# AGOA extension offers little relief for South African fruit exporters

By Fred Meintjes | 19 August 2026

**Industry leaders in South Africa say the extended AGOA trade agreement offers limited practical advantage while punishing US tariffs remain in place**


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South African fruit exports to the US are unlikely to benefit much from the extension of the American Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) for another two years.

Experts have pointed out that the current tariffs being applied by the US government will override any AGOA benefits.

Ironically, the present tariffs on some competing countries will level the playing field, especially in the case of table grapes, where South Africa will have the same import tariffs as its competitors.

In the past, South American countries such as Chile and Peru enjoyed better entry conditions.

“At least now we compete at the same level, and we can plan our coming season on this basis,” said Mecia Petersen, chief executive of industry body Sati.

South Africa endured a tough campaign in terms of grape supplies to the US last season with volumes dropping considerably year-on-year.

“We will continue our efforts to expand our presence in the US but are also realistic in recognising that we will not be returning to the previous import levels immediately,” Petersen continued.

”We are again planning some promotional activities for the coming season.”

The South African citrus industry noted that oranges are already at a zero rating, but that it hoped its mandarins would also be included into this category.

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“While we welcome the extension, it does not currently affect South African citrus exports,” said Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, CEO of the Citrus Growers’ Association. ”This is because the current tariffs imposed by the White House overrides AGOA.

”Furthermore, in November last year, oranges received a tariff exemption – which means our oranges can enter the US tariff free.

“This provides some welcome relief to our growers,” Ntshabele outlined. ”But our mandarins are not exempted from the tariffs – which will affect mandarin growers in the Western and Northern Cape in the 2026 season.

”That is a concern and is the reason why a mutually beneficial trade deal between the US and South Africa is of such great importance.

”A satisfactory trade agreement can supply South Africa with more long-term certainty that AGOA can provide,” he confirmed.

South African sources noted that the country’s inclusion in AGOA is already under scrutiny by lawmakers in Washington.

When the extended AGOA expires in two years' time, the country may be excluded.

That is why setting up free trade agreements in the US, and other parts of the world, will now move to the top of the country's trade agenda.

Recent improved access to India for South African citrus and new deals with China and other countries in the east are going to benefit exports.

However, there is no doubt that trade tariff wars and the conflict in the Middle East, and the subsequent impact on cost in the value chain, will create taxing circumstances for South African exporters.