

South Africa close to finalising US trade agreement that could ease damaging tariffs on fresh produce exports

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 13 October 2025

South Africa's trade minister Parks Tau has indicated that the country is close to finalising a trade agreement with the US that could ease damaging tariffs on fresh produce exports and protect thousands of local jobs



There is new hope in the South African fresh produce export business that the country is close to a new trade agreement with the US.

Media reports are today (13 October) quoting South Africa's trade minister Parks Tau as saying that the two countries are close to finalising a deal that could ease damaging tariffs and protect thousands of local jobs.

If true, the deal will fundamentally change prospects for South African fresh produce exporters as they enter their new season.

Access to the US at reasonable tariff rates is seen as crucial for those exporters looking to maintain trade links with US importers and retailers.

Speaking at a trade and investment event in South Africa's Drakensberg, Tau revealed that the two countries are "on the verge of negotiating an agreement around tariffs, and how they can be reciprocally beneficial".

The negotiations follow the 30 per cent tariffs imposed by US president Donald Trump in August on South African exports, which have placed a significant strain on sectors like automobile manufacturing and fresh produce farming.

Minister Tau said the dialogue had been "tough", especially around a couple of key issues, which includes South Africa's Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) laws, which the US has criticised, as well as US claims of "genocide" of white Afrikaans farmers.

South Africa's BEE policy may still be a sticking point because minister Tau said the country will not abandon its empowerment policies.

South African citrus, stonefruit and table grape exporters have stated that the US market is crucial to their future plans.

In recent years all these sectors have made great progress in carving out an important slice of the US consumer market for their products.

The AGOA agreement, under which South African exporters have had duty free access to the US, has also recently lapsed, affecting countries across the continent who benefitted from the agreement.