

**NOTICE TO IMPORTERS****Imports of sugar into the Community from Serbia and Montenegro**

(2004/C 200/04)

The preferential arrangements provided for in Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2000 for sugar of CN codes 1701 and 1702 imported from Serbia and Montenegro were suspended for a period of three months by Commission Regulation (EC) No 764/2003. This suspension was extended for an additional period of six months by Commission Regulation (EC) No 1343/2003 and again extended for further six months by Commission Regulation (EC) No 213/2004, expiring on 7 August 2004. The suspension measure was decided on the basis of findings that the system of certification and control of the preferential origin of sugar did not allow the competent authorities of this beneficiary country to verify the originating status of the products and to provide administrative cooperation as required for the verification of evidence of origin.

The Commission has decided to terminate the current suspension, since it trusts the measures meanwhile adopted by Serbia and Montenegro give the necessary assurances as to their future correct issuing of certificates of origin in respect of sugar and their capacity to provide the required cooperation for the subsequent verification of those certificates.

Under these circumstances, the Commission hereby withdraws the notice to importers concerning imports of sugar from Serbia and Montenegro published in the Official Journal C 33 of 6 February 2004. The current suspension of preferences for Serbia and Montenegro with regard to sugar is allowed to expire on 7 August 2004.

However, the Commission informs importers that the notice published in the Official Journal C 14 of 20 January 2004, p. 2 is maintained. This notice to importers concerns all products imported into the Community from Serbia and Montenegro. Although the management and control of preferential origin appears to have improved, the administrative cooperation provided for the verification of origin certificates issued in the past has been slow and not always conclusive. Furthermore, the overall efficiency, especially in Montenegro, needs further monitoring and evaluation.

Consequently, the Commission will continue to apply a reinforced surveillance of Serbia and Montenegro with regard to their implementation and control of preferential origin. Community operators presenting documentary evidence of origin with a view to securing preferential treatment for all products imported from Serbia and Montenegro are therefore advised to continue taking all the necessary precautions, since the release of the goods in question for free circulation may give rise to a customs debt.

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