
Trade defence report: Restoring the level playing field for European producers

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EU trade defence measures are effective in reducing unfair international trading practices, according to an annual report published today by the European Commission. The anti-dumping or anti-subsidy duties imposed by the Commission lead on average to an 80% decrease in unfair imports, leaving other foreign supplies unaffected. EU measures protect now also 23,000 more jobs than a year before.

Commissioner for Trade Phil Hogan said: “A strong and effective trade defence is of key importance to protect our companies and jobs against unfair trading practices and to ensure diversity of supply. Making sure our companies operate in fair market conditions will be even more crucial in the times of post-corona crisis recovery. While imports offer more choice at a competitive price for our consumers and businesses, we need to make sure they come to Europe on fair terms, not dumped or subsidised, and that they do not make us overdependent. That’s why I am pleased to see that the system we have in place works and that the reforms of the last years are paying off.”

The report highlights in particular:

Continued high-level of EU trade defence activity: In 2019, the Commission launched 16 investigations (against 10 in 2018) and imposed 12 new measures (against 6 in 2018). An intensive activity in reviewing existing measures resulted in the conclusion of 18 expiry reviews, 11 more than in 2018. At the end of 2019, the EU had in place 140 trade defence measures, 5% more compared to the year before. Those included 121 anti-dumping, 16 anti-subsidy and three safeguard measures. The highest number of EU trade defence measures concerns imports from countries such as China (93 of the existing anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures), Russia (10 measures), India (7 measures) and the U.S. (6 measures).

Increase in the number of EU jobs protected: The measure imposed in 2019 increased the number of jobs benefitting from the EU trade defence by 23,000, bringing the total number of direct EU jobs protected to 343,000.

Sustained effectiveness of EU trade defence measures in reducing unfair imports: Thanks to an average 80% reduction in injurious imports because of EU trade defence measures, EU producers can maintain their activity and EU users of

concerned products continue enjoying diversified sources of supply.

Resolute action to safeguard EU steel market: Following up on the 2018 U.S. import duty on steel, in early 2019 the Commission adopted definitive safeguard measures for a range of steel products of all origin. This was necessary to avoid a further sharp increase of imports that threatened to worsen the already fragile economic condition of EU steel producers. The measures were subsequently reviewed to maintain traditional trade flows and diversity of sources of supply. Half of the new anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations in 2019 also concerned iron and steel products.

Strong focus on enforcement and countering circumvention: 2019 saw an increase of cases targeting circumvention of duties in place, for instance by passing through other exporters or via other countries. The Commission launched a record number of four anti-circumvention investigations on its own initiative, including the largest such investigation to date on tableware and kitchenware from China, which extended duties to 30 more companies.

New recourse to safeguard measures: In addition to the safeguard measures on steel, the Commission also put in place safeguard measures for Indica rice from Cambodia and Myanmar. The measures taken under the rules of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences followed requests addressed to the Commission by rice-producing EU Member States. Those are the first safeguard measures triggered by the EU in a long time.

Strong defence of EU exporters targeted in foreign trade defence investigations: Measures taken by other countries against imports from the EU stood again at a high level of 175 in 2019. Such a high level is expected to be maintained in the future, due to numerous cases initiated in 2019. The Commission has been very firm in intervening in foreign investigations that unfairly target EU exports. In two notable cases – anti-subsidy measures imposed by the U.S. on table olives from Spain and the measures on frozen fries – the Commission initiated trade dispute settlement in the World Trade Organization.

(European Commission)