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South Africa farm exports surge 10% as US shipments climb

'From now on a great deal hinges on whether South Africa succeeds in securing favourable terms with the US,' Wandile Sihlobo said.

By Antony Sguazzin, Bloomberg · 2 Jun 2025 ⌚ 12:13

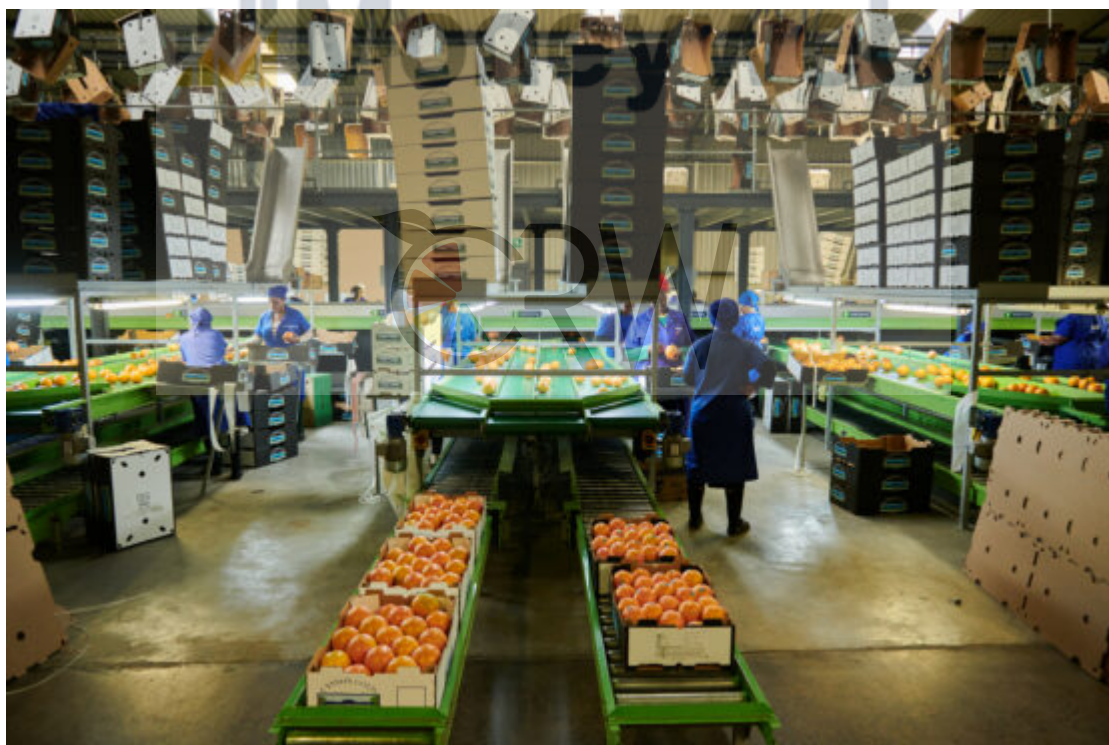


Image: Bloomberg

South African agricultural exports rose 10% in the first quarter to \$3.36 billion from a year earlier as port performance improved and shipments to the US climbed, an industry body said.

The 14% increase in trade to the US, which totaled \$202 million, comes as South Africa braces for the imposition of a 30% tariff on exports to the country by the Trump administration when a 90-day grace period expires in July.

30-day grace period expires in July.

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“From now on a great deal hinges on whether South Africa succeeds in securing favourable terms with the US,” Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist of the Agricultural Business Chamber of South Africa, said in a note to clients on Monday.

South African farming exports rose for a sixth consecutive year in 2024 to a record \$13.7 billion, as the industry expanded output of crops such as citrus, avocados and nuts, and sought new markets. While it account for only 2% of total gross domestic product, the sector is a important source of employment for unskilled workers. The statistics office will release first-quarter GDP data on Tuesday.

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In the three months through March, other African countries accounted for 45% of farm exports, the European Union 23% and Asia and the Middle East 16%. The US received 4% of shipments, mainly citrus, wine, fruit juice and grapes.

Farming imports rose 19% to \$1.94 billion, resulting in a \$1.42 billion agricultural trade surplus.

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