

Citrus and nut exports at risk after AGOA expiry

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) expired on 30 September 2025, creating uncertainty for 32 African countries that previously benefited from duty-free access to the U.S. market. While the Trump administration has voiced support for a one-year extension, no renewal has yet taken place.

For South Africa, the lapse introduces tariffs on agricultural products that have relied on AGOA preferences. In 2024, South Africa's agricultural exports to the United States were valued at about US\$523 million, accounting for 4% of the country's total agricultural exports. This represents a 104% increase from 2018 levels.

Fresh produce exposure

Key agricultural exports under AGOA include macadamia nuts, oranges, mandarins, raisins, apple juice, and grapes. Average annual export values to the U.S. over the past five years included oranges at US\$55 million, mandarins at US\$30 million, and macadamia nuts at US\$23.8 million.

In 2023, shares of total South African exports going to the U.S. included apple juice (68%), macadamia nuts (27%), dried grapes (18%), mandarins (11%), and oranges (8%).

The imposition of Most Favoured Nation tariffs is projected to reduce South Africa's agricultural trade balance, with vegetables, fruits, and nuts expected to decline by US\$61.8 million.

Employment and regional impacts

The expiry of AGOA is expected to reduce labour demand in agriculture, particularly in fruit and nut production. The vegetables, fruits, and nuts subsector could see a 1.389% decline in labour demand, adding pressure to South Africa's rural employment challenges.

Industry sources estimate that up to 35,000 jobs could be at risk due to reduced citrus exports to the U.S.

Regional impacts will be uneven. The Western Cape, which accounted for 49% of South Africa's agricultural exports to the U.S. between 2018 and 2022, is expected to be most affected. In 2022, exports from the province were valued at US\$260 million. Other affected regions include Mpumalanga (US\$70 million in 2022), Gauteng (US\$49 million), Eastern Cape (US\$32 million), and KwaZulu-Natal (US\$30 million).

Outlook

Analysts warn that higher tariffs could shift U.S. buyers to cheaper suppliers, reducing South Africa's competitiveness in citrus and nuts. Unless AGOA is renewed, producers face lower export volumes, reduced income, and job losses in key agricultural provinces.

Source: Central News (<https://centralnews.co.za/trump-administration-supports-one-year-agoa-extension-amid-expiration-concerns-for-african-exporters/>)

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