



Trading Up

贸易升级

Although implementation problems still remain with the Sino-Swiss Free Trade Agreement, Swiss and Chinese companies are increasingly taking advantage of it, and trade between the two countries is flourishing.

by **Mark Andrews**

When The Bridge last examined the Sino-Swiss Free Trade Agreement (SSFTA) in its Autumn 2016 edition there was still much negativity as to the benefits that it had brought, particularly from the SMEs interviewed. The Agreement, which came into force in July 2014, was supposedly giving eligibility to 99.7% of Chinese exports and 84.2% of Swiss goods for zero rate tariffs, but few companies interviewed at that time said that they had experienced much benefit to their bottom line. A year later, however, there are signs that more companies are beginning to experience a real benefit that adds to their competitiveness.

After only three and a half years from its implementation it is perhaps still too early to quantify the direct effect of the

尽管《中瑞自由贸易协议》在具体实施上还存在一些问题，越来越多的瑞士和中国公司开始利用这一协议，两国之间的贸易日益繁荣。

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2 016年秋季刊《桥》针对《中瑞自由贸易协议》的采访中，很多人反映相较于对于其带来的便利方面，仍尚有更多不足之处，对于受访的许多中小企业来说尤其如此。《协议》自2014年7月生效以来，本应该使99.7%的中国出口商品和84.2%的瑞士进口商品获得零关税资格，但是当时受访的公司很少有表示从中受益的。一年后，有迹象显示更多的公司借助《协议》增强其竞争力。

至今《协议》刚刚生效三年半，现在计算它对贸易的直接作用为时尚早，

agreement on trade, especially as some of the reductions in tariffs occur on a sliding scale over a ten-year period. However, bilateral trade in 2015/2016 increased over 2013/2014 levels by 10.6% for exports from Switzerland, and 4.7% for imports. “The recent development in Sino-Swiss trade relations is particularly remarkable taking into account the overall demand in China – measured by GDP growth – has almost halved in recent years compared to the previously typically two-digit annual growth rates,” according to the Swiss Embassy in Beijing. Sectors that have led the charge of Swiss companies in China trade have been precision instruments, watches and jewellery, followed by chemicals, agricultural products and then stone and earth materials.

Of course, trade flows between the two countries are influenced not only by the SSFTA, but also by a wide range of variables such as exchange rates, economic factors and growth trends, so identifying the specific contribution made by the SSFTA is not easy. However, according to research by Professor Patrick Ziltener, from the University of Zurich and a member of the Sino-Swiss Competence Center (SSCC-HSG), the SSFTA provides extraordinary savings potential in all sectors. His research shows that the annual total savings potential for Swiss exporters equals about CHF300 million this year alone, increasingly thereafter to over half a billion CHF annually. Comparing sectors, the MEM (mechanical, electrical and metal industry) sector has the greatest potential with calculations showing possible savings of CHF90 million this year alone. This is followed by the watch, and chemical and pharmaceutical industries. The Swiss food industry also stands to benefit by up to CHF4.5 million,” according to the research.

Implementation issues

Since its inception, implementation and interpretation have caused a number of problems. In particular, the wording of the FTA when dealing with trade from seaport to seaport did not appear to clearly address the issue that as Switzerland is landlocked it has to trade via other European ports. “With the intensive use of the FTA, import processes in China have not always been without difficulties particularly at the beginning. Initial difficulties, in particular regarding the direct transport rule, have meanwhile been solved thanks to the regular contacts between the customs authorities of both parties”, according to the Swiss Embassy.



Professor Patrick Ziltener
University of Zurich

尤其这十年间其中一些关税的减免是按比例增减的。但是，2015/2016年度比2013/2014年度双边贸易中瑞士出口增长率为10.6%，进口增长率为4.7%。“考虑到近几年与之前通常为两位数的年增长率（以中国的国内生产总值增长速度为准）几乎下降了一半，近期的中瑞双边贸易发展是很可观的”，北京瑞士驻中国大使馆方面表示。瑞士在对中国贸易中领先的行业有精密仪器，钟表和珠宝，接下来是化学制品和农产品，然后是石材和土壤材料。

当然了，《中瑞自由贸易协议》不是唯一的影响因素，汇率、经济因素、发展趋势等一系列其他变量也会影响到两国之间的贸易流动，因此衡量《协议》的具体贡献不是件易事。但是，根据苏黎世大学兼中瑞技术中心成员 Patrick Ziltener 博士的一项研究显示，《中瑞自由贸易协议》对各个产业节省进出口成本都有巨大的潜在影响。此研究显示，瑞士出口商仅今年就能节约三亿瑞郎成本，而此后还将增长到至少每年五亿瑞郎左右。对比各个产业，机械、电气和金属工业有望节约最多的开销，今年一年的潜在节约额就有约九千万瑞郎。接下来是钟表、化学产品和制药工业。根据这项研究，瑞士食品工业也将受益于此，有望节约四百五十万瑞郎。

实施《协议》遇到的问题

自启动以来，《中瑞自由贸易协议》的实施及解读已经引起了一系列的问题。尤其是《协议》中对于海港港口对港口贸易的相关规定并没有明确瑞士作为内陆国家需要通过欧洲其他港口进出口的问题。瑞士驻中国大使馆方面表示：“《中瑞自由贸易协议》的广泛应用在

中国进口流程问题上并不是一帆风顺的，尤其是在一开始。最初的一些困难，特别是在直接运输规则上的一些疑议，已经在两国政府海关的常规合作过程中解决”。

一些公司在运用《协议》的进出口流程中也遇到了一些问题。例如 Ferrum 公司，一家从事机械、电气和金属工业的传统瑞士中小型家族企业。在其主营的四大主营业务中，只有灌装技术和离心机技术是在中国运营的。其产品都是进口，中国运营的部门只负责销售、售后（主要是备件）、培训及技术支持。根据《协议》规定，此公司本应该少缴纳6%



Patrick Rohner
Ferrum

Certain aspects of the processing have also been a problem for some companies. An example is Ferrum, a classic family-run Swiss SME operating in the MEM sector. The company has four main business units of which only the canning technology and centrifuge technology units operate in China. All products are imported and its China operations consist of only sales, after sales (largely spare parts), training and technical support functions. According to the FTA the company should be able to save 6% on its import tariffs, but in practice this has not always been so easy to get. "In the beginning, each time we applied for the FTA status there were some complications," says Patrick Rohner, Ferrum's Head of Sales & Service Base China. "In one case, from the Swiss end we did everything correctly and uploaded the documents, but, the Chinese customs claimed they were unable to download the documents and so were not able to claim FTA status. In the case of our machines which we start to sell at around CHF 250,000 per piece, losing 6% is substantial. However, the situation seems to be improving."

Handling paperwork also has proved to be an issue. Schuler Wine is eligible for tariff reductions from the FTA when importing Swiss wine into China. "At the beginning, we haven't enjoyed trade agreement benefits because of paperwork problems", says Schuler Wine China Head, Helen Zhang. Swiss wines have only recently been exported to China, after continuous communication between China and Switzerland this year, these problems will be sorted out, giving a significant cost advantage that the SSFTA brings against competing EU wines.

Another drawback has been that the time taken to process claims under the FTA increases the delay in customs clearance so that the company ends up spending more money on warehousing costs. "We have deliveries for which we ask for FTA status, and then we have deliveries for which we don't ask for it," says Ferrum's Rohner. "It seems that the ones which we don't ask for it are much faster to clear. The worst case so far was a three week delay, and typically it adds up to a week to clear customs under the FTA. Now, if we have very urgent parts we don't apply for the FTA, because we fear it might take too long."

Another issue with any bilateral trade treaty is that modern supply chain has become increasingly complex and it is commonplace for goods to be produced from components or raw materials that are sourced from numerous other countries. In the case of Switzerland, with its strong ties to the EU, this has proved a stumbling block. One example is Bertrams Chemical Plants. "The VNM (value of non-originating materials) for our raw materials is too big for us to enjoy savings from the FTA as these are mainly



Cao Ran
Bertrams Chemical Plants China

的进口税，但是实际上要享受这一优惠并不是那么容易。“一开始的时候我们每次申请中瑞自由贸易协议优惠都会遇到一些困难，” Ferrum 的中国区销售和服务部主管 Patrick Rohner 说，“有一次，我们瑞士方面完全按规则办事，上传了所有相关文件，但是中国海关称他们无法下载我们提供的文件，因此我们不能得到优惠资格。我们每台机器定价在 25 万瑞郎左右，6% 的损失是很严重的。但是现在情况似乎在好转。”

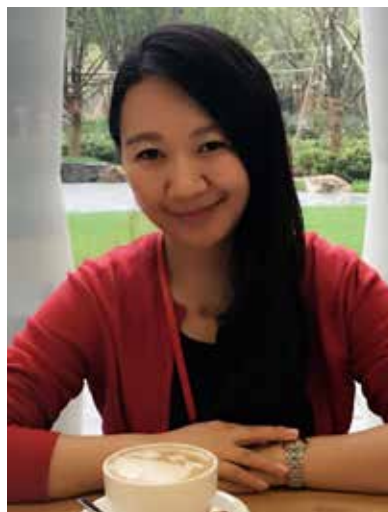
准备文件材料也成为了一个问题。轩乐酒业进口瑞士葡萄酒到中国是有资格享受减税的。“一开始我们因为一些书面材料的问题不能够享受这一政策优惠”，轩乐酒业的主管 Helen Zhang 表示。瑞士葡萄酒最近才被进口到中国，在今年中国与瑞士两国的不断沟通交流之后，这些问题将会得到解决完善，《中瑞自由贸易协议》将给瑞士葡萄酒与其他欧洲葡萄酒竞争中带来的成本优势。

另一个劣势则是由于海关根据《中瑞自由贸易协议》处理进口优惠造成清关时间延长，许多公司最终会花费更多仓储成本。“我们有些订单是申请了减税优惠的，有些没有，” Ferrum 的 Rohner 先生说，“而没有申请减税优惠的那些清关起来会快很多。目前最糟糕的一次是订单延迟了三周，而一般来说通过《协议》清关需要一周时间。现在如果有急单我们根本不会申请减税优惠，因为可能需要过多时间。”

任何双边贸易协议都有可能出现的

问题是现代供应链变得越来越复杂，而通常产品都是由来自无数不同国家的组件或者原材料生产而成的。对于瑞士来说，与欧盟的紧密联系已经变成了一个绊脚石。博特瑞姆斯化工技术有限公司是一个很好的例子。博特中国区董事总经理 Cao Ran 表示：“我们的原材料大都来自欧洲其他国家进口而非瑞士国产，因此非原产材料的价格非常高，使用《中瑞自由贸易协议》进出口的话是无法节省成本的。”

采暖、通风和空调



Han Ying
Sauter

made in other European countries rather than Switzerland,” says Cao Ran, Managing Director Bertrams Chemical Plants China.

Sauter, a manufacturer of control systems and building management systems for heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, has a similar problem. “Part of our production has moved to Germany and is labelled ‘Made in Germany’. However, all shipments are still despatched from Switzerland,” says Han Ying, Quality Management & Administration Department Manager for Sauter China.

Still, it is not all doom and gloom. Swiss statistics show that the benefit for Chinese companies in duty saved on exports to Switzerland has been about CHF110 million. It is more difficult to quantify the benefit of exports to Swiss companies, but it is likely to be substantial.

An example of a firm that is deriving real benefits is Lonza, which operates in the pharmaceutical and biotech sector producing specialty ingredients. The 2017 savings in duty are expected to be “significant”, according to Vicky Zhao, Lonza China’s Senior Manager of Corporate Affairs. “Many items we import from Switzerland have been listed on the Sino-Swiss Preferential Tax List since the SSFTA was implemented on 1 July 2014, and a great deal of them have enjoyed their import tax rate decreasing year by year,” says Zhao. “For nitrile function compounds duty has reduced from 6.5% to 3.9%, and for other vitamins and their deviants it has gone from 4.0% to 2.4% - both reductions of 40%.”

There also are political benefits which are less tangible but also very important. “For China, a bilateral FTA is more than just a customs duty reduction device. It is also a confirmation of a solid, strategic relationship and hence a signal. One that is powerful and that can lead to government contracts, business partnerships, distribution deals, additional momentum when bidding for public tenders or local government support for Swiss companies in China,” says Tomas Casas, professor at University of St. Gallen (FIM-HSG) and academic director of its China Competence Center. And there is certainly a clear commitment on both sides to have the FTA work. Earlier this year Xi Jinping when visiting Berne signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the Agreement. With this MoU, Switzerland and China expressed their commitment to deepen the existing agreement in areas with respective potential, and to strive to eliminate or further lower tariffs on products that are currently not yet or only partially considered in the FTA. This should mean that going forward, more Swiss companies will see gains to their bottom line from the Agreement as it enhances their competitiveness in China against companies from the EU and beyond. ○



Professor Tomas Casas
University of St. Gallen

的控制系统和建筑管理系统制造商索特自控系统有限公司也遇到了类似的问题。索特中国区质量管理和行政部经理 Han Ying 说：“我们的生产线有一部分转移到了德国，并标上了‘德国制造’的标签。但是所有的订单都是从瑞士发货的。”

然而，情况也并不总是那么一筹莫展。瑞士数据统计显示，中国公司在出口到瑞士的关税方面节省了约一亿一千万瑞郎成本。要量化瑞士公司出口成本节

约比较复杂，但数目应该是很可观的。从事制药和生物技术的特殊成分生产的龙沙集团是从《协议》中获益的公司中的一员。龙沙中国公司事务高级经理 Vicky Zhao 表示，2017 年度关税方面的成本节约预期很高。“自 2014 年 7 月 1 日《中瑞自由贸易协议》实施以来，我们从瑞士进口的许多产品都被列入中瑞优惠税率名单，其中很多商品的进口税都在逐年减免” Zhao 说，“腈基化合物的关税从 6.5% 降低到了 3.9%，其他维他命及其衍生物的关税从 4.0% 降低到了 2.4% - 都降低了 40% 左右。”

《协议》所带来的政治影响虽然是无形的，但是也不容小觑。“对中国来说，《中瑞自由贸易协议》不仅仅是一项海关减税策略，也是一个信号，标志着中瑞双方稳固的战略关系。这一强大的联系将为瑞士在华企业获得政府合约、商业伙伴关系、分销协议、公开招标的额外考量或当地政府更多支持提供便利，”圣加伦大学国际管理研究所教授兼中国技术中心学术总监 Tomas Casas 提到。显然，两国政府都致力于《协议》的实施推广。今年年初，在访问伯尔尼的时候，习近平签署了促进《协议》实行的《谅解备忘录》。在《备忘录》中，瑞士和中国双方都表示了扩大现有协议范围，以及努力减除或进一步减免目前协议没有覆盖商品的关税的决心。这表明今后瑞士公司将继续获益于《中瑞自由贸易协议》，在与欧洲公司和其他国家公司竞争中变得更加有竞争力。○

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