CAOBISCO PRESS RELEASE

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CAOBISCO supports an ambitious and balanced EU-Thailand Trade Agreement to Strengthen Europe's Food Industry

Ahead of the conclusion of the negotiations on the EU–Thailand Free Trade Agreement, CAOBISCO, representing the European chocolate, biscuit and confectionery industries, reiterates its support for an ambitious and balanced agreement that enhances the competitiveness and resilience of Europe's confectionery sector. The agreement represents an opportunity both to strengthen the resilience of supply chains for key ingredients and to improve market access for European value-added food products in one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic markets.

In Thailand, where demand for high-quality chocolate, biscuits, and confectionery continues to grow, the European confectionery industry sees strong potential for expanding its export business. By reducing the current high import tariffs—10% on chocolate and 20% on both sugar confectionery and sweet biscuits—the trade agreement would enhance the competitiveness of European exporters and create new growth opportunities, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. To ensure that these benefits can be fully realized, the agreement should also include practical and business-friendly Rules of Origin. Overly restrictive origin requirements, such as weight-based rules, instead of value-based rules, could significantly limit companies' ability to claim preferential tariffs, undermining the value of the agreement. CAOBISCO calls on both parties to ensure that the Rules of Origin chapter contains practical and workable provisions that enable companies to make effective use of the agreement's tariff preferences.

"Europe's chocolate, biscuit and confectionery industry is a global leader in quality, innovation and exports. To maintain this position, companies need both predictable access to key ingredients and better opportunities to reach growing international markets. Thailand already represents an important destination for European confectionery exports, worth more than €60 million in 2024, and an ambitious, balanced trade agreement can help unlock further growth while strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of Europe's food industry," said Tobias Bachmüller, President of CAOBISCO.

The EU–Thailand Free Trade Agreement should also improve market access for agricultural products and food ingredients. More diversified and reliable supply chains are essential to strengthen resilience, competitiveness and long-term food security.

One important example is sugar. As a key ingredient for Europe's chocolate, biscuit and confectionery industry, access to diversified sources of supply is vital. Thailand is one of the world's leading sugar exporters, yet it currently plays only a limited role in supplying the EU market. Opening the market under the FTA would complement existing import channels, enhance supply resilience and support Europe's value-added food industries.

CAOBISCO believes that EU trade policy should strike a fair balance across the entire value chain, taking into account the interests of farmers, processors and food manufacturers alike. Strong, diversified supply chains are essential to sustain Europe's leadership in high-quality food production, innovation and exports.

CAOBISCO is the Association of the Chocolate, Biscuits & Confectionery Industries of Europe. We represent more than 15,000 European chocolate, biscuits and confectionery manufacturing companies, 99% of which are SMEs. The sector is a major player in the European economy, with over 225, 000 direct employees and an annual turnover of over €42 billion.

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