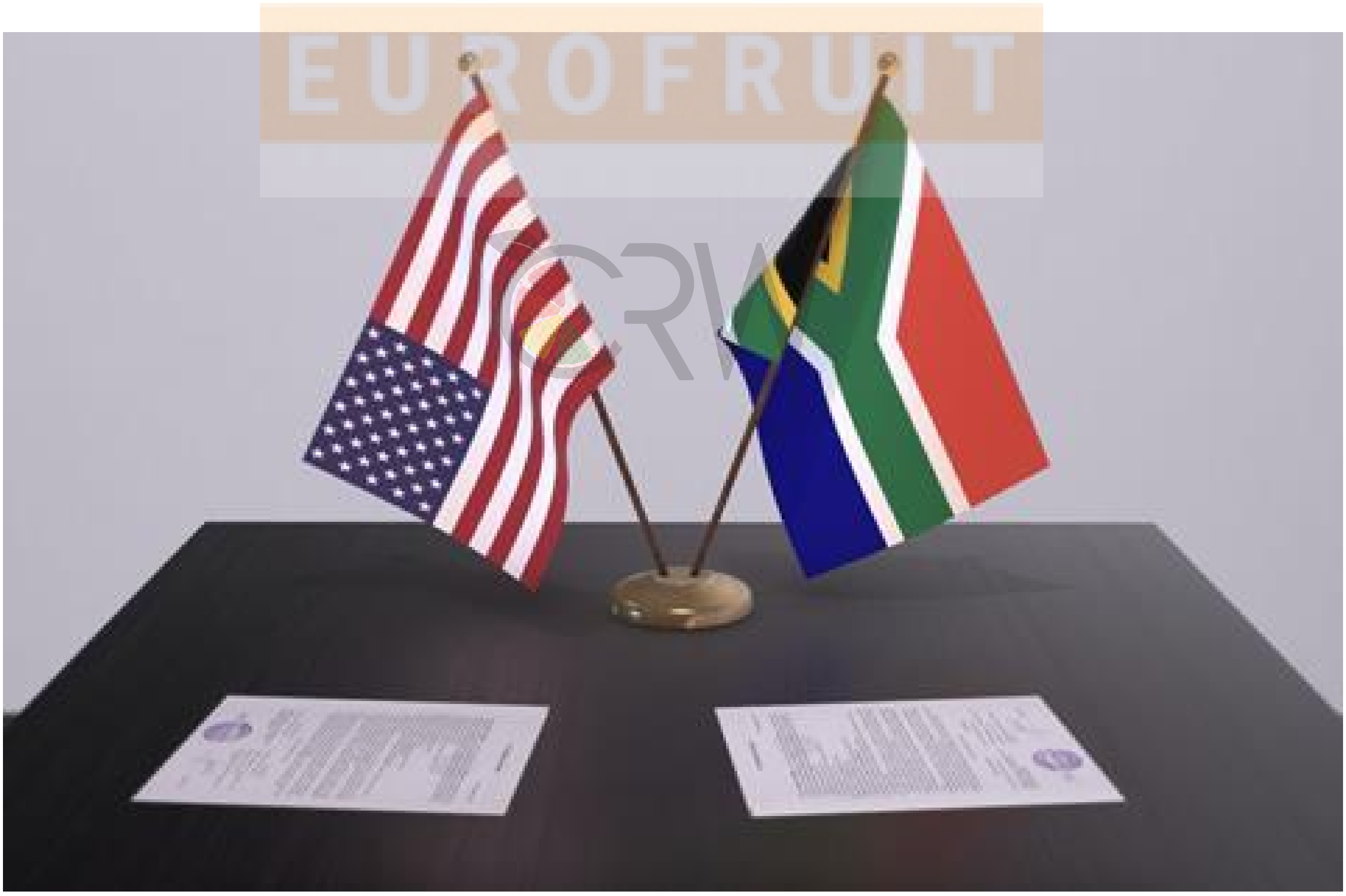
South Africa receives seven-day extension as 30 per cent US tariffs loom over fresh produce exports

By Fred Meintjes | 1 August 2025

With the original deadline now passed, South Africa's government appears to be shifting focus to domestic support rather than preventing the tariffs, leaving citrus and upcoming stonefruit and grape seasons facing significant market disruption

The deadline for the imposition of new 30 per cent tariffs on South Africa fresh produce exports to the US has passed, with the latest reports indicating that the country has been granted another seven days to come up with a better proposal.



Few believe that things will change in that timeframe, and most accept that the higher tariffs are now unavoidable.

It [illegible] affect next week's shipments – with sources saying they are planning another conventional vessel to mop up the fruit that is already packed but could not be shipped before the end of July.

South Africa now faces pressure on two fronts. On one side is the Trump tariffs, and on the other a massive police scandal that is threatening the government.

It is not surprising that domestic problems perhaps now override the issues of global trade.

The South African government seems to have also thrown in the towel as far as the tariffs are concerned, creating a new desk for 'export assistance' and promising to help those industries affected.

With early stonefruit orchards in South Africa already signalling the start of a new season with blossom, and the early grape-producing vineyards moving to bloom, there is not much time to find alternatives to the US export market.

The country's fresh produce industries have already stated that under the new tariffs they will not be able to ship to the US.

With South Africa's automotive and fresh produce sectors to be hit by the new tariffs, there has also bee a hardening of public opinion against the US.

It is likely that South Africans will also seek closer ties to Brics and European nations.

All South African citrus shipped by 31 July will clear in US ports under the old tariffs.

What is now uncertain is how South African exporters and their US receivers will deal with the future.

South Africans will also need to study the effect of US tariffs amongst their competing countries in South America.

Uneven tariff rates will further muddle the situation if US retailers can obtain produce under better rates.

South African sources also said that administering the vast range of tariffs imposed on countries around the world, will be a bureaucratic nightmare for the US administration.