



NACCIMA restates opposition to Customs' raids on markets

Stories: **Layi Adeloye**

THE threat by the Nigerian Customs Service to effect raids on supermarkets in cities in search of banned but smuggled items has been condemned by the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Indus-

try, Mines and Agriculture.

According to NACCIMA, such an action would be "reckless and unhealthy on the part of the Nigerian Customs Service and the economy.

The NACCIMA's position was unveiled in a statement signed by the Direc-

tor-General, Mr. Lawrence Olumide, in Lagos last Friday.

"It is an open and unfortunate admission of failure on the part of the Nigeria Customs Service to properly and effectively man our borders," NACCIMA alerted, stress-

ing that "seizures of goods prohibited from importation can only be effectively carried out at the border posts."

While the association admitted that it had been a proponent of import prohibition of products that are adequately produced locally, it, nevertheless, argued that "the implementation of such a ban should be carried out in such a way that would prevent losses to importers who have concluded import contracts before the pronouncement of the prohibition."

Alternatively, it said: "Sufficient time should be allowed for import contracts already concluded to be honoured in the interest of our country's image and the business community."

In the association's view, goods that were already in the warehouses and supermarkets before the import prohibition pronouncement should be given an 18-month grace period, as such usually "have a transition period ranging between 12 and 18 months before they could be completely sold.

"We, therefore, expect

that the NCS should have taken note of this in giving deadlines for compliance by the importers.

Accordingly, the NACCIMA said it viewed the threat issued by the Customs as unrealistic.

Describing the threat of confiscation as unacceptable, the association called on the Minister of Finance to intervene without delay.

It also urged the government to desist from effecting arbitrary changes in policies as a way of avoiding disruptions to businesses.