

Why has the EU pushed ahead with unfair deals?

The EU's official public position on EPAs is that they were necessary to comply with WTO rules and that the deals would be good for development.

However neither of these claims hold water:

- There were other legally viable alternatives to EPAs which the ACP requested and the EU could have pursued;
- The proposals the EU put forward have been cited as anti-development by an impressive and wide-ranging group including the United Nations, the World Bank, academics from the EU and ACP and non-governmental organisations in Europe and worldwide.

In Traidcraft's view, the real reasons for pushing ahead with the deals lie behind the scenes. EPAs are part of the EU's overall strategy of seeking new market opportunities for European companies and staying competitive in the world economy. The EU has taken the opportunity offered by these new trade agreements to push the interests of European firms, which have aggressively lobbied for greater access to new markets in developing countries.

Securing more rights for EU companies in ACP markets is partly driven by a perceived need to compete with the US and China for market share. And it sets a useful precedent for leveraging the kind of access the EU is seeking in more lucrative markets such as India and Latin America (with whom the EU is also now negotiating free trade deals).

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