

Update:

Before returning to Belize, BELCAR was able to have a meeting with MINECO to discuss and resolve their issues. Further information and update on the shipment of corn to Guatemala will be sent from BELCAR when the processes are finalized.

Belize- Guatemala Private Sector Engagement with Prime Minister Briceno - Guatemalan Association of Exporters (AGEXPORT)

On the final day of the Trade Mission, the delegation of Belize headed by Prime Minister Briceno, attended a conference at the Guatemalan Association of Exporters (AGEXPORT) Headquarters facilitated by the AGEXPORT Team. Here, remarks were delivered by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala and Prime Minister Briceno with presentations delivered by the President of the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Director of AGEXPORT.

In these presentations, brief overviews of AGEXPORT and the current trade ecosystem were covered, but the main objective was to encourage further discussion of improved bilateral collaboration between governments and private sectors. This then led to the second half of the gathering, a B2B mixer, which allowed all parties present to interact, exchange contact information, and to discuss business endeavours. The private sector of Belize had the opportunity to interact mostly with service companies in tourism and global digital services along with complimentary offers for Agro producers and other distribution companies, such as laboratory testing companies.

ANNEX: Belize Trade Mission Delegation: Private Sector			
	Company Name	Representatives	Company Profile
1.	BELCAR Export/Import Co	Jacob Dyck Pancho Braun Tim Marten	Bel-Car specializes in cleaning, packaging and exporting of Grains like Whole Corn, Beans, Corn Meal and Soybean oil & meal products. Our leading sales are to the Caricom but have also shipped to many other locations including North America, South America, Central America, Europe and the middle East. We hope to engage and achieve commercial exports to Guatemala through the Belize Guatemala partial scope agreement.
2.	BLPA	William Usher Albert Moore Chairman Edwards	The Belize Livestock Producers' Association (BLPA) is the leading advocate for developing a green livestock industry in Belize, the premier lobbyist for the best interest of livestock development, and the go-to organization for services to all livestock farmers in the areas of technical services and market access. The BLPA is a membership organization of Cattle ranchers, Cattle breeders, Livestock meat processors and Exporters. The BLPA has been exporting live beef cattle to Guatemala and since 2023 our exportation to Guatemala reached a total of 33,000 heads. As of June 2024, the figure shows cattle export and local consumption to date.
3.	Marie Sharp	Jody Williams	Marie Sharp's Fine Foods Limited is Belize's premier producer, distributor and exporter of Premium Habanero Pepper Sauces, Jams, Jellies, Juices and other specialty food items. This family company first started in a kitchen by Mrs. Sharp in the 1980's

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			<p>with only one employee and now more than 40 years later the company has grown to over 100 employees and has coverage in close to 40 markets worldwide. Marie Sharp's takes great pride in its slogan "Proud of Products" and continues to expand to reach new global markets.</p> <p>The purpose and objective to participate at this years' Guatemala/Belize Trade Mission is to network, meet new and reliable supply chain partners and create long term partnerships with potential businesses from Guatemala.</p>
4.	Business Chamber Spanish Lookout	Victor Reimer Jimmy Braun	<p>We would like to see how to improve or open more of the PSA (Partial Scope Agreement) to include chicken, beef and grains. We are looking to see how to improve the payment/banking system which will result in immediate growth.</p> <p>We also see the border at the Melchor / Benque crossing to be very limited with hours and we would love to see some form of a more open border in regards to tourism/trade , (we are not much of a tourism sector) but if our local tour guides could take their guests to Tikal and the Guatemalan tours could come thru to Plascencia would to our mind be a great boost for tourism energy. This Tourism thing is not something we have much info on but we just look at the issue from a distance.</p>
5.	Grace Kennedy	Luis Ugarte Danielle Daley- Longman	<p>GraceKennedy (Belize) is involved in the importation and distribution of a wide range of food and non-food grocery items throughout the country under the Grace brand other Grace owned brands. GraceKennedy (Belize) also represents and distributes numerous third-party brands such as Malher. We</p>

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			expect to explore import and export opportunities with mainly food and beverage businesses in Guatemala and by extension Central America.
6.	Protel BPO	Kevin Herrera	<p>Protel BPO Limited began operations in 2012, and offers a unique combination of location, experience, and value. Located in a four-story concrete building overlooking the Caribbean Sea, Protel BPO operates two locations with a total capacity of over 1,100 seats. The company is both PCI certified and HIPAA compliant, ensuring the highest standards of security and privacy. Protel BPO stands out for its highly competitive rates, offering 40-60% cost savings compared to average U.S. contact center operations, making it an exceptional value for businesses.</p> <p>What further sets Protel BPO apart is its strong company culture. As a locally owned and operated business, the company benefits from daily executive oversight, a flat organizational structure, and a focus on rapid response and accountability. With over 50 years of combined management experience from Belizean personnel, Protel BPO demonstrates a deep understanding of the contact center industry. The company is committed to career development, with all management positions filled by agents who have advanced through a structured career path.</p> <p>We are hoping to meet companies who may want to take advantage of what Belize has to offer in the BPO space, to create</p>

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			potential strategic alliances and to look at the possibility of expanding into parts of Guatemala.
7.	Acquity BPO	Katherine Meighan	Acquity BPO Belize Limited is a top offshore BPO provider in Belize, offering high-quality inbound and outbound marketing, lead generation, and BPO services to US-based clients. With over a thousand employees in Belize City and Belmopan, we are expanding to provide stable incomes and career opportunities in Belize, Guyana, and the Philippines.
8.	Transparent BPO	Victoria Tun	Transparent BPO believes in pushing boundaries to ensure that every customer experience delivers meaningful outcomes. We combine the management experience of a large BPO outsourcing company with the nimble, open approach of a small company. Our clients benefit from new ideas and measurable results that support their brand and facilitate the process for them and their customers. Our goal is to learn innovative strategies and to create meaningful relationships from this trip to help us continue to strengthen our Company's culture.
9.	Toledo Cave & Adventure Tours	Bruno Kuppinger	Toledo Cave and Adventure Tours provides unparalleled eco-adventures that immerse travelers in Belize's breathtaking landscapes while promoting conservation and cultural appreciation. Sustainable practices, and community engagement, creates transformative experiences that leave a positive impact on both visitors and the environments. We have a deep appreciation for the environment and local cultures, fostering responsible tourism practices that preserves the beauty and integrity of Belize's natural and cultural heritage. Expectations from the mission:

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Increase the flow of tourism through the Ports of Puerto Barrios and Punta Gorda *Promote Toledo Tourism and collaborate with Tourism Stakeholders along Rio Dulce, Livingston and having a daily Ferry (roundtrip) *Partner with Tourism Stakeholders in Antigua, Western Highlands, Lake Atitlan, *Exchange Language Programs-/Schools (Belize-Guatemala, Business Spanish-English) *Learn, understand and share more about the Cacao Industry in Guatemala as a tourism product (Quality, Production, Import-/Export) *Tourism Product Belize and Guatemala as one package (so small, so big) for European and North American-/Canadian Travelers and their markets.
10.	Belize Hotel Association	Blanca Luna Lau-Narvaez	The Belize Hotel Association (BHA) is a non-profit organization that represents various accommodation providers and businesses in the hospitality industry. It supports sustainable tourism growth in Belize through global marketing, partnerships, and training programs to enhance service standards.
11.	Montrans Consulting	Katia Montenegro	Montrans Consulting has distinguished itself as a leading provider of multilingual language services, encompassing translation, interpretation, and language learning. The company also excels in crafting bilingual strategic marketing solutions. With over seven years of serving both Belizean and international clients, Montrans Consulting has built a strong reputation for its

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			expertise. Katia is the Founder and President of the International Network of Women in Business.
12.	BCCI	Katherine Meighan Kim Aikman	Largest private Sector organization in Belize. Representing over 1500 companies in the sectors of Industry, Services, and Commerce. We are governed by our constitution Chapter 308 of the laws of Belize. Our guiding philosophy is to Connect, Capacitate and Champion for our members.
13.		Ambassador Emile Mena	Co-Chair of the NTNC and Belize's Ambassador of Trade

ANNEX: Belize Trade Mission Delegation: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade			
	Representative	Position	Department
	Kyrshanie Pott	Trade Economist	Directorate General for Foreign Trade
	Nikolai Pulido	Trade Economist	Directorate General for Foreign Trade