SOUTH AFRICA AND AGOA:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR EXPORTERS

Issued: 3 November 2026
Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic)

PURPOSE

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) provide guidance to South African exporters regarding recent developments relating to South Africa's beneficiary status under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the potential implications for trade with the United States (US) market, and support available through the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (**the dtic**).

The FAQs are intended to assist exporters in understanding potential impacts, assessing exposure, protecting commercial relationships and identifying appropriate support mechanisms.

CURRENT STATUS

On 2 November 2026, the US announced its 60-day notice of intention to terminate South Africa's beneficiary status under the AGOA, with implementation expected from 1 January 2027.

This implies that government has 60-days to address issues raised by the US. If the US find that South Africa (SA) addressed the issues, then SA will remain part of AGOA. If the US finds that SA has not addressed the issues, then SA will no longer be part of AGOA, effective 1 January 2027.

The government of South Africa is assessing the implications of these developments and continues to engage relevant stakeholders through appropriate diplomatic, trade and economic channels.

the dtic remains available to support exporters, assess potential impacts and coordinate responses to exporter concerns.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is AGOA and why has it been important to South African exporters?

The AGOA is a United States trade preference programme that provides eligible sub-Saharan African countries with preferential, generally duty-free access to the US market for qualifying products.

AGOA has supported export growth, industrial development, employment creation and participation in regional and global value chains.

2. What was announced by the United States on 2 November 2026?

On 2 November 2026, the US announced its intention to terminate South Africa's beneficiary status under AGOA.

According to the announcement, the termination of South Africa's AGOA beneficiary status is expected to take effect from 1 January 2027.

Exporters are encouraged to monitor official communications relating to implementation and any subsequent developments.

2.1 What does the 60-day notice period mean?

The African Growth and Opportunity Act provides that, where the President of the United States, determines that a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country should be terminated from the programme, the President must notify the United States Congress and the government of the affected country before the termination takes effect.

Accordingly, the period between the announcement and the expected implementation date should be understood as the statutory notice period contemplated under AGOA before the termination of beneficiary status takes effect.

For exporters, this period provides an opportunity to:

• Assess products and exports that may be affected

• Confirm potential tariff exposure

• Engage United States buyers, importers and distributors

• Review contracts, purchase orders and shipments

• Evaluate potential impacts on exports, employment and investment

• Communicate potential impacts and support requirements to **the dtic** through the AGOA and Export Support Help Desk.

Exporters are encouraged to utilise this period to assess their exposure and undertake appropriate commercial and contingency planning should the announced termination of South Africa's AGOA beneficiary status be implemented.

3. What do these developments mean for South African exporters?

South African exporters will continue exporting to the US under the MFN scheme of the WTO. Already 89% of SA exports to the US goes to the US under MFN. The announcement does not prohibit exports from South Africa to the US market.

Should the announced termination of South Africa's AGOA beneficiary status be implemented as indicated, qualifying South African products would no longer benefit from AGOA preferences and will become subject to the applicable MFN regime.

The US tariff book can be found here to check they specific tariffs:

https://hts.usitc.gov/

4. Will South African products be prohibited from entering the United States?

No.

South African products will continue to enter the US market, provided they comply with all applicable customs, regulatory, sanitary, phytosanitary, technical and product safety requirements.

These developments relate to preferential tariff treatment and do not constitute a prohibition on exports to the US.

5. Which sectors may be affected?

The impact will vary according to product classification, tariff exposure and dependence on the US market.

Sectors with significant exports to the US may include, but are not limited to:

- Automotive and automotive components
- Agro-processing
- Fresh produce
- Citrus
- Wine
- Macadamia nuts
- Clothing and textiles
- Chemicals
- Pharmaceuticals
- Manufactured products
- Value-added mineral products.

The actual impact will differ significantly between individual products, companies and supply chains. Company-specific assessments are therefore required.

6. What could happen to customs duties if the announced termination is implemented?

Products that currently benefit from AGOA preferences may become subject to the applicable US tariff regime.

The tariff impact is unlikely to be uniform across all products. Applicable duties will depend on the specific product classification and any other trade measures that may apply.

Exporters should undertake product-specific tariff assessments and obtain appropriate professional customs, tariff or legal advice where necessary.

Exporters should also determine and confirm the applicable MFN tariff rate and tariff treatment against official US tariff schedules and measures in force at the time of importation.

the dtic cannot provide legal opinions on individual commercial transactions.

7. Is there a transition period before AGOA preferences may be withdrawn?

Yes.

Although the announcement was made on 2 November 2026, implementation is expected from 1 January 2027. This provides exporters with a limited period to assess potential impacts, engage customers and review commercial arrangements.

Exporters are encouraged to use this period to prepare contingency plans and assess potential risk mitigation measures.

8. How can exporters determine the potential tariff implications for their products?

Exporters should:

- Confirm the HS tariff classification of their products
- Determine whether the product currently qualifies for AGOA preferences
- Establish the applicable US tariff treatment for the product
- Assess whether any additional trade measures may apply
- Consult importers, customs brokers and professional advisers, where necessary
- Review the relevant US tariff schedule and customs requirements.

Product-specific analysis is important as tariff treatment differs across products and sectors.

9. Will additional tariffs automatically apply to all South African products?

No.

Tariff treatment depends on the specific product classification and other applicable measures.

Exporters should not assume that all products will face the same tariff outcome and should undertake product-specific assessments before making commercial decisions.

10. What happens to existing contracts, purchase orders and goods already in transit?

The treatment of existing contracts, confirmed orders and shipments will depend on the applicable legal and commercial arrangements, implementation measures and relevant customs requirements.

Exporters are encouraged to engage customers, importers and customs brokers as soon as possible to assess any potential implications.

the dtic cannot interpret or enforce contractual obligations between private parties and exporters should obtain appropriate legal advice where necessary.

11. Who will be responsible for any additional import duties?

In the USA, the importer is the one that release goods at customs and liable for duties. Therefore, exporters need to discuss with their buyers on how duties will be treated.

12. Will South African exporters still need to comply with United States standards and regulations?

Yes.

AGOA preferences and US regulatory requirements are separate matters.

Exporters must continue to comply with all applicable US requirements relating to:

- Product standards
- Food safety
- Labelling
- Packaging
- Customs procedures
- Technical regulations
- Sanitary and phytosanitary measures
- Origin documentation and record keeping.

These requirements remain applicable irrespective of developments relating to AGOA beneficiary status.

For more information visit: https://www.fda.gov/industry/fda-basics-industry/registration-and-listing

13. What support measures is the dtic considering for affected exporters?

the dtic is assessing and coordinating available support interventions and referrals for affected exporters and will continue to engage stakeholders regarding potential response measures.

Support may include:

- Export advisory services
- Tariff and market access guidance
- Company impact assessments
- Export diversification support
- Identification of alternative markets
- Buyer retention and matchmaking support
- Participation in approved export promotion programmes

- Utilisation of **the dtic's** foreign office network
- Referrals to relevant financing, incentive and export support programmes
- Coordination of responses to sector-specific concerns.

Support interventions will be considered subject to programme requirements, approvals, available resources and applicable conditions.

14. Why is the dtic requesting information from exporters?

the dtic is gathering information to better understand the potential impact of recent developments on exporters, industries, value chains, employment and investment.

This information will assist Government in:

- Assessing the scale of potential impacts
- Identifying priority challenges and risks
- Understanding sector-specific concerns
- Informing engagement with stakeholders
- Considering support, response and intervention measures
- Supporting evidence-based policy and intervention measures.

Information received through the Help Desk will assist **the dtic** in assessing exporter impacts, identifying common challenges and informing ongoing engagements and interventions.

15. What information should exporters provide when contacting the Help Desk?

Exporters are encouraged to provide:

- Company name and contact details
- Product description
- HS tariff classification
- Sector
- Annual and monthly exports to the US
- Percentage of company revenue linked to the US exports
- Buyer or importer details
- Existing contracts, confirmed orders and shipments
- Estimated tariff exposure
- Estimated export sales at risk
- Estimated revenue exposure
- Employment linked to affected exports

- Potential employment and investment impacts
- Alternative markets being explored
- Specific support required.

Providing complete information will assist in the assessment of company-specific impacts and support requirements.

16. Should exporters withdraw from the United States market?

No.

The US remains an important export destination for many South African companies.

Exporters are encouraged to maintain and strengthen commercial relationships, where possible, assess competitiveness under changing market conditions and consider diversification strategies as part of broader risk management planning.

17. Which alternative markets should exporters consider?

Potential opportunities may exist within:

- African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- SADC markets
- European Union
- United Kingdom
- Canada
- Middle East
- India
- China
- ASEAN markets
- Latin American markets.

Alternative market opportunities will differ according to product competitiveness, regulatory requirements, logistics costs, market demand and existing commercial relationships. Not all products affected by developments relating to South Africa's AGOA beneficiary status will have immediate substitute markets available.

More information on trade agreements can be found here:

https://www.sars.gov.za/customs-and-excise/rules-of-origin

18. What immediate actions should exporters take?

Exporters are encouraged to:

1. Assess product-level tariff exposure.
2. Review contracts and Incoterms.
3. Engage United States buyers, distributors and importers.
4. Evaluate orders and shipments that may be affected.
5. Quantify potential commercial and employment impacts.
6. Identify risk mitigation measures.
7. Explore alternative markets where appropriate.
8. Submit impact information to the AGOA and Export Support Help Desk.
9. Engage the dtic regarding available support interventions and referrals.

AGOA AND EXPORT SUPPORT HELP DESK

Exporters experiencing challenges or requiring assistance are encouraged to contact the AGOA and Export Support Help Desk by submitting their enquiries through the below link, alternatively you may contact the Helpdesk below. Please provide the information outlined above to facilitate assessment of impacts, referrals and support requirements.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR AGOA RELATED INFORMATION

Ms Edith Mnisi, Tel: 012 394 1786.

Mr Karabo Modimokwane, Tel: 012 394 1164.

FOR AGOA AND EXPORTS RELATED ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK OR QR CODE BELOW TO SUBMIT YOUR ENQUIRY.

https://jforms.thedtic.gov.za/form/dtic-agoa-export-impact-and-support

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

These FAQs are intended to provide general guidance to South African exporters regarding developments relating to AGOA and access to the US market.

The information contained in this document is provided to assist exporters in understanding potential implications and available support mechanisms. It does not constitute legal, customs, tax, tariff or commercial advice and should not be relied upon as such.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained herein, the commercial, contractual, customs, tariff and regulatory implications may differ from one exporter to another. Exporters are therefore encouraged to obtain appropriate professional advice in relation to their specific circumstances.

The government of South Africa continues to assess the implications of recent developments and engage relevant stakeholders through appropriate diplomatic, trade and economic channels. **the dtic** will continue to engage exporters and may update these FAQs as developments arise.