

# Livestock producers "elated" at waived cattle import duty

*Mexico's decision to waive the 15% tariff on all cattle imported from Belize will allow the country's livestock industry to grow tremendously, says the BLPA.*



*Belize Livestock Producers Association*

*by Khaila Gentle*

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The Belize Livestock Producers Association (BLPA) has expressed elation in response to Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador's recent decision to waive the 15% import duty on all cattle being exported from Belize to Mexico. According to the association, as a result of the groundbreaking decision, the cattle industry will now be able to grow "leaps and bounds" as livestock producers continue to experience "times like never before". The BLPA also noted that local cattle farmers will now be able to further maximize their revenues.

"With the decision to waive the 15% tariff and the efforts by Belizean government officials to streamline the export process and reduce the costs, especially for physical cattle inspection by the Mexican veterinarians, it is expected that the price offered to Belizean cattle farmers will increase in the short run," wrote the BLPA in a press release issued on Tuesday.

The announcement was made on Saturday, May 7, during President López Obrador's brief visit to Belize. Before departing the country, the Obrador gave a statement to the media at the Laing Building in Belize City.

"We have just made an agreement with the Prime Minister that Mexico will remove import duties on products that Belize can export to our country," he said, further explaining that those agricultural products would include cattle.

In his message, President Obrador also spoke of the importance of Central American countries uniting as a region in order to build economic strength.

"Only in this way, a united, integrated, twinned America, will we be able to face the turbulence of the world economy and, most importantly, the geopolitical danger that the economic decline of the United States represents for the entire world compared to other regions, especially Asia," he stated.

"We are going to bring true free trade between our nations," he added.

The Belize Livestock Producers

Association has called the decision made by President Lopez Obrador a strategic one, adding that it resulted from continuous lobbying efforts by the Government of Belize in collaboration with the BLPA, led by the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, Honorable Jose Abelardo Mai, alongside the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Honorable Eamon Courtenay, and the Prime Minister of Belize.

Prime Minister John Briceno also spoke with local media about the tariff break being given to local cattle farmers, expounding on the work that went into reaching the historic agreement.

"It's very historic what took place on Saturday. You may remember, when we were in Government between 1998 under Said Musa to 2008 we worked very hard to get rice into Mexico. Prime Minister Musa at that time met with the then President, we met with the Foreign Minister, we met with the Ministers of trade and we did everything—we spent a lot of money, government, trying to get the Blue Creek rice. But they have a very, the bureaucracy and the lobby that they had in Mexico was too strong for us to break through," he stated.

The Prime Minister, who commented that he has always seen the value in having Mexico—with a population of over 125 million—as a trading partner, says they had a trade meeting with President Obrador last year which proved fruitful and led to the recent breakthrough.

"At that meeting, actually, we were in a tent, just himself, his Foreign Minister, myself, our Foreign Minister Eamon Courtenay, and both ambassadors. We should have been in a twenty-minute meeting; we ended up spending more than an hour. So, I was talking to him about Belize and what we are doing, that if we can remove these taxes it will create great opportunities for us," said Briceño.

And when President Obrador and Prime Minister Briceno met a second time, they spoke even further, particularly about Belize's amnesty

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## VACANCY NOTICE

### OMBUDSMAN

Applications are invited from suitable qualified persons to fill the vacant position of **OMBUDSMAN**.

Under section 3 of the Ombudsman Act, Chapter 5 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, the Ombudsman is a Parliamentary Commissioner who is appointed by the Governor-General, acting on the recommendations of both Houses of the National Assembly contained in resolutions passed in that behalf. The Office of the Ombudsman is not deemed to be an office in the public service.

#### Functions

The main functions of the Ombudsman are the following: -

- (a) To investigate complaints received from the public under the Ombudsman Act about the administrative acts and decisions of the Central Government departments (including the Belize Police Department), local authorities, and other public statutory bodies and State-owned enterprises, involving official corruption or other wrongdoing;
- (b) To make recommendations to the competent authorities for appropriate action against the person (s) responsible, where there is evidence of a breach of duty, or misconduct or the commission of a criminal offence;
- (c) To review the decisions of the authorities in accordance with Part V of the Freedom of Information Act, where access to a document has been refused by a Government Department, or other prescribed authority;
- (d) To perform all other functions assigned to the Ombudsman under the Ombudsman Act or any other law.

#### Minimum Qualifications and Skills

The candidates should possess the following qualifications and skills: -

- (a) Bachelor's degree in law, business or public administration or other related discipline;
- (b) Experience in complaint investigation and resolution in the public sector;
- (c) Ability to deal with persons from a wide variety of backgrounds and to maintain an objective understating of different perspectives;
- (d) Professional demeanour and impeccable credentials;
- (e) A thorough knowledge of the Ombudsman Act of Belize and the procedure prescribed therein for the investigation of complaints;
- (f) If possible, familiarity with the workings of Ombudsman in other jurisdictions.

The Ombudsman must be non-partisan and a person of integrity and high national standing.

#### Disqualifications

Under section 5 of the Ombudsman Act, no person is qualified for appointment as Ombudsman if he (a) is a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate; or (b) is a member of a local authority; or (c) is an undischarged bankrupt; or (d) has at any time been convicted of any offence involving dishonesty or moral turpitude.

#### Age Limit

Candidates should be between 30 and 62 years of age.

#### Salary

Subject to negotiation and subsequent confirmation by the National Assembly.

#### Deadline for applications

Interested persons in possession of the requisite qualifications and experience should submit their applications to the **Clerk, National Assembly, Belmopan**, no later than **31<sup>st</sup> May 2022**.

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