

South Africa: Extra time on AGOA

This week South Africa missed the deadline to comply to conditions set by the US to allow the export of beef and chicken from the states and as a result may be shut out of the AGOA program.

Losing the duty-free status afforded by AGOA could also affect US orders for South African citrus, which were valued at over R950 million through the first nine months of last year, 2015.

South Africa has been concerned that an outbreak of avian flu in the United States which killed nearly 50 million birds could pose animal and human health risks to its economy.

South African Trade and Industry minister Rob Davies said on Monday his government was keen to meet outstanding requirements on beef exports to South Africa, and that discussions between Pretoria and Washington were ongoing.

Using a soccer analogy, he said the talks had gone into "extra time" but that the "final whistle" had not been blown.

At stake is South Africa's membership of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a U.S. program designed to help African exporters.

"Our mandate is to come out with a successful outcome, which ensures that we continue to benefit from AGOA and on other hand ensures that we are responsible as a government in terms of our agricultural industry and in terms of our human health," Davies told reporters in the capital Pretoria.

"We have not been told when the new deadline will be. The other side blows the whistle," Davies said.

He said that even if the United States proceeded to block South African produce from its market, Pretoria could still eventually benefit.

"We have been told if that happens, it can easily be reversed if we reach an agreement subsequently," Davies said.

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