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# Agriculture widens trade surplus with more exports, less imports in Q2

30TH SEPTEMBER 2025 BY: MARLENY ARNOLDI - SENIOR DEPUTY EDITOR ONLINE

Photo by: Creamer Media's Marleny Arnoldi

The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) finds in its latest trade brief that South Africa's agricultural exports increased by 8% in the second quarter, compared with the second quarter of last year, with the sector comfortably maintaining its trade surplus position.

In fact, agricultural imports declined by 6% in the second quarter compared with the second quarter of last year, marking the first decline in second-quarter imports in five years.

Agricultural exports were valued at R71.5-billion in the second quarter, marking a 60% increase compared with 2020 levels and a 91% increase compared with 2019 levels.

Agricultural imports totalled R35-billion.

Nearly 80% of South Africa's total agricultural exports by value are contributed by its top ten product categories, which includes citrus and wines. In turn, the leading import product category is cereals.

In terms of South Africa's total trade, the BFAP says the country maintains a positive net trade position despite a 1% decrease in exports in the second quarter.

Total exports have loomed at R500-billion since the second quarter of 2021, which indicates long-term stagnation, but a sustained net trade position.

The Southern African Development Community remains the primary market for South Africa's agriculture exports, comprising 35%.

The BFAP says exports to the US and EU experienced the most significant increase in value in the past quarter, having grown by 19% and 18%, respectively, year-on-year.

In turn, South Africa recorded lower imports from the BRICS Plus, UK and EU regions, with imports from these regions having declined by 26%, 17% and 16% year-on-year in the second quarter.

The country recorded a 12% increase in imports from "other regions" in Asia outside the Middle East, China and India, and a 10% increase in imports from the US.

## US TRADE

The announced tariff increases of between 10% and 50% by the US on at least 50 of its trade partners in April signalled intense uncertainty and turbulence in global trade and international markets.

The BFAP explains South Africa was hit with a 30% tariff increase, which also means that preferential market access under the African Growth and Opportunity Act is lost.

The tariff increase was announced in April, subsequently paused for 90 days at a level of 10% and the 30% level took effect from August, which was outside the second quarter period; however, the sentiment surrounding its impact is worth considering, given the changing trade, diplomatic, and foreign relations between the two countries.

Total imports from the US, which account for 3% of South Africa's total imports, increased between the second quarters of 2024 and 2025.

South Africa's exports to the US, which accounted for 9% of the total, declined by 11%.

Agricultural exports increased by 19% as frontloading, especially for citrus fruit and fruit juices, preceded the tariff shock.

"The effect of US tariffs in the future will be interesting to observe, as a 30% duty kicks in for South African citrus and table grapes, compared to 10% for those originating from South American countries like Peru, Chile and Uruguay.

"In the case of fruit juice, Brazil was able to negotiate an exemption on orange juice, while other products will face the full brunt of the tariff," the BFAP states.

The next quarter's trade performance is likely to show some signs of these impacts from tariffs, as it will include the period outside the 90-day pause.

During this period, the third quarter, South Africa's citrus exports typically reach their peak, with other products, such as fruit juices, macadamias and table grapes, also increasing their volumes.

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