

TRADEBEAT

International Liaison Unit
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Jamaica Customs Agency
New Port East, Kingston
www.jacustoms.gov.jm
iilu@jca.gov.jm
(876) 922-5140-8



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- Ricardo Treviño Chapa,
Deputy Secretary General,
World Customs Organization

WCO Knowledge Academy 2020 Surge

There was a huge surge in participation in the 10th edition of the World Customs Organization (WCO)'s Knowledge Academy for Customs and Trade (KACT), recording its highest numbers in 2020. Met with overwhelming enthusiasm, KACT 2020 welcomed over 960 participants from various Customs administrations and the international trading community to an intense three day training programme facilitated by the WCO. Open to all interested participants, the training sessions were virtually facilitated from 8 – 10 September, in both English and French, with sessions being repeated based on specific learning tracks. Held annually at the WCO Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium, KACT is typically facilitated face-to-face, bringing together the foremost experts in Customs matters to meet the demands of a complex international and cross-border trading system. However, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that KACT 2020 would be virtually facilitated, in line with global safety measures that have now become the new norm.

Designed for knowledge sharing, KACT acts as a forum for Customs and trade professionals to exchange ideas across relevant industries in both the public and private sectors. The WCO plays a pivotal leadership role by coordinating these efforts to build awareness via the programme design and content, while encouraging the fostering of a common approach to resolving issues affecting international trade. Despite the prevailing global circumstances, the WCO took the decision to mobilize resources in response to this new reality and organized the Knowledge Academy specifically to address the current challenges faced by the international trade community, and the role that Customs plays in times of crisis.

KACT for Customs and Business

The primary objective of the WCO Knowledge Academy for Customs and Trade (KACT) is to provide an intense training programme for the benefit of Customs and Business practitioners across the globe. Through the introduction and strengthening of information derived from the WCO's tools and instruments, participants stand to gain in-depth knowledge applicable to their particular role in the international trading process. KACT also provides a forum for the business community to express their particular needs, while exploring expectations on core Customs issues. Through these interactions, participants are able to share knowledge, know-how and expertise while fostering a vital Customs-Business Knowledge network that seeks to improve efficiencies within international trade clusters.

Despite ongoing concerns regarding the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Customs administrations are expected to continue to facilitate the seamless flow of goods across borders, especially relief goods intended to mitigate the overall impact of the pandemic. It is within this context that a partnership approach is being fostered between Customs and the Business sector by targeting a wide cross section of industry players, namely business professionals, Customs managers and administrators, border agency officials, international organization representatives and academia. Participation is also encouraged among the wider Customs authorities, the IT sector, the broader business community, governmental and trade organizations, lending institutions, border regulatory agencies, and all others involved in the international trade arena. Demonstrating commitment to the fundamentals of the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC), the WCO as it is now called, provides for free registration for at least two participants from each Member Administration.



Key Areas of WCO Work Covered

The WCO, in its contemplation of the 2020 Knowledge Academy, considered the needs expressed by Member States and tailored the programme to address those specific concerns. Delegates were divided into two learning tracks per day, with sessions being repeated to accommodate participants from different time zones. Participants had the opportunity of directly engaging with WCO technical experts who serve their respective Customs administrations but are duly recognized as specialists within their particular fields. KACT 2020 also provided for diversity, with over 20 prominent speakers, trainers and facilitators of different profiles and backgrounds. Participants got the opportunity to discuss specific issues most relevant to their interests, share experiences and exchange best practices in their fields of expertise. In addition to the technical experts, the programme was led by instructors from private sector companies, government institutions and academia, offering participants further opportunities to interact with experts from other Member administrations, international organizations, trade organizations, the broader customs community and other players in the global trade arena.



Key areas of the WCO's work covered:

- (i) Compliance and Facilitation topics encompassing the role of Customs in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; Customs supporting safe, secure and sustainable cross-border E-Commerce; and Customs addressing safety and security challenges;
- (ii) Tariff and Trade Affairs sessions centering on a range of matters relating to the Harmonized System (HS) for the classification of goods, as well as the utility of the HS during the COVID-19 pandemic; rules of origin; and the future of Customs valuation;
- (iii) Capacity Building involving the blended learning approach; and
- (iv) Two (2) research sessions on the trade in waste and the DATE (Dual Attentive Tree-Aware Embedded) Model.

All sessions were recorded and have been made available to all participants of KACT 2020. WCO Members can access them via the WCO CLiK! Platform, while private sector representatives would need to request access directly from the WCO.



Participation by JCA

The Knowledge Academy for Customs and Trade (KACT) has been supported by the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) over the past few years, where at least one Customs candidate has participated. 2020 was no exception for the JCA, despite time zone challenges. The programme ran from 9am - 6pm Brussels time, where the JCA candidate successfully completed the programme despite the 7 hour time difference, resulting in contact hours from 2am - 11am. Such is the commitment of the JCA, where participation is

encouraged and prioritized by the current Chairperson for the WCO Capacity Building Committee (CBC) since 2019, Velma Ricketts-Walker, CEO/Commissioner of the JCA.

Endorsed as an effective capacity building initiative of the WCO, KACT 2020 through its virtual design allowed for increased participation by Customs officers and trade stakeholders, and eliminated the financial constraints typically associated with the face to face model. The WCO is currently contemplating the virtual format for KACT 2021 following encouraging reactions and positive feedback from attendees.

ILU TRADEBEAT

The International and Industry Liaison Unit is committed to raising the level of awareness on topics relating to International Trade, as well as issues concerning the Caribbean region which may affect both our internal and external stakeholders. Our quarterly newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administrations worldwide, specifically how they affect the Jamaica Customs Agency.

As we realize our vision of becoming a modern Customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as one way of contributing to the vision of the JCA. The International and Industry Liaison Unit is located at the JCA's Head Office, and our officers are available to respond to your trade-related queries.

Contact us at: iilu@jca.gov.jm

Written by: Marsha Wilson-Maxwell
CARICOM Officer
International & Industry Liaison Unit

