

Antigua moves towards ban on sunscreen chemicals to protect coral reefs

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The Ministry of Trade has commenced stakeholder consultation that will lead to a possible ban on certain chemicals that are used in many popular sun-screen lotions.

Senior trade policy analyst in the Ministry, Jomica Carbon, explained that the ministry is undertaking the consultation to support the development of a WTO-compliant and Caricom-aligned policy to ban the importation, manufacture, sale, and distribution of sunscreens containing harmful chemicals such as Oxybenzone, Octinoxate; Avabenzene, Homosalate; and Octocrylene, Octisalate.

“This initiative is driven by the urgent need to protect Antigua and Barbuda’s coral reef ecosystems, which are vital to the country’s tourism-dependent economy, and to address emerging public health concerns related to these chemicals.

“The proposed approach draws inspiration from international best practices, particularly the successful ban implemented by Palau, which prohibits a range of reef-toxic chemicals to preserve marine biodiversity,” said Carbon at a meeting of the task force this week.