



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

MEDIA RELEASE

Suspension of the Quota and Registration System for Cement

07 February 2024: The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) wishes to announce that earlier today, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago agreed to the Suspension of the Quota and Registration System for Cement.

This decision was made further to the MTI's monitoring of market conditions in the cement industry and the recent announcement by Trinidad Cement Limited (TCL) on 05 February 2024 of its intention to raise the price of cement by 6.63% for Premium Plus and 7.69% for its Eco Cement with effect from February 19, 2024. This price adjustment is the fourth undertaken by TCL in the last twenty-six (26) months.

Increases in Price of Cement by TCL

Date	Price Increase by TCL
December 2021	15.6%
August 2022	7.0%
March 2023	5.0%
February 2024	7.6%

The action taken by the Government today was based on balancing the following dual considerations:

- (i) **Availability of Affordable Cement-** cement forms a critical linkage between the manufacturing and construction sectors and is therefore vital for the country's sustainable development. There are several large-scale projects which will be adversely affected but moreso, the availability of affordable cement to consumers is of paramount importance.
- (ii) **Viability of the Local Cement Industry-** the cement industry is one of the pillars of the non-energy sector and contributes to the overall economy. The local manufacturer is a major exporter of Building Cement; net foreign exchange earner; and a major employer.

New Arrangements for the Importation of Cement

The Quota and Registration System for Cement was instituted on 01 January 2021 with an initial ceiling of 75,000 tonnes of Cement allowed for import. In 2022, the maximum quota ceiling for cement allowed for importation was increased to 150,000 tonnes. This ceiling remained in effect in 2023. ***With the Suspension of the Quota and Registration System there will be no Quota on the volume of cement allowed for import.***

Cement remains on the Import Negative List and will continue to be subject to a licensing regime. This Regime will be **non-automatic** and applications for a licence to import cement must be submitted to the Minister of Trade and Industry with the requirements that applicants *inter alia*:

- (i) are registered under the Companies Act;
- (ii) have adequate and appropriate warehousing facilities for the safe and reliable storage of imported cement;
- (iii) have an established distribution network; and
- (iv) must ensure that all imported cement meets the relevant CARICOM Regional Product Standards.

Imported cement will in the interim, continue to be subject to a twenty (20) percent Common External Tariff (CET) rate of duty.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to assure the public that it will continue to monitor market conditions. The Ministry of Trade and Industry will meet with TCL soonest and thereafter, recommend further policy adjustments inclusive of a review of the CET on cement, if necessary, in the national interest.

END