Political tensions may impact fruit exports from South Africa to the U.S

The U.S. has expressed its discontent with the latest rumors indicating that South African weapons were being provided to Russia, and there are concerns the situation could impact fruit exports.

South Africa is part of The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a preferential trade program that gives African countries preferential access to U.S. markets, allowing them to export products tariff-free. Their participation in the program could be at risk due to the latest news.

The American dissatisfaction was voiced by the U.S. ambassador to South Africa, Reuben Brigety who commented that based on SA's actions they were stepping over their neutrality on the war in Ukraine.

The problem started after a Russian ship docked at South Africa's Simon's Town naval base in December last year and allegedly left South Africa loaded with weapons, according to the U.S. government.

Recently, a Russian cargo plane also arrived at Waterkloof, the country's main air base just outside the capital, Pretoria.

Brigety told the media in Pretoria that Washington had verified that the ship was loaded with weapons while docked. When the ship docked, controversy erupted, and Pretoria remained silent about its activities in South African waters.

Shortly after reaching historical trade volumes between both nations, valued at $1 billion in 2022, South Africa could lose the benefit of tariff-free exports. The main South African export to the U.S. are citrus, this season they are projecting 80,000 tons in exports.

Once the news hit, South African currency suffered a free fall against the dollar, reaching its lowest level in 22 years this week at just 19.30 rand to the dollar.