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## PODCAST: It is crucial to ease agricultural trade friction in Southern Africa

A ban by Namibia and Botswana on importing agricultural produce from South Africa has led to friction

25 NOVEMBER 2024 - 17:13

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Picture: SUPPLIED

Southern Africa has experienced agricultural trade friction in the past few years since Namibia and Botswana banned the import of South African vegetables and citrus. Simply put, the rationale of both Namibia and Botswana was that the import ban ensures their domestic producers are not exposed to South African competition, thus giving them space to rebuild for self-sufficiency.

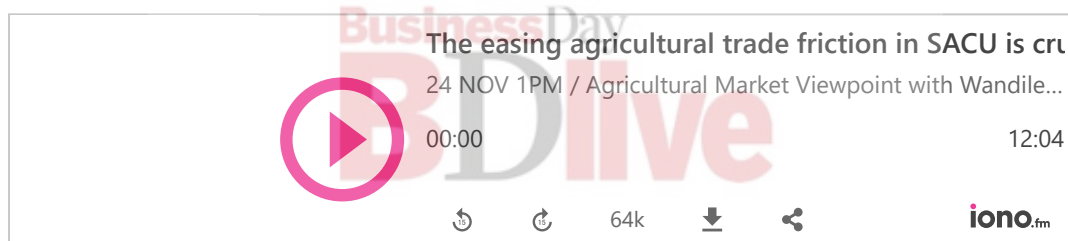
All these countries are members of the Southern African Customs Union, and such a policy reaction disrespects the spirit of free trade. While South African fruit exports could be redirected to other markets worldwide, the vegetable industry had to bear the financial impact of reduced regional demand.

Beyond breaching the spirit of the customs union, Botswana and Namibia also have limitations in the potential of their land to produce sufficient high-quality vegetables. Thus, there have been reports of food inflation in these countries.

Fortunately, South Africa did not react irresponsibly to the ban on its vegetable and citrus exports. The major objective should always be to enhance regional agricultural production and discourage fragmentation.

A new administration in Botswana under President Duma Boko brings the opportunity to reverse the prohibitions of the previous administration and encourage stronger regional agricultural production and trade. The priority should be to ensure that the people of Botswana can access high-quality agricultural and food products.

Listen to the podcast for more insights.



*Richard Humphries, Sam Mkokeli, Nelisiwe Tshabalala and Amanda Murimba produced this podcast.*