



## Regional Newsflash November 2011 Edition 41

Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

*Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Dominican Republic*

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### Central American region



**Record Foreign Direct Investment in Central America** (Source: Economic Commission for Latin American and Caribbean) In the first six months of 2011, Panama received \$1,426 million, 17% more than in the first half of 2010. Costa Rica received \$1.057 million (+45%), Honduras \$486 million (+15%), Guatemala \$485 million (+54%), El Salvador \$376 million (+1404%), and Nicaragua \$284 million (+30%). The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), confirms the upward trend in foreign direct investment (FDI) which has been recorded since 2010, for all of Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the agency, the FDI of 18 economies in the region increased by 54% during the first half of 2011 compared to the same period in 2010. In contrast, the region has shown a sharp drop in investment abroad, which had a negative balance in the first half of the year. ECLAC estimates that by the end of 2011, FDI inflows will show very positive results, which could mean a new record, confirming estimates made in May. With regard to Central America, the report states that all countries in the sub region recorded significant increases, with Costa Rica and Panama being the main recipients of FDI in the subregion. The current investment flows confirm the good performance of Latin American and Caribbean economies, despite the turbulent economic scenario.



### **European Commission Approves FTA with Central America**

(Source: Ministerio de Comercio Exterior de Costa Rica) The European Commission has reviewed and approved an association agreement between Central America and the European Union. This is the first step in a process which should result in the agreement

being signed. The process now moves to the Council of the European Union, a body composed of member countries, which must review and sign the legal compliance agreement. The Commission's initial approval represents an important step in the process of implementing the EU-CAAA. We must now step up the pace of the process so that the Board will allow us to sign the agreement in early



2012, which will then enable us to send it to the Legislature for consideration, according to Foreign Trade Minister, Anabel Gonzalez. Costa Rica has repeatedly stressed the need to get the EU-CAAA signed swiftly, in order to secure further opportunities for trade and investment for the country. To this end, Minister Gonzalez appealed to the European Union's head of foreign trade, Karel De Gucht, who visited Costa Rica last June. During the trip, the Commissioner noted that he believed this agreement would extend the scope of trade in the region and estimated that there would be a reduction in tariffs in both directions by somewhere in the order of €170 million. Since 2001, Costa Rican exports of goods to the European Union have been growing at a rate of 8% per annum on average. Between 2009 and 2010, growth was around 11%. Last year, 18.1% of total exports went to this region.

**FTA between EFTA and Central America** (Source: univision.com) The European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising of Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, will negotiate a free trade agreement with Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. The announcement was made by the Swiss Minister of Economics, who said that EFTA member states agreed on the need to deepen relations with Central American states. The opening of free trade negotiations was set this month in Geneva, during EFTA's ministerial conference.

**TLC Central America - South Korea by 2012** (Source: European pressphoto agency) Central America plans to start negotiations for an FTA with South Korea next year. The announcement was made by the Salvadoran Vice Chancellor for Developmental Cooperation, Jaime Miranda at the end of the 10th Forum of Dialogue and Cooperation between the two countries. Starting with 'a study of possibilities' for implementing an FTA between South Korea and the region, whose completion was announced five months ago it is time to start negotiations next year.

**Competition for European tuna quota** (Source: laprensagrafica.com) Tuna companies are hoping that the 4,000 metric ton quota for export to Europe will be distributed proportionally. The Spanish company Calvo, which operates processing and canning plants for the fish, has expressed interest in having the largest possible proportion of the quota of 4,000 metric tons of tuna available for export to the Europe region. This quota was allocated under the Association Agreement negotiations between the Isthmus and the European Union. Calvo, who owns a fleet of eleven tuna ships, exports between 75% and 80% of its production to Europe, and wants the quota to be allocated in proportion to the volume of exports achieved to date. El Salvador (Calvo) understands the interests of other nations. Costa Rica and Guatemala are the other two tuna-producing countries in the region. Negotiations for the distribution of this quota began in 2010. The idea is to reach an agreement.

**Central America regional trade diversification and port infrastructure in a positive tendency.** Central America's foreign trade is growing and diversifying its export markets. A decade ago, more than half of Honduras' exports went to the United States. The nation's number two market was the rest of Central America. What a difference a decade makes. In the first half of this year, Honduras sent 35 percent of its exports to the European Union. The North American bloc of the US, Mexico and Canada accounted for 30 percent, followed by the rest of Central America at 18 percent. During the period 2000-2010, Costa Rican trade with the United States declined from 58% per cent of the total in 2000 to 38% last year, with significant increases in exports to Panama and the Caribbean, as well as China, although much of the latter involves shipments between Intel plants. The United States remains the leading market for Nicaraguan coffee and other exports. But Venezuela is the country's number two trading partner, and its importance is growing. But another tendency is going in the opposite direction. With the exception of Panama, where Colón and Balboa have pushed Brazil's Santos into the number three spot in the port rankings for Latin America, the region's ports are stagnating. Recent attempts at modernization, including La Unión in El Salvador and Moín, Costa Rica. But while La Unión was built almost three years ago, no agreement has yet been reached on a concession. In the case of Moín, various groups have delayed the award of a \$1 billion concession for the construction and operation of a new container port. Another approach would involve the association accord with Central America, which Europe has been pressing for, including a condition that region create a customs union, with common border rules. Fewer border barriers would let the region manage with fewer ports.



**Tourism earns Central America \$7.34 billion** (Source: Efe). Tourism earned \$7.34 billion last year in Central America, a 0.9 percent increase on 2009. Panama and Costa Rica were the region's top earners in tourism, with



\$2.55 billion and \$1.96 billion respectively, according to a preliminary report by the Secretaria for Tourism Integration in Central America. Guatemala earned \$1.38 billion, Honduras \$650 million, El Salvador \$518 million and Nicaragua \$282 million.

**Mining in Central America.** Central America has plenty of gold, the price of which has more than tripled in the past five years. The region also has major deposits of other metals, including silver, nickel and copper, whose prices have likewise surged. The result has been that mining companies are interested in Central America, where six mines currently operate, and another 20 are in the process of exploration. Nine other projects have been suspended, mainly in El Salvador and Costa Rica, as a result of pressure from environmental groups. The conflict between miners and environmentalists respects neither national nor political frontiers. The government of Nicaragua, usually regarded as leftist, welcomes miners, as do those of Panama and Honduras, generally seen as pro-business. These countries must take into account the potential environmental impact of mining operations. On the other hand, mining projects should produce enough revenue, to let governments pay for first-quality environmental supervision. In addition, Guatemala has insisted that miners pay higher royalties for the ore they produce, given high international prices.

**Costa Rica, Panama and Guatemala in top ten nearshore alternatives to offshore outsourcing** (Source: Think Solutions). US outsourcing customers seeking nearshore alternatives to offshore outsourcing hot spots need not look far for the leading options. Mexico is their best bet, according to a new ranking of Latin American outsourcing locations by outsourcing consultancy ThinkSolutions. It was no surprise to see Mexico at the top of the list, according to ThinkSolutions partner Tony Mataya. More unexpected was Chile, Costa Rica and Argentina. The top ten outsourcing locations include Costa Rica in third place, Panama in seventh and Guatemala in tenth.

**Central American armies go shopping for arms** (Source: BBC) The so-called drugs war is encouraging Central American countries to spend more on arms. The region's armies were sharply reduced in the wake of the Cold War and the civil conflicts that were resolved in the region two decades ago. But the tendency is being reversed. Now several Central American countries are trying to modernize their military and police forces. Even countries that have no armies, such as Panama and Costa Rica, are investing in national security.

**Bad-debt portfolio of banks in El Salvador is highest in Central America** (Source: La Prensa Gráfica). A Fitch Ratings report on Central America's banking system says that the bad-debt portfolio is the highest in Central America. The statistics for June show that bad debts accounted for 3.9 percent of the assets of banks in El Salvador. Honduras was second with 2.9 percent, followed by Nicaragua with 2.8 percent and Costa Rica, 2.4 percent. Guatemala and Panama were at 1.9 and 1.1 percent respectively. Fitch says that the region's banks will not regain for some time the levels they reached before the 2009 international crisis.



**Walmart de México y Centroamérica reports 12.4 percent increase in sales** (Source: CNNExpansión).

Thanks to strong growth in its Mexican operations, where same-store sales increased by 4.2 percent, Walmart de México y Centroamérica recorded a 12.4 percent increase in September sales of \$1.9 billion. In Central America, however, the change to a policy of "everyday low prices" led to an initial negative impact. Same-store sales dropped by 0.7 percent. The company plans to open 445 stores this year. In September it opened 35, of which nine were in Central America.



**Del Monte begins construction of second greenhouse project in Central America** (Source: Del Monte Fresh Produce Company).

Costa Rica follows Guatemala. Del Monte is continuing the expansion of its greenhouse product line and, in addition to the state-of-the-art greenhouses recently completed in Guatemala, has begun the construction of similar hydroponic greenhouses in Buenos Aires, Costa Rica. The project that comprises of 17 greenhouses, covering 52 acres, packing house and other supporting facilities is set to be completed in the first week of December 2011 and the first harvest is projected for February 2012. The Del Monte greenhouse facilities in Costa Rica will be



similar to the greenhouses in Guatemala with a few variations due to differences in topography. The greenhouses are hydroponic, state-of-the-art facilities with sophisticated food safety and quality assurance systems.

**Chilean Banmédica aims to invest in Central America using unit in Colombia as its springboard** (Source: Portafolio). Banmédica, a Chilean company, aims to use its Colombia operation to invest in Central America. The company's plans include an investment in infrastructure of \$70 million a year, as it has done for the last 12 years. Banmédica aims to achieve growth of 15 percent this year. The company recently decided to invest \$60 million for the construction of a clinic in Bogotá.

**Central America fosters a strong international Web design and development sector** (Source: thenextweb.com) Central America has rapidly established itself as a destination for web design and development, thanks to local studios which work almost exclusively for foreign clients. According to the Costa Rican entrepreneur Ricardo Arce, this trend is particularly strong in his home country. In Costa Rica, there are quite a few companies with over 100 employees that are aimed at offering software development services to U.S. clients, most notorious are companies such as Avantica, Isthmus or Outcoding.

**Grupo Poma aims for 25 more hotels** (Source: El Diario). Real Hotels and Resorts, the hotel division of El Salvador-based Grupo Poma and representative of Choice Hotels, continues to grow in Central America. The Suite Las Palmas hotel in El Salvador has become the most recent Choice Hotel with a rebranding as Clarion Suites. Real recently opened another Accent hotel in Costa Rica. By 2014, the company plans to develop 25 more hotels in the region.



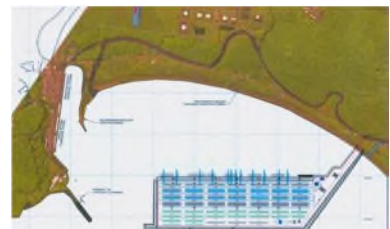
**Tuesday, December 6 San Jose, Costa Rica Trade Opportunities**  
**Holland Trade Information Day**

PROCOMER and the Dutch Embassy in Costa Rica will host the Holland Trade Information Day on December 6th in Hotel San Jose Palacio, San Jose. The event will be coordinated with the Costarican Chambers of Commerce (COMEX) with support from CADEXCO and CRECEX. The Embassy will provide a general presentation regarding the Dutch economy, economic growth sectors, distribution and logistics advantages and business opportunities. Dutch organisations such as CBI, SNV, Oikocredit and STRO as well as several Dutch companies will also be present to promote their services/products. Companies that want to participate can contact the commercial department at the Dutch Embassy in San José thru email [sanjose@trade-minbuza.nl](mailto:sanjose@trade-minbuza.nl) or by phone (00506) 2296 1490.



**Trade union fails in court attempt to halt \$1 billion contract awarded to APM Terminals at Moín in Costa Rica** (Source: La República)

The port workers' union failed in an effort to halt the award of a concession for an extension of the container port at Moín, Costa Rica. The union failed to prove to the nation's supreme court that the \$1 billion project would damage the environment. The verdict clears the way for the Comptroller-General's Office to approve the contract won by APM Terminals of the Netherlands.



**Fiscal Reform Plan** (Source: IHS) The Costa Rican government accepted 21 additional exemptions to the list of products and services that will be taxed under its fiscal reform plan. Among the goods that will be exempt from the new levy are fruits including apples and pineapples, as well as foodstuffs such as biscuits. This latest list brings the total number of exempted items to approximately 260. Attempts to reach agreement on new fiscal arrangements have bedevilled the government of President Laura Chinchilla since it took office in May 2010. That is largely because Chinchilla's National Liberation Party (PLN) has no majority in Congress. With only 24 of 57 seats, the government has been unable



to push through its proposals for a sweeping set of tax reforms, which include the adoption of a 14% value-added tax (VAT), taxes on financial transactions, and taxes on overseas income. The controversial nature of some of the measures has been met with fervent congressional opposition, and the government has subsequently been shifting the parameters of its proposal in attempt to gain support for the plan.

**Inflation rate remains low** (Source: IHS) Recent figures from the Costa Rican Institute of Census and Statistics highlight a small increase in the general consumer price index (CPI) for the month of October. The CPI rose by slightly more than 0.2% month-on-month (m/m), while the cumulative inflation rate stood at nearly 3.5% over the January-October period. The detailed breakdown of the index reveals that strong price declines in key energy commodities like diesel and gasoline offset rising prices in some agricultural products. The heavily weighted food sector registered a 1.2% m/m increase, followed by the restaurant and entertainment sectors, which posted small price increases of 0.6% and 0.5% m/m, respectively. Although clothing, communications, healthcare, education and domestic appliances did not report significant changes, prices in the transportation sector declined by 0.9% m/m in October. In the food sector, tomatoes, watermelons and eggs are among the products recording the highest inflationary pressures. Currently, the Costa Rican inflation rate remains the lowest in Central America.



#### **Holland promotion thru Team Amsterdam in cycling Tour of Costa Rica**

On Dec. 15 Team Holland-Amsterdam will present itself to Costa Rican press and TV. The Dutch Embassy is one of the main sponsors (Holland, pioneers in international business!) and will be present to promote business opportunities between the two countries. The Embassy helped Team Amsterdam to find Dutch sponsors: Seatrade, APM Terminals and Proagroin. For twelve days, from 16 till 28 December it will be the main sporting event in the country with daily live coverage on TV and plenty of exposure in the



media.

**Costa Rica expects \$400 million Chinese grant by year-end to widen main road from San José to the Caribbean ports** (Source: Inside Costa Rica). Without a doubt Ruta 32, the San José - Limón highway in Costa Rica, needs an overhaul that included widening of the two lane road that is a major route between the Central Valley and the Caribbean coast and ports. However, its expansion to four lanes and other improvements will depend on the firming up of a donation by China. Although transport minister, Francisco Jiménez, said earlier this year that the cost of the project would be \$221 million, Costa Rica's Ambassador to China, Marco Vinicio Ruiz, explained that the work would cost almost double, some \$400 million.



#### **British Foreign Minister talks climate, cars and commerce in Costa Rica.**

Tour part of new engagement with Latin America. British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Jeremy Browne stopped in Costa Rica as part of a goodwill tour of Latin America. Browne's tour covered other parts of Latin America including Mexico, Panama and Brazil. The minister said the tour is part of a new era of engagement with Latin American on the part of the British government.

**Medical tourism expected to grow by up to 30 percent a year in Costa Rica** (Source: Inside Costa Rica). Medical tourism has quickly become of growing importance in Costa Rica, where more than 36,000 tourists were received for medical and wellness treatments. The number is expected to grow between 20 and 30 percent annually according to industry experts. The growth also means there is a need for more professionals to assist medical tourists.



#### **Costa Rica to have \$400 million complex to convert waste into energy**

(Source: Inside Costa Rica). At a cost of \$400 million, Costa Rica will soon get a waste-to-energy complex to be situated in the province of Alajuela.



The project consists of three plants that will be built by stages, with a total generating capacity of 45 megawatts. The technology for the plant comes from Australia's Entech Renewable Energy Solutions, a technology provider and global leader in low-temperature gasification technology, with an initial funding of \$140 million from Capita Corp Merchant Banking.

**Costa Rican main airport to double capacity** (Source: Hispanically Speaking News). Operating company Aeris receives finance from Inter-American Bank. Costa Rica's Juan Santamaría International Airport in San José has successfully completed a three-year restructuring and is preparing to more than double its passenger capacity after partnering with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. Last month, both institutions disbursed \$100 million in loans to Aeris Holding, the airport's operating company, owned by sponsors Brazil's Andrade Gutierrez Concessões and ADC & HAS Finance. Juan Santamaría International Airport, Central America's second biggest airport, receives 85 percent of all international arrivals in Costa Rica and 80 percent of all tourists that arrive into the country.

**Increase in poverty and unemployment** (Source: INEC) Costa Rica experienced a slight increase in unemployment and poverty between 2010 and 2011, according to data released by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC). According to the national survey, unemployment increased from 7.3% to 7.7%, while poverty rose from 21.3% to 21.6%. In response, Labour Minister Sandra Pizsk and Social Welfare Minister Fernando Marin agreed that the figures were worrying because one of the objectives of the government of President Laura Chinchilla, who came to office in May 2010, has been to improve the social situation. Pizsk also attempted to explain the unemployment figures by suggesting that the public sector may have failed to absorb unemployment from the private sector—resulting from the global financial downturn—because of guidelines issued by the government to cut public spending and reduce the fiscal deficit, which currently stands at 5% of GDP.

**Spain's FCC wins \$40 million contract for Costa Rican water treatment plant** (Source: La República). Spain's FCC was awarded the contract a wastewater treatment plant for San José, the Costa Rican capital. The award followed an appeal by FCC against the original result of the tender, which gave another Spanish company, Accion Agua. The plant will cost about \$40 million. It forms the core of an overall \$270 million project to clean up the environment of the San José metropolitan area.

**Services sector is driving force of the Costa Rican economy** (Source: La República) The services sector is the main driving force of the Costa Rican economy. Growth in the sector is led by software and call centers. For the last two years growth in employment of professional staff has been strong and sustained. No other area of the economy has been as successful in surviving the 2008 crisis.



**Public infrastructure will no longer be managed through non-governmental organizations.** President Elect, Otto Pérez Molina announced that during his administration public infrastructure will only be managed by the government in order to avoid corruption and to improve transparency in public spending. Mr. Pérez stated that he has already asked his future Minister of Finance, Pavel Centeno, to abolish a law that allows Non-Government Organizations to manage public infrastructure projects. According to Mr. Pérez a lot of NGO's were created with the sole purpose of managing such projects and the results were nonexistent or unfinished low quality works. According to Congresswoman Nineth Montenegro, almost 2,000 million dollars will be transferred to NGO's if the budget proposal submitted by President Colom were to be approved. NGO's are not liable to the Government's Acquisitions Law, which allows them to misuse public funds.

**Fiscal deficit will close at 2.9%** According to the Vice-Minister of Finance, fiscal deficit for 2011 will close between 2.8% and 2.9%. Public Debt could reach Q84, 000 million. Mr. Hernández justified the government going into such high debt because of the economic world crisis and a decrease in tax collection. This week Congress will discuss another loan of US\$100 million.



**1.2 Million more people living in poverty** Although monetary transfer programs implemented by the current government helped to reduce levels of extreme poverty, the number of people living in poverty increased by 1.2 million during the last five years. According to data from the National Statistics Institute (INE) the general poverty index increased from 51% in 2006 to 53.71% in 2011. People living in poverty have less than €2.7 daily to survive while those living in extreme poverty have around €1.2. INE data shows that families living in extreme poverty have an average of 7 members and low education.

**Remittances up 6%** (Source: elperiodico.com.gt) In the first ten months of the year, remittances totaled \$3,656 million, 6% higher compared to the same period in 2010. According to the Banco de Guatemala, the performance of remittances this year, after the crisis of 2009, has been positive, with the exception of last July in which a decline of 9% was recorded. This year is estimated to close at \$4,469 million. The growth of remittances is a positive sign. According to the Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies, Guatemala depends more on remittances than on foreign investment which is why the new government should develop a scenario that faces weakening of employment in the United States.

**Guatemala seeks international investors** (Source: Airport-world.com) The Guatemalan government is committed to public-private partnerships that encourage investment in infrastructure. Airports, ports and national highways could be built with input from the private sector through the creation of the new Council for the Promotion of Public-Private Partnerships, which aims to stimulate infrastructure projects crucial for the economic development of the country. The first task to be performed by the council will be the implementation of the National Agency of Partnerships for Infrastructure Development, which will be responsible for monitoring the projects developed under this framework. The construction of airports, specifically the expansion of the La Aurora International Airport, could benefit from this new initiative. La Aurora airport has tempted many private investors, such as Confiasa and El Bosque, who will build the largest warehouse complex in Central America and Plaza Tecnológica Aeropuerto.

**Increased energy demand** (Source: prensalibre.com) In the first nine months of the year, electricity demand increased by 7.8% compared to the same period in 2010. Prior to this, the average increase up to 2007 was between 4% and 6% annually, however 2008, 2009 and 2010 showed increases of 0.29%, 0.87% and 3.7% respectively. Carlos Colom president of National Energy Commission (CNEE) and Romeo Rodriguez, coordinator of Competitiveness, "agree that this improvement is an indicator of a more buoyant national economy. This growth is related to industrial activities in food production processes, and in the steel industry which consumes a lot of electricity.

**Manufacturing exports grow** (Source: sigloxxi.com) Manufacturing's share of total exports is showing a clear upward trend. Between last January and August it accounted for 70% of total sales. In the year to September, sales in this sector grew by 26%. Of the \$7952.3 million traded between January and September this year, \$5589.4 million were brought in by manufacturing, while traditional products generated \$2362.9 million. Improved trade access, coupled with investments from foreign technology companies in developing nations such as Guatemala, help to explain this increase.

**Tax collection up 18%** (Source: sigloxxi.com) In the first 10 months of 2011, tax revenues reached \$4.723 million, 18.4% higher than in the same period in 2010. The increase in revenue is due in part to a significant increase in the collection of Income Tax (32.9%). Pablo Urrutia, analyst from the Association for Research and Social Studies (ASIES), thought that in addition to these figures and percentages, it would be necessary to look at other factors, such as prices and inflation. Even if more money has been collected, if you do not have better spending there is no real benefit, despite the fact that economic growth has increased.

**Investment in nickel production** (Source: prensalibre.com) Russian firm Solway Investment Corporation plans to invest about \$1.5 billion in the FeNiX ferronickel mining project. The project is operated by the Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel (CGN), which was purchased by Solway from its former owner HudBay Minerals Inc. Dimitry Kudryakov, new president of CGN, detailed the company's three stage investment plan. In total, the company plans to invest up to \$1.6 billion over the next 5 years, with the eventual goal of doubling the operation's current production, bringing it to



150,000 tons of ferronickel and 50,000 tons of nickel. According to the new FeNix development plan, Solway will require 60 megawatts (MW) of power to operate the first phase, 135 MW to achieve the goals of the second stage, and up to 250 MW to bring about the third phase of production.

## Nicaragua



**Nicaragua authorizes onion and potato import** (Source: laprensa.com.ni). The Ministry of Commerce has authorized the importation of 68 million pounds of onions and 58 million pounds of potatoes from Costa Rica and the Netherlands. In order to supply local consumption for a month authorization has been given for 10 million pounds of onions from Costa Rica and 58,000 quintals of both potato and onion from the Netherlands, confirmed Orlando Solorzano, Minister of Development, Industry and Trade (MIFIC). Minister Solorzano also reiterated that despite damage to the red bean plantations as a result of recent rains no export restriction for red beans is considered. The Agriculture and Forestry Minister Ariel Bucardo, confirmed that of the 140,000 acres of beans planted during subcycle-season, losses of 7.460 hectares have been reported, especially in León, Chinandega, Estelí and Madriz. In addition, there are 21.500 hectares that are partially affected. **Opportunity for Dutch exporters!**

**Continuing growth in Nicaragua's textile sector** (Source: elnuevodiario.com.ni) By September 2011, exports of Nicaraguan textiles and clothing had reached \$1007 million, 37% more than in the same period in 2010. The growth rate of exports from Nicaraguan free zones engaged in the textile industry is still by far the highest in Central America. The latest report from the Nicaraguan Association of the Textile and Apparel Industry (Anitec), indicated that while this sector had grown 37% in Nicaragua, the rate was 17.4% in Guatemala, 13.5% in Honduras and 9.9% in El Salvador, while Costa Rica registered a decrease of -2.7%.

**Interest from European investors in Nicaraguan tourism** (Source: elnuevodiario.com.ni). During the Encuentro Empresarial (Business Meeting) between Nicaragua and Europe, Italian and Spanish investors expressed their interest in investing in the tourism sector. Regarding this subject the head of the Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism (Intur), Mario Salinas, noted that companies are primarily interested in the construction industry, specializing in transportation projects. The project attracting the most attention from Italian road building companies was the coastal road on the south coast, being seen as a hub of tourist development. The road is an investment they would be undertaken with a concession given by the Government of Nicaragua, so meaning that there would be a toll primarily for foreigners entering from Costa Rica so that (investors) within a certain period, and according to economic studies, can get a return on their investment.

**Ball Horticultural to invest \$15 million in hydroponic project in Nicaragua** (Source: Stock Markets Review). Ball Horticultural, a US company and one of the leaders in ornamental plant cuttings and seed production in the world, recently announced it will develop a \$15 million hydroponic project in Nicaragua through its subsidiary company Las Limas. This company, which will become the first major floriculture project with the latest technology in the country, will create approximately 900 jobs, of which nearly 80 percent will be women. Currently, the company produces seeds and seedlings for worldwide distribution through its farms in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile, United States, Portugal and China.

## El Salvador



**Electricity tariffs in El Salvador to be reduced by 10.2 percent** (Source: La Prensa Gráfica). The new official list of tariffs that comes into effect this month in El Salvador includes a 10.2 percent



reduction in the cost of electricity. In practical terms, however, for most consumers, the drop will be 9 percent. The reduction in tariffs will provide a breather for industry, commerce and heavy domestic users. They have faced six months of increases. Small-scale domestic consumers escaped the increases because of government subsidies.



**Iberia surpasses goal by transporting 41,000 passengers in first year of Madrid-San Salvador flight** (Source: Efe). Spanish airline Iberia exceeded its target by transporting 41,000 passengers in the first year of its direct flight between Madrid and San Salvador. The first flight from the Spanish capital landed in San Salvador on October 2 of last year. In addition to connecting El Salvador with Europe, Iberia has increased its presence in the rest of Central America thanks to connections provided by Taca.



**Honduras 6th biggest coffee producer in the world** (Source: elfinancierocr.com) After overtaking Guatemala to become the main producer in Central America, Honduras is seeking to improve its position in the world rankings of coffee growers. One feature to note about the coffee boom in Honduras is that their production is an important factor in the distribution of wealth in the population; there are about 100 000 farmers who grow on 237 thousand hectares distributed across almost every part of Honduran territory. For the 2011-2012 harvest, the Honduran Coffee Exporters Association (Adecafeh) hopes that the production will be 10% higher than 2010-2011. By the close of the production year (October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011) Honduras had exported 5.2 million bags weighing 48 kilos, as compared to 4 million bags in the 2009-2010 harvest. Honduran coffee has an average price of \$2.45 per pound this season, ahead of Guatemala for the first time in a decade. The export of coffee has brought \$1,200 million into the economy, double the previous harvest, and is without doubt one of the most important pillars for the economic growth in Honduras. Producers enjoying the buoyant prices of coffee in the international market project sales of close to 7 million bags for next season, which would result in an income of foreign exchange of \$1,500 million.

**Honduras plans \$400 million power tender** (Source: La Tribuna) The state electricity utility in Honduras intends to invest \$400 million in repairs for transmission lines and the construction of at least three sub-stations in a drive to overcome a wave of blackouts. Leonardo Deras, deputy manager of the utility, confirmed that a tender is being prepared to remedy what has been defined as an emergency. The strategy includes the installation of power transformers in Tegucigalpa that will make the network more reliable.

**Onyx Service and Solutions to construct an \$84 million, 18.5-megawatt solar power project for Roatán, Honduras** (Source: Financial Post). Onyx Service & Solutions is to construct an \$84 million solar power project for Roatán, Honduras. The project will assist Honduras in becoming more self-reliant for electrical power as opposed to using diesel for generation, which comes at a very high cost. Once under contract, the project will proceed through the normal regulatory process before breaking ground. The project capacity is currently 18.5 megawatts and is expected to take over 65,000 280-watt solar panels. Onyx is also currently in talks to increase the size of the solar power capacity up to 58 total megawatts, once the original 18.5 megawatt facility comes online.



**Honduras inaugurates first wind power plant amid energy crisis that has prompted frequent power outages** (Source: Tico Times). Honduras' first wind power plant began operations amid an ongoing energy crisis that has prompted frequent power outages across the country. The state power utility, ENEE, launched the project, which includes 51 towers lining a hill some 25 kilometers south of Tegucigalpa. The project is the first phase of a more expansive push to bring more wind energy to the country. By the end of the year, the wind farm will be producing a total of 102 megawatts at a cost of \$260 million.



**IFC and Austrian development bank OeEB provide \$98 million financing for largest private hydro project in Honduras** (Source: The Financial). IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, and OeEB, Austria's development bank, are providing \$98 million in financing for the largest private hydropower project in Honduras. IFC is supporting the construction of the 38.5-megawatt project with senior and subordinated loans totaling \$30 million. IFC has also mobilized \$68 million for the project, including a \$23 million parallel loan from OeEB. The project, La Vegona, is IFC's first renewable energy investment in Honduras. Beginning in mid-2013, the hydropower plant is expected to produce about 181 gigawatt hours of electricity a year.

**Honduras will proceed with new international airport at Palmerola Air Base** (Source: Honduras Weekly). Porfirio Lobo, the Honduran president, reiterated plans to build a commercial airport at Palmerola Air Base to replace Tegucigalpa's Toncontin International Airport. He confirmed that the government is currently awaiting the completion of a technical study by a Spanish company. Airports of Honduras, the authority that oversees the operation of the country's four international airports, has taken the position that it will invest at least \$100 million for construction of a commercial terminal at Palmerola.



**European Union becomes leading market for exports from Honduras** (Source: El Heraldo). Takes top spot from United States, Mexico and Canada. The European Union has become the leading importer of exports from Honduras. In the first half of the year, Europe accounted for 35.3 per cent of the nation's overseas sales, or \$818 million. The Nafta bloc of the United States, Mexico and Canada took second place with a 30.4 percent share at \$705 million. Central America came third with 18 percent at \$418 million.

## Dominican Republic



**Venezuela to sell more oil to Dominican Republic** The government of Venezuela has announced it will increase oil supplies to the Dominican Republic from 30,000 to 50,000 barrels of oil a day, under the PetroCaribe Agreement that dates back to 2005. The agreement allows for long-term credit purchases with extended grace periods.

**INDRHI want 12 more dams** There are 35 dams in the Dominican Republic and the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources (INDRHI) is carrying out a feasibility study for building 12 more to provide irrigation for 77,378 hectares in addition to the current 150,808. Nine of the new dams, which will also generate energy, will have an installed potential of producing an additional 80 megawatts to the 460.3 MW that are now being generated by the hydro-electric plants that provide 15% of the national energy supply. The investment in these 12 systems is estimated to be US\$947.5 million and each dam will take between one and three years to build.

## Trade Events



### **Latin America Trade Award**

Who will win the 2011 LATA? You too can be at the announcement! On Thursday, December 15, the Latin America Trade Award will be awarded to a Dutch company active in distinctive ways in the region. During this festive event, which is organized by NLABC and sponsored by Rabobank International, participants can extend their business network and identify business opportunities in Latin America. The



Rijksoverheid

award is presented by Chris Buijink, Secretary General of the Ministry of EL & I. For more information, please visit [www.lata2011.nl](http://www.lata2011.nl)

Present: Nominees, fellow entrepreneurs, Latin American Ambassadors and representatives from ministries, SenterNovem, trade associations, chamber of commerce, etc.

Where: Utrecht, Rabobank International

When: Thursday, December 15, from 18:30 hours (including walking dinner)

Cost: € 75, - (excl. VAT) for members of the NLABC;

€ 125, - (excl. VAT) for other participants

[More information](#)



The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Costa Rica (also responsible for Panama, El Salvador and Honduras), Nicaragua and Guatemala welcomes you to the new Business Guide for Central American firms that are interested in doing business with the Netherlands. The Netherlands are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which consists of four countries, namely, Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten. All are islands in the Caribbean. In 2008, the Dutch embassies in Central America launched the digital trade guide for Dutch entrepreneurs known as "Handelswijzer" with the purpose of providing information on doing business in Central America ([www.handelswijzer.com](http://www.handelswijzer.com)). In 2009 we launched the virtual trading platform to facilitate communication between Dutch and Central America companies ([www.centralamericab2b.com](http://www.centralamericab2b.com)). Now we produced a guide to Central American firms wishing to do business with the Netherlands and Europe (EU), named [www.guiadecomercio.nl](http://www.guiadecomercio.nl). All these instruments were developed to assist companies in finding business opportunities and promote trade.



#### **TRADEPLATFORM:**

In 2009 the Departments of Commerce of the Dutch Embassies Guatemala-City, Managua and San José developed a trade platform. This Business to Business (B2B) tool helps Central American and Dutch companies to get in touch with the aim of exchanging information and doing business. The

website [www.doingtradeincentralamerica.com](http://www.doingtradeincentralamerica.com) provides information sources for Dutch companies interested in doing trade with Central American companies, and groups them together on this website. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2009 the Embassy of the Netherlands has launched a trade platform, which can be found at [www.centralamericab2b.com](http://www.centralamericab2b.com). This service is provided free of charge. The services of this trade platform include the possibility to promote your company, to publish your trade leads, to search for potential contacts or partners in the different countries and sectors, and to contact the companies that you are interested in. In addition, notifications of events that could be of interest to Dutch or Central American companies will be published on this platform. To maximize the accessibility for all parties, the website is in English. Furthermore, a short manual is provided to make the usage of the website as easy as possible.

To benefit from all these services, please register your company at [http://www.centralamericab2b.com/index.php?option=com\\_comprofiler&task=registers](http://www.centralamericab2b.com/index.php?option=com_comprofiler&task=registers).



### **EVD country webpage**

The NL EVD Internationaal provides Central American country web pages where you can find up-to-date information, such as: business news, economical developments, tenders, country information (incl. fact sheet and laws), interesting sectors, activities, important documents and the business country guide from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. For more information visit the website: [www.evd.nl/landen](http://www.evd.nl/landen). More information can also be obtained from Judith Brussee, e-mail: [centraal-amerika@info.agentschapnl.nl](mailto:centraal-amerika@info.agentschapnl.nl) telephone: +0031 (088) - 602 80 97.



### **Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as information source**

On the website of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in San José (for the countries Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador) you can not only find general information about these countries in our resort, but also specific commercial information. Our 'handelswijzers' business trade guides entail broad and up-to-date information on how to do business in each of the four countries, they are meant as a tool/guide for Dutch exporters and investors. For more information visit: [www.holanda.cr](http://www.holanda.cr), [www.handelswijzer.com](http://www.handelswijzer.com), [www.doingtradeincentralamerica.com](http://www.doingtradeincentralamerica.com) or [www.centralamericab2b.com](http://www.centralamericab2b.com).

For more information you can contact our commercial department at the Dutch Embassy in San José thru email [sanjose@trade-minbuza.nl](mailto:sanjose@trade-minbuza.nl) or by phone (00506) 2296 1490 (Luc Schillings or Hans Buhrs).

You can also contact our Consulaat-Generaal in Panama, Phone: (00507) 263 6494 or (00507) 264 7257 (Jennie van Haren). Email: [consuladonl@cwpanama.net](mailto:consuladonl@cwpanama.net)

For more information about Guatemala you can contact the commercial department of the Dutch Embassy in Guatemala City by email; [gua-ez@minbuza.nl](mailto:gua-ez@minbuza.nl) or by telephone (00502) 2381 4300 (Susana Azurdia). More information can be found on the website: [www.mfa.nl/gua](http://www.mfa.nl/gua)

For more information about Nicaragua you can contact the commercial department of the Dutch Embassy in Managua by email [mng@minbuza.nl](mailto:mng@minbuza.nl) or by telephone (00505) 2276 8630 (Jan Bauer, Luis Bravo) For more information visit the following website: [www.embajadaholanda-nic.com](http://www.embajadaholanda-nic.com) .

For more information about the Dominican Republic contact the commercial department of the Dutch Embassy in Santo Domingo by email [std-ea@minbuza.nl](mailto:std-ea@minbuza.nl) or by telephone (00 1 809) 262 0320 (Reinier Davina) More information is available on the following website: [www.holanda.org.do](http://www.holanda.org.do)