AEDS MARKET WATCH

His Excellency President Mnangagwa takes COMESA helm, vows industrialisation "Brick by Brick"



The President tied the summit theme, "One Market, One Future: Advancing Inclusive Industrialisation, Investment and Regional Integration in COMESA," to economic reality.

INSIDE

- President Mnangagwa calls for regional industrialisation, trade reforms
- COMESA Foreign Ministers Push for Stronger Regional Cooperation on Peace and Security
- Zimbabwe urges COMESA to turn green pledges into factories
- Coca-Cola system contributes US$3.6 billion to COMESA economies
- Malawi's soybean success story offers lessons for Africa



Table of

CONTENTS

02 FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

04 PRESIDENT MNANGAGWA TAKES COMESA HELM, VOWS INDUSTRIALISATION "BRICK BY BRICK"

07 PRESIDENT MNANGAGWA CALLS FOR REGIONAL INDUSTRIALISATION, TRADE REFORMS

09 COMESA FOREIGN MINISTERS PUSH FOR STRONGER REGIONAL COOPERATION ON PEACE AND SECURITY

10 COMESA IN PICTURES

11 ZIMBABWE URGES COMESA TO TURN GREEN PLEDGES INTO FACTORIES

12 COCA-COLA SYSTEM CONTRIBUTES US$3.6 BILLION TO COMESA ECONOMIES

13 MALAWI'S SOYBEAN SUCCESS STORY OFFERS LESSONS FOR AFRICA

15 FUEL BY PIPE: THE ETHIOPIA-DJIBOUTI PROJECT RESHAPING EAST AFRICA'S ENERGY FUTURE



Editor's Desk

As we close the month of October, we are pleased to present another edition of the AEDS Market Watch. October has been a defining month for regional economic cooperation and integration, with the spotlight firmly on the COMESA region as Zimbabwe successfully hosted the 25th COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government and assumed the Chairmanship of the bloc for the 2026-2027 period. The summit underscored the growing importance of regional markets in driving trade, investment, industrialization, and sustainable economic growth across Eastern and Southern Africa.

As highlighted throughout this edition, COMESA member states continue to pursue ambitious initiatives aimed at enhancing intra-regional trade, strengthening value chains, improving infrastructure connectivity, and increasing economic resilience in an increasingly complex global environment. The developments featured in this newsletter demonstrate that regional integration remains one of Africa's most powerful tools for unlocking growth, creating jobs, and expanding opportunities for businesses and communities alike.

This edition also reflects AEDS' growing commitment to providing broader regional and global economic intelligence. Beyond developments within Zimbabwe, we bring you key stories from across Africa and international markets, recognizing that economic trends today transcend national borders and increasingly shape policy and business outcomes across the continent.

Looking ahead, AEDS is gearing up for its flagship End-of-Year Economic Review, scheduled for 3 December 2026 at Manna Resorts. The event will feature the fourth installment of the Zimbabwe Economic Pulse (ZEP), providing a comprehensive assessment of the country's economic performance in 2026 and offering forecasts for 2027. Discussions will focus on key issues including economic growth prospects, production and structural transformation, the roadmap to a mono-currency system, climate-related economic risks, and emerging opportunities for investment and trade. We encourage policymakers, businesses, investors, development partners, and the public to join this important conversation on Zimbabwe's economic future.

As always, we remain committed to delivering timely, evidence-based analysis that supports informed decision-making and contributes to economic transformation across Zimbabwe, the COMESA region, and Africa at large.



Grace Khalawo - Editor

Publisher:
AEDS
Executive Editor:
Pretty Nyathi
pretty.nyathi@aedsafrica.com
Editor:
Grace Khalawo
grace.khalawo@aedsafrica.com

Contributors:
Grace Khalawo
gracekhalawo@aedsafrica.com
Pretty Nyathi
pretty.nyathi@aedsafrica.com
Tapiwanashe Mangwiro
tapiwanashe.mangwiro@aedsafrica.com
Kundai Gorejena
kundai.gorejena@aedsafrica.com
Ethen Masendu
ethen.masendu@aedsafrica.com

Design & Layout:
Ready Designs
0773-559730

AEDS Market Watch:
16 Central Avenue
Causeway Building Harare,
Zimbabwe
+263 242 70 55 77
/ +263 774 810 689
info@aedsafrica.com

© 2026 AEDS.
All rights reserved.

3 December 2026

END OF YEAR ECONOMIC REVIEW

"Building Durable Stability in the face of External Shocks"

Venue
Manna Resorts

Fees
Early Bird $100-00 per delegate
Standard Pricing after November 16 2026 - $150-00 per delegate
Exhibition Space $300-00 for 9sqm outdoor Exhibition Space

Guests



Hon. N.M. Ndhlovu
Minister of Industry and Commerce



Hon. Eng. Dr. P. Kambamura
Minister of Mines and Mining Development



Hon. Prof M. Ncube
Minister of Finance



Dr J. Mushayavanhu
Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe



Prof O. Jiri
Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Water Development.



Ms L. Muriro
Facilitator



Mr W. Dangarembizi
Managing Director, Hunyani Holdings



Prof. G. Mugano
Director General, AEDS

KEY TOPICS

1. State of economy and 2027 outlook
2. Structural and production enhancement policies
3. Roadmap to mono-currency
4. El Nino Effects
5. Ease of Doing Business

RSVP

Ruvimbo Chakanetsa: +263 712 385 024
Email: ruvimbo.chakanetsa@aedsafrica.com
Conrad Choruma: +263 772 359 556
Email: conrad.choruma@aedsafrica.com
Charity Chataika: +263 77 266 3578
Email: charity.chataika@aedsafrica.com

AEDS
AFRICA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
Our work is not just a job, it's our purpose.

In Partnership with

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF ZIMBABWE

President Mnangagwa takes COMESA helm, vows industrialisation "Brick by Brick"



Outgoing Chairperson President William Ruto and incoming Chairperson President Mnangagwa

President Emmerson Mnangagwa formally took over as Chairperson of the COMESA Authority on Thursday. He promised a 2026-2027 term focused on value addition, inclusive industrialisation and new ways of financing the bloc's integration agenda. Accepting the chair at the 25th Summit of Heads of State and Government in Harare, President Mnangagwa said he assumed the role with deep humility and a profound sense of duty. He thanked leaders for the confidence reposed on my country to nurture the vision of this regional bloc.

Tribute to Kenya, eyes on the new plan

President Mnangagwa praised outgoing chair William Ruto for dedication and visionary leadership and commended Kenya for steering COMESA with purpose and clarity, particularly in advancing digitisation and regional value chains. He said member states' collective wisdom will be invaluable in implementing the COMESA Medium-Term Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2030, due for launch at the summit. He promised to support the Secretariat in rolling it out with clear results, regular reporting and a lean, accountable organisation.

From theory to action

The President tied the summit theme, **One Market, One Future: Advancing Inclusive Industrialisation, Investment and Regional Integration in COMESA,** to economic reality. It is, he said, "a call to harness the region's resources and investment potential to accelerate modernisation and industrialisation, towards a higher quality of life for our citizens." He cited progress since the Free Trade Area was established in 2000, when intra-COMESA exports stood at approximately US$2 billion. They have since grown to over US$14 billion in 2025. That growth, he said, demonstrates the value of cooperation.

But he warned against complacency. "Persistent non-tariff barriers, infrastructure gaps and policy mis-alignments require bold decisions," he said, calling for simplified border procedures and wider use of digital trade systems. He urged states to accelerate ongoing programmes to increase industrial production and productivity, enhance quality and standards, address transportation bottlenecks and rationalise pricing.

President Mnangagwa takes COMESA helm, vows industrialisation "Brick by Brick"

Beneficiation at the centre

Zimbabwe's chairmanship will prioritise "fast-tracking value addition and beneficiation as well as inclusive industrialisation and greater participation in regional value chains."

He pointed to his country's own experience. A policy demanding that resources be processed locally, he said, "has seen a manifold increase in value of our minerals." The lesson for the region is that "the natural endowments of Africa must industrialise our economies, create jobs and broad-based empowerment which improve the quality of lives of our peoples."

Zimbabwe will champion initiatives in agro-processing, cross-border agro and industrial parks, supply chain harmonisation and the climate-proofing of agriculture. Climate action and the green agenda, he said, "are vital aspects to guarantee national and regional food security, and sovereignty."

Financing outside the box

President Mnangagwa said integration depends on money, and that roads, rail, energy and digital networks "require affordable, predictable and long-term financing." He urged the region "to think outside the box on development financing models that will help bypass high borrowing costs and heavy debt obligations." He called on trade, insurance and financial institutions and development partners to "increase funding in support of priority infrastructure and productive investments within COMESA." He also noted that financing challenges facing women, youth entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium enterprises "require robust models that secure inclusivity."

No one left behind

Inclusion ran through his speech. "No one and no country should be left behind," he said. "Integration succeeds when its benefits impact the small traders crossing our borders; persons with disabilities and rural communities; the women processing food and the young graduate starting a digital business."

He promised to continue work on simplified trade regimes and free movement of persons, and urged education systems to anchor skills training and innovation in "the unique realities in our jurisdictions."

Peace, sovereignty and the private sector

The President said peace and security "are indispensable for sustainable development and regional integration," and pledged to strengthen preventive diplomacy. Describing Zimbabwe as "a friend to all and an enemy of none," he said his country is committed to "multilateralism, dialogue, and mutually beneficial cooperation which recognises sovereign equality." He also commended the private sector for recommendations from the COMESA Green Industries Connect and the 19th COMESA Business Forum and Exhibition, which he said "should guide our implementation road-map."

The president ended with a Shona and Ndebele proverb, translated as: "A country is built, ruled and prayed for by its own people." Likewise, he said, the COMESA region "must be modernised and industrialised through individual and collective efforts of its citizens."

"Brick by brick, stone upon stone, step by step," he urged, "let us continue building integrated, productive inclusive and prosperous economies, which we all want and indeed deserve." He concluded: "Long live COMESA unity and solidarity. Long live African unity."

> **President Mnangagwa praised outgoing chair William Ruto for "dedication and visionary leadership," and commended Kenya "for steering COMESA with purpose and clarity, particularly in advancing digitisation and regional value chains."**



Incoming Chairperson President Mnangagwa, outgoing Chairperson President William Ruto and President Hichilema



Incoming Chairperson His Excellency, President Dr. E.D. Mnangagwa

President Mnangagwa calls for regional industrialisation, trade reforms

President Mnangagwa urges COMESA countries to dismantle trade barriers, strengthen value addition and build cross-border industries



Tapiwanashe Mangwiro

President Emmerson Mnangagwa has challenged COMESA member states to accelerate industrialisation, remove barriers to regional trade and strengthen cross-border investment, saying the regional bloc must transform its vast natural resources into competitive industries, jobs and shared prosperity.

Addressing the 19th COMESA Business Forum in Harare yesterday, the President said governments and the private sector must move beyond declarations of regional integration and implement practical measures that increase production, expand intra-regional trade and improve the livelihoods of citizens.

He called on business leaders, investors and policymakers to develop concrete recommendations for consideration at the 25th COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government, which will deliberate on strategies to advance the organisation. “Together we have a duty to build an integrated Common Market that delivers shared prosperity for all,” he said.

President Mnangagwa said the forum, running under the theme “One Market, One Future: Advancing Inclusive Industrialisation, Investment and Regional Integration in COMESA”, presented an opportunity to forge partnerships that allow businesses to produce, invest, trade and create employment across member states. He said the success of regional integration should be measured by tangible economic outcomes rather than commitments that remain on paper.

President Mnangagwa calls for regional industrialisation, trade reforms

President Mnangagwa urges COMESA countries to dismantle trade barriers, strengthen value addition and build cross-border industries

The President reaffirmed Zimbabwe's commitment to mutually beneficial partnerships under the principles of "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" and "Zimbabwe is a friend to all and an enemy to none". He urged investors to exploit opportunities across the COMESA market, particularly in agriculture, mineral beneficiation, energy, manufacturing, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, tourism and the digital economy.

President Mnangagwa said the region needed to shift from exporting raw commodities towards processing and manufacturing, allowing countries to retain more value from their natural resources. "Private sector players are urged to move decisively from the export of commodities towards value addition, beneficiation and manufacturing," he said.

He cited Zimbabwe's December 2022 decision to restrict exports of unprocessed lithium ore as part of efforts to accelerate industrialisation and retain more economic value locally. The President identified agro-processing, leather, cotton-to-clothing, pharmaceuticals, battery materials and clean-energy technologies as sectors with significant potential to develop regional value chains. He said investment should not be confined to individual national markets but should connect producers, suppliers, financiers and consumers across the region.

A Zimbabwean agro-processor, for example, should be able to source packaging from Zambia, obtain financing from a regional institution and use a Kenyan distributor to access consumers across COMESA. Such arrangements, he said, would enable countries to benefit from complementary productive capacities while expanding markets for businesses. President Mnangagwa said the region's youthful population presented an important opportunity for industrial growth, provided investment was directed towards skills development, production and employment creation.

He urged investors and development finance institutions to support enterprises that create opportunities for young people and strengthen the participation of women and small businesses in regional value chains. The President also called for stronger linkages between COMESA and the African Continental Free Trade Area, saying the regional bloc must help build productive capacity, remove tariff and non-tariff barriers and harmonise trade procedures.

He said governments needed feedback from businesses on regulatory and policy constraints that discouraged investment, innovation and cross-border commerce. "Intra-COMESA trade and investment remain significantly low. This gap presents both a challenge, as well as an opportunity," he said.

President Mnangagwa said member states must address restrictive rules of origin, cumbersome customs procedures, non-tariff barriers and other costs that undermine the competitiveness of regional businesses. He stressed that borders should facilitate commerce rather than obstruct it.
"Our borders are gateways to markets and not bottlenecks to trade," he said.

In this regard, the President pointed to the modernisation of Beitbridge Border Post and the upgrading of the Chirundu One-Stop Border Post as examples of Zimbabwe's efforts to improve regional connectivity and facilitate the movement of goods and people. He said infrastructure development needed to be complemented by efficient digital systems, including interoperable digital payments, electronic certificates of origin, electronic single windows and modern logistics platforms.

Businesses, he added, should embrace e-commerce, digital marketing, artificial intelligence and data-driven innovation to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global economy. The President said improved connectivity and trade facilitation would help firms access wider markets, reduce transaction costs and strengthen regional production networks.

He also called for innovative financing models to address the funding constraints facing small and medium enterprises, which remain important sources of employment and entrepreneurship. President Mnangagwa welcomed the forum's focus on de-risking trade and investment and closing the financing gap for small businesses, saying such interventions were necessary to expand productive capacity and enable more enterprises to participate in regional markets.

He urged participants to translate discussions into commercial partnerships that connect buyers with producers, investors with viable projects, manufacturers with regional suppliers and small businesses with distributors. The multi-sectoral international exhibition accompanying the forum, he said, offered an opportunity to identify investment prospects and establish lasting business relationships.

Zimbabwe was ready to partner with investors across several sectors, with particular emphasis on projects that extend beyond national borders and strengthen economic linkages throughout COMESA. The President also highlighted Zimbabwe's role as host of the headquarters of the Intra-African Trade Fair Company in Harare and its preparations to host the Intra-African Trade Fair in 2029. He said the country looked forward to advancing the COMESA Medium-Term Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2030 and supporting the broader objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

President Mnangagwa urged the private sector to work closely with governments and development institutions to build a more integrated and prosperous regional economy. "In Zimbabwe, we say, 'Nyika inovakwa, inotongwa inonamatirwa nevene vayo', which translates to; A country is built, governed and prayed for, by its own people," he said.

He said the responsibility for building a stronger COMESA rested with its member states and their businesses, which must work together to ensure that the benefits of integration reach all citizens. President Mnangagwa called for renewed commitment to production, industrialisation, investment and value addition, emphasising that regional integration must deliver practical benefits to businesses and communities.

He officially opened the 19th COMESA Business Forum, commending the COMESA Secretariat, COMESA Business Council, ZimTrade, the private sector and other partners for organising the event.

Tapiwanashe Mangwiro is a Senior Economist at AEDS.

RENON
BUILT ON EXCELLENCE
CONCRETE ROOF TILES • RIDGES • PAVERS • CEMENT BRICKS



YOUR HOME. YOUR VISION.
OUR QUALITY.

Building dreams starts with quality materials and a team you can trust.



CONCRETE ROOFING TILES

Durable style for your home.



PAVERS

Create beautiful outdoor spaces.



CEMENT BRICKS

Build with confidence.

LET'S BUILD SOMETHING EXCEPTIONAL

RenontilesZim
Renonroof
www.renon.co.zw

346 Kirkman Road
Room 10 Enterprise center Building
Harare showgrounds

Contact Details
+263 785 498 080
+263 771 957 718



COMESA Foreign Ministers Push for Stronger Regional Cooperation on Peace and Security

Foreign Affairs Ministers from COMESA Member States have called for greater regional cooperation to address growing peace and security challenges across Eastern and Southern Africa, emphasizing that stability remains the foundation for economic growth, trade and regional integration.

Meeting in Harare for the ***21st COMESA Ministerial Meeting on Peace and Security***, the Ministers reviewed the region's security landscape against the backdrop of an increasingly complex geopolitical environment marked by armed conflicts, political instability, electoral disputes, climate-induced insecurity, irregular migration, piracy and economic shocks.

The Ministers reaffirmed that peace and security are central pillars of sustainable development and regional integration, as outlined in the COMESA Treaty. Deliberations were informed by recommendations from the COMESA Committee on Peace and Security, which reported mixed progress across the region, with some countries making gains while others continue to face escalating security challenges.

Among the key concerns discussed were the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, ongoing efforts to consolidate peace in Ethiopia, Somalia's political transition and security threats posed by extremist groups. The Ministers also examined developments in Libya, where political divisions and instability continue to fuel migration, human trafficking and organised crime, while expressing concern over the devastating conflict in Sudan.

COMESA Secretary General ***Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe*** commended the efforts of Member States, the African Union, regional bodies and international partners in responding to these challenges. She stressed the importance of enhancing African-led solutions to conflicts affecting the continent.

“Our responsibility is to complement these efforts and ensure African ownership through the practical implementation of African solutions to African problems," she said.

Kapwepwe also noted that elections conducted across the region during the reporting period reflected encouraging democratic progress while highlighting persistent challenges. She underscored the importance of strengthening electoral institutions, promoting political tolerance, encouraging the participation of women and youth, responsibly managing digital technologies and preventing election-related violence.

Zimbabwe's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, ***Professor Amon Murwira***, called on Member States to strengthen cooperation in addressing both existing and emerging threats.

"We should work towards collective decisions that strengthen our capacity to anticipate crises, prevent conflict, manage emerging threats and build a more peaceful, resilient and integrated region. Poverty remains our greatest enemy," he said.

The Ministers further discussed the broader implications of tensions involving the United States and Iran, noting that global geopolitical developments have the potential to affect regional stability and economic performance. They agreed on the need to enhance the region's economic resilience and strategic preparedness in the face of external shocks.

The meeting concluded with the election of ***Zimbabwe as Chair***, ***Zambia as Vice-Chair*** and ***Burundi as Rapporteur***, positions expected to guide the region's peace and security agenda over the coming period.

The discussions reinforced a shared commitment among COMESA Member States to strengthen regional cooperation, prevent conflicts and create a secure environment that supports economic transformation and sustainable development across the bloc.


WELCOME TO THE
25th SUMMIT OF
COMESA






Flesh of the Sun and Flesh of the Sky
Let us make Africa the Tree of Life.
CHAIRPERSON
VICE CHAIRPERSON


19th COMESA Business Forum & Exhibition
HAPPENING NOW SESSION TWO
From Commodities to Competitiveness: Securing Regional Value Chains for the Future
SCAN THE QR CODE TO
Download the Programme
#CBF2026



Zimbabwe urges COMESA to turn green pledges into factories

Harare's industry minister proposes a regional circular economy fund as the country takes up the bloc's chair

Zimbabwe has called on its fellow members of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa to stop adopting strategies and start building factories, as it prepares to take over the bloc's chairmanship. Speaking at the COMESA Green Industries Connect conference in Harare, Industry and Commerce Minister Mangaliso Ndhlovu said the region's industrialisation plans must now "translate into concrete outcomes that deliver value to our economies and tangible benefits to our people".



The test, he said, was not paperwork. "The success of this agenda will be measured not by the number of strategies adopted, but by the investments mobilised, factories modernised, resources used more efficiently, enterprises developed and jobs created."

A new fund

The centrepiece of Minister Ndhlovu's address was a proposal that Comesa "explore the establishment of a Comesa Circular Economy Fund". It would back enterprises investing in cleaner production, energy-efficient equipment, recycling infrastructure and the conversion of waste into productive inputs.

The minister offered no figures, and he cautioned that such a facility would need "careful design, sustainable financing and transparent eligibility criteria" so that money flows to "commercially sound projects with measurable industrial and environmental benefits".

The idea builds on commitments made by COMESA industry and investment ministers on 8 September. They pledged an inclusive transition to a circular economy, called for implementation of the bloc's Green Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Strategy for 2026–2035 and welcomed the SWITCH2-Circular Economy Programme.

Value chains and lithium

Minister Ndhlovu argued that the region's mix of farmland, minerals and engineering skills could be stitched into stronger regional supply chains. He pointed to Zimbabwe's own experience: its shipment of locally processed lithium sulphate to China "illustrates the opportunities that arise when we move further up the value chain".

At home, he said, Zimbabwe is working with the Climate Technology Centre and Network on a national decarbonisation roadmap for the cement sector, with iron and steel and mineral processing also seen as candidates. He said recent investment in renewable energy, efficient machinery and water recycling is lowering costs for manufacturers.

He also urged the bloc to align green standards and cooperate on product testing, arguing that a more integrated market would give manufacturers "the scale needed to justify investment in cleaner technologies".

Electric vehicles

Minister Ndhlovu singled out electric mobility as an opening for regional industry. He said COMESA countries should aim to participate in vehicle assembly, charging infrastructure, battery technologies and component manufacturing.

“Our ambition must extend beyond importing finished products," he said, to building the skills and capabilities to "capture a greater share of the emerging value chains". That would require reliable electricity, supportive policy and safe systems for recycling batteries at the end of their life, he added.

Who pays

The minister split responsibilities. Governments must supply "clear and predictable policies" and reliable infrastructure, while businesses must "invest in productive capacity" and adopt cleaner technologies.

Member states, he said, must assign clear institutional responsibilities and put in place mechanisms for monitoring delivery, rather than leaving the work to the COMESA Secretariat.

He closed with a pitch for Zimbabwe's coming chairmanship. "Let us turn waste into value, innovation into investment and our shared resources into lasting prosperity," he said.

Coca-Cola system contributes US $3.6 billion to COMESA economies

- Tapiwanashe Mangwiro
- Pretty Nyathi
- Grace Khalawo



The Coca-Cola system contributed US$3.6 billion in value-added economic activity across the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region in 2024, while supporting more than 458 200 jobs through its operations and wider value chain, a new study has revealed. The study, conducted by global consultancy Steward Redqueen, found that the beverage manufacturer's economic contribution accounted for 0,3 percent of the regional trading bloc's combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP), highlighting the role of private sector investment in driving regional economic growth.

The findings were unveiled on Monday during the 19th COMESA Business Forum in Harare, which brought together business leaders and policymakers to discuss trade, innovation and economic integration across the bloc's 21 member countries. The report attributed Coca-Cola's economic footprint to its network of bottlers, suppliers, distributors and retailers, whose activities generate demand across agriculture, manufacturing, packaging, transport and other services.

“As this study shows, the Coca-Cola system continues to deliver substantial economic impact in COMESA, creating opportunities through local partnerships, investments, and supply chains,” said Coca-Cola Africa Operating Unit president Luis Felipe Avellar. The study also highlighted the company's employment multiplier, indicating that its economic activities extend well beyond jobs created directly within its operations.

“For every direct job created by the Coca-Cola system in COMESA, an additional 28 jobs are supported throughout the regional economy,” Avellar said. The findings underscore the importance of domestic and regional supply chains in spreading the benefits of large-scale business operations to smaller enterprises and other industries.

In 2024, the Coca-Cola system spent almost US$1,5 billion on goods and services sourced from suppliers within COMESA member states, supporting industries such as sugar production, manufacturing, packaging and logistics. Such procurement expenditure provides markets for local producers while strengthening linkages between businesses operating across the region.

Coca-Cola vice-president for East and Central Africa Operations Alfred Olajide said the company's contribution extended beyond the sale of beverages to supporting local enterprises and economic development. “The Coca-Cola system operates as a critical economic engine across the COMESA region, empowering local suppliers, retailers, and distributors to thrive,” he said.

Olajide said the COMESA Business Forum provided an opportunity to demonstrate the company's commitment to innovation, collaboration and sustainable development. The study employed a Multi-Regional Input-Output model to assess the economic effects of Coca-Cola's operations, local procurement and value-chain relationships across the region.

The approach captures the wider economic activity generated when businesses purchase locally sourced inputs and support employment across interconnected industries. Beyond its contribution to economic output and employment, Coca-Cola said it was also supporting water stewardship and community development initiatives across Africa. Several COMESA member states benefit from the company's Africa Water Stewardship Initiative, a programme valued at nearly US$25 million that seeks to address water-related challenges across 20 African countries by 2030.

Water availability remains important for communities, agriculture and manufacturing, making sustainable water management a key consideration for businesses whose operations depend on reliable supplies. Avellar said collaboration between the private sector and regional institutions was essential to achieving inclusive economic development.

“The 19th COMESA Business Forum reaffirms the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. We are proud to collaborate with COMESA in building stronger economies and better futures for the communities we serve,” he said. The findings come as regional economies seek to strengthen intra-African trade, expand productive capacity and create employment through greater industrialisation and investment.

For COMESA, the results highlight the potential contribution of established regional value chains to economic activity, while reinforcing the importance of building stronger links between large businesses, local suppliers and smaller enterprises.

Malawi's Soyabean success story offers lessons for Africa

How Smallholder Farmers Are Driving Growth, Value Addition and Rural Industrialisation



Grace Khalawo - Editor

For many years, Malawi's agricultural sector was defined by tobacco. The crop dominated export earnings, shaped rural livelihoods and became a cornerstone of the country's economy. However, changing market dynamics, growing concerns over economic dependence on a single commodity and the need for greater agricultural resilience have compelled farmers to explore alternative high-value crops. Among the most notable success stories emerging from this transition is soybean production.

Across Malawi's farming communities, soyabeans have evolved from a relatively minor crop into a major commercial commodity. The crop is creating new streams of income for farmers, supplying raw materials for agro-processing industries and contributing to efforts aimed at building a more diversified and sustainable agricultural sector. National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM) has been among the organisations supporting farmers through training, market development and improved production practices, helping expand soyabean cultivation across the country.

The rise of soyabeans is particularly significant because it reflects a broader shift in how African agriculture is evolving. Rather than relying solely on traditional export crops, countries are increasingly investing in commodities that create value across multiple sectors, from food production and livestock feed manufacturing to industrial processing and regional trade.

The crop is widely used in the production of cooking oil, stock-feed and a range of food products consumed by households. Growing demand for protein-rich foods and livestock products has further strengthened the market for soybeans, creating opportunities for producers throughout the value chain. Malawi has responded by steadily increasing production and positioning itself as an emerging player within the regional soybean industry.

One of the biggest drivers behind the growth of soyabean farming has been its commercial viability. Compared to many traditional crops, soybeans offer attractive returns while requiring fewer expensive inputs. Farmers have increasingly embraced new technologies and improved production methods that lower costs and improve yields.

Agricultural development programmes operating in Malawi have demonstrated that the use of biological inoculants can significantly reduce fertiliser requirements. By enabling soybean plants to naturally fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, farmers are able to cut production costs while maintaining productivity. In an environment where fertiliser prices remain a major challenge for many producers, such innovations have become game changers.



The economic benefits extend beyond cost savings. Studies on the soybean value chain in Malawi have found that soybean production generates stronger profitability than many staple crops, making it an increasingly attractive option for both smallholder and commercial farmers. As a result, more land is being devoted to soyabean cultivation, and more farmers are integrating the crop into their production systems

Beyond profitability, soyabeans are helping farmers strengthen the sustainability of their operations. The crop improves soil fertility by fixing nitrogen and leaving residual benefits for subsequent crops planted on the same land. This natural process enhances soil health and can contribute to higher yields in crop rotation systems, reducing dependence on chemical fertilisers over time.

Malawi's Soyabean success story offers lessons for Africa

How Smallholder Farmers Are Driving Growth, Value Addition and Rural Industrialisation

These environmental advantages are particularly important as farmers across Southern Africa grapple with climate change, declining soil fertility and rising production costs. Soyabeans offer a practical solution that supports both productivity and sustainability.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of Malawi's soybean success story is the role played by smallholder farmers. Unlike industries dominated by large agribusinesses, soybean production in Malawi is largely driven by thousands of family farmers who have embraced the crop as a pathway to commercial agriculture.

Through farmer organisations and cooperative structures, producers have gained access to improved seed varieties, technical knowledge and organised markets. Such support systems have enabled farmers to move beyond subsistence production and participate more effectively in agricultural value chains. The result has been improved incomes, stronger rural businesses and greater resilience among farming households. The ripple effects are now being felt beyond the farm gate.

As soyabean production expands, processing industries are also growing. Businesses involved in cooking oil extraction, livestock feed manufacturing and food processing increasingly depend on soybeans as a raw material. This has created opportunities for value addition, job creation and investment in rural areas.

Young entrepreneurs are also finding space within the sector. Across Malawi, innovators are developing soybean-based products ranging from nutritious food supplements to soy milk and other processed goods. These enterprises are helping diversify rural economies while creating employment opportunities for young people entering the agribusiness sector.

Despite these gains, challenges remain. Limited access to quality seed, inadequate storage infrastructure, climate-related risks and gaps in extension services continue to constrain productivity. National output remains below potential, and experts argue that significant investment will still be required to unlock the industry's full value.

Researchers and policymakers have identified opportunities in mechanisation, irrigation, seed multiplication, aggregation centres and processing facilities as critical areas for future growth. Strengthening these areas could enable Malawi to increase production, meet growing domestic demand and expand exports to regional markets. According to recent policy assessments, targeted reforms and investments in the soybean value chain have the potential to create thousands of jobs, reduce poverty and contribute substantially to economic growth.

For the rest of Africa, Malawi's experience provides a valuable lesson. Agricultural transformation does not always begin with large-scale projects or massive capital investment. Sometimes it starts with farmers adopting the right crop, supported by the right institutions and linked to the right markets.

The soybean sector demonstrates what is possible when productivity, value addition and market development come together. It highlights the importance of building complete agricultural value chains that benefit farmers, processors, traders and consumers alike.

As global demand for plant protein, edible oils and livestock feed continues to grow, Malawi's soybean farmers are proving that agriculture can be more than a source of food. It can be a driver of industrialisation, export growth and rural prosperity.

The country's soybean revolution may still be unfolding, but its impact is already clear. What began as a diversification strategy is rapidly becoming one of Malawi's most compelling agricultural success stories, offering important lessons for governments, investors and farmers across the African continent.

> **“Across Malawi, innovators are developing soyabean-based products ranging from nutritious food supplements to soy milk and other processed goods”**

Grace Khalawo is a Communications and PR Officer at AEDS

Fuel by pipe: The Ethiopia-Djibouti project reshaping East Africa's energy future

An African-backed energy corridor could cut fuel transit times, strengthen regional integration and offer a model for landlocked economies seeking greater energy security.





Kundai Gorejena

Africa's infrastructure deficit is often discussed in terms of roads, railways and electricity. Yet another critical constraint lies in the cost of moving essential commodities across borders. A new 120-kilometre petroleum pipeline linking Djibouti and Ethiopia could offer a practical solution, transforming how one of the continent's largest economies imports fuel.

Announced on September 25, 2026, as a US$660 million partnership involving Nigeria's Dangote Group, the project aims to reduce the journey from Djibouti's port to Addis Ababa from five days to one, according to Ethiopia's prime minister. Beyond faster deliveries, the investment raises a broader question: can African capital and regional cooperation build the infrastructure needed to lower business costs and accelerate industrial development?

For Ethiopia, a landlocked country of more than 100 million people, the stakes are considerable. For Africa, the project could demonstrate how strategic infrastructure can turn geographical disadvantages into opportunities for regional integration.

From Road Convoys to a Continuous Fuel Corridor

The project will connect the Damerjog petroleum terminal on Djibouti's coast to Dewele in Ethiopia, combining a pipeline with substantial storage facilities at both ends. It is expected to become operational within 18 months of the announcement.

The system will allow fuel arriving by sea to be stored at Damerjog before being transported through the pipeline to Dewele for distribution across Ethiopia. Planned storage at the Ethiopian end is approximately 800,000 cubic metres, providing a buffer against fluctuations in shipping schedules, demand and supply.

The storage infrastructure is as important as the pipeline itself. It will allow operators to receive large tanker shipments, maintain inventories and manage supply disruptions more effectively.

The central economic advantage is efficiency. Transporting fuel by pipeline can reduce the recurring costs associated with road haulage, including vehicle maintenance, congestion and delays. Although the project's actual savings will depend on operating costs, tariffs and utilisation, a dedicated transport corridor could make fuel supply more predictable.

Fuel by pipe: The Ethiopia-Djibouti project reshaping East Africa's energy future

An African-backed energy corridor could cut fuel transit times, strengthen regional integration and offer a model for landlocked economies seeking greater energy security.

Why Ethiopia Needs a Different Approach

Ethiopia depends heavily on Djibouti for access to international trade, including petroleum imports. This geographical reality makes the transport corridor between the two countries strategically important. Delays at the port, along the road network or at border crossings can increase costs across the wider economy.

Fuel is not merely an import commodity; it is an input into nearly every productive sector. Transport operators need it to move goods, farmers rely on it to power machinery and transport agricultural produce, while manufacturers require reliable energy supplies to maintain production.

Consequently, improvements in fuel logistics can have effects beyond the petroleum industry. More reliable deliveries could reduce supply interruptions and improve planning for businesses. If lower transport costs are passed through the supply chain, the benefits could eventually extend to food prices, transport fares and manufacturing costs. The inclusion of jet fuel in the first phase is also significant for Ethiopia's aviation industry, particularly as Addis Ababa serves as a major regional air transport hub.

However, lower logistics costs will not automatically translate into cheaper fuel for consumers. The final impact will depend on pipeline tariffs, distribution expenses, taxes, financing costs and the extent to which efficiency gains are reflected in domestic prices.

The Strategic Winners

Djibouti stands to strengthen its position as Ethiopia's principal maritime gateway. Increased petroleum handling, investment and associated employment could generate additional economic activity and government revenue. The project also deepens the country's role in regional supply chains, reinforcing the strategic importance of its ports.

Ethiopia gains a dedicated route for transporting refined petroleum products, alongside additional storage capacity. The combination could reduce dependence on road-based fuel transportation and provide greater flexibility in managing inventories. Nevertheless, the pipeline will complement rather than eliminate Ethiopia's broader dependence on external supply routes and imported petroleum.

The Dangote Group gains a foothold in East Africa's energy logistics market. Its involvement forms part of a wider industrial expansion spanning petroleum, fertiliser, power and plastics. The group's Nigerian refinery has a stated capacity of 700,000 barrels per day, with plans to increase this to 1.4 million barrels per day. Its wider investments illustrate how African businesses can extend beyond national markets to develop interconnected industrial supply chains.

The broader significance lies in the emergence of African-led investment linking production, storage and distribution across different regional markets.

What It Means for Africa

First, the pipeline gives regional integration a physical foundation. African governments have committed to expanding intra-African trade, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Area. Yet trade agreements cannot deliver their full benefits without efficient transport, energy and logistics infrastructure. A shared pipeline creates a practical economic connection between neighbouring countries.

Second, the project highlights the potential of African capital. Investment involving an African industrial group and regional partners demonstrates how businesses and institutions on the continent can participate in financing strategic infrastructure. Such arrangements can diversify funding sources, although their long-term success will depend on sound financing, transparent contracts and commercially sustainable operations.

Third, the project highlights the relationship between infrastructure and industrial competitiveness. When essential inputs become more expensive or unreliable, firms face higher production costs and households encounter pressure on their purchasing power. Improving the movement of fuel can therefore support a wider effort to make African production more competitive.

Finally, it offers lessons for other landlocked economies, including Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's experience illustrates how dependence on external transport corridors can expose domestic businesses to logistical costs and disruptions. While a pipeline may not be commercially or geographically suitable everywhere, the underlying lesson is relevant: strategic storage, diversified supply routes and investment in efficient transport systems can strengthen energy security.

Infrastructure Must Deliver Economic Value

The Ethiopia-Djibouti pipeline is more than a fuel transportation project. It is a test of whether African partners can develop and operate the infrastructure required to support regional commerce and industrial growth.

Its success will ultimately be measured not by the length of the pipeline or the size of the investment, but by whether it delivers reliable supplies, reduces total logistics costs and supports productive activity.

If those benefits materialise, the corridor could provide a useful model for other African economies seeking to overcome geographical constraints. The continent's next phase of development will depend not only on what it produces, but also on how efficiently it moves, processes and distributes the inputs that keep its economies running.

Kundai Gorejena is an Economics Graduate Trainee at AEDS

Namibia's foot-and-mouth outbreak sends meat prices soaring

Livestock movement restrictions are squeezing butcheries, restaurants and farmers, exposing the wider economic cost of a disease outbreak.





Ethen Masendu

Namibia's foot-and-mouth disease outbreak is spreading economic pain beyond livestock farms, with meat prices rising, supplies dwindling and small businesses struggling to stay afloat. While restrictions on livestock movement and slaughter are essential to containing the disease, they are disrupting a supply chain that supports farmers, processors, retailers and restaurants. The crisis highlights a difficult balancing act for policymakers: controlling an animal disease while protecting livelihoods, stabilising food prices and preventing a temporary supply shock from becoming a broader economic problem.

Scarce Supplies, Higher Prices

The immediate impact is being felt at butcheries, where limited supplies are pushing up procurement costs. At Benguella Butchery in Swakopmund, owner Charlene Hartung says meat trimmings, commonly used to make minced beef and sausages, are selling for between 105 and 140 Namibian dollars per kilogramme, excluding value-added tax.

The high buying prices leave butcheries with little room to maintain affordable retail prices without sacrificing already pressured profit margins. In Otjiwarongo, Franna's Butchery owner Marissa Swart says shortages have forced the business to use more expensive cuts from cattle legs instead of cheaper rib and shoulder meat when preparing minced beef.

“Obviously our prices had to increase. The clients were not happy, but we did not have any other choice,” she says. The problem is not simply that meat has become expensive. In some cases, businesses cannot secure enough stock to operate normally.

Lesley Losper, owner of LLL Farms in Otavi, says restrictions have prevented him from purchasing livestock through the auctions and direct farmer arrangements on which his business depends. “There is no price increase for me. I cannot get any meat. Whether it is cheap or expensive, there is no meat coming through to me,” he says. For smaller operators without the financial capacity to maintain large inventories, interruptions to livestock supplies can quickly threaten business continuity.

Restaurants Feel the Pressure

Restaurants are also confronting higher procurement costs, with some passing the increases on to customers. Windhoek-based Berrylicious Restaurant has raised prices on selected dishes, including rump steak, sirloin steak and T-bone steak, following increases from suppliers. Manager Ndali Samuel says the restaurant is also struggling to obtain certain meat products.

Namibia's foot-and-mouth outbreak sends meat prices soaring

Livestock movement restrictions are squeezing butcheries, restaurants and farmers, exposing the wider economic cost of a disease outbreak.

Butcher Block Steakhouse, meanwhile, has opted to absorb higher supply costs rather than immediately increase menu prices. Manager Khyro Blockftaan says the business had prepared for difficult operating conditions and is attempting to protect customers from the full impact.

The contrasting responses illustrate the choices facing hospitality businesses: increase prices and risk losing customers, or absorb higher costs and put profit margins under pressure.

Not every business has been affected equally. Tom and Ndati in Ongwediva reports that it has maintained sufficient stocks and has not increased prices. Co-owner Lajah Shilunga says the business has yet to encounter significant supply problems.

However, such experiences may change if restrictions persist and existing inventories become harder to replenish.

The Economic Cost Beyond the Butchery

The consequences extend well beyond retail prices. Farmers unable to move or sell livestock face mounting feeding and maintenance expenses while income is delayed. Abattoirs and feedlots face the risk of interrupted operations, putting employment and business survival under pressure.

Namibia's livestock industry is particularly important because it supports rural livelihoods and contributes to agricultural production and export earnings. Disruptions can therefore affect household incomes, business activity and foreign currency receipts.

Export interruptions also threaten the wider economy. Prolonged restrictions can weaken the financial position of farmers and processors, reduce demand for related services and create uncertainty for businesses dependent on livestock production.

The outbreak has also highlighted the vulnerability of supply chains that depend on particular production areas, slaughter facilities and export routes. When movement restrictions affect one part of the system, the consequences can travel rapidly through the entire value chain.

Containment Must Be Matched by Support

The priority remains containing foot-and-mouth disease through vaccination, surveillance, movement controls and effective disease monitoring. Restrictions may be economically painful, but allowing the disease to spread could cause even greater damage to livestock production and export markets.

The government and industry must therefore complement containment measures with targeted economic support. First, financial relief should reach farmers and agricultural businesses experiencing cash-flow difficulties. The Agricultural Bank of Namibia's willingness to consider alternative repayment arrangements provides one avenue for easing immediate pressure. Banks and other lenders could also consider restructuring affected borrowers' obligations on a case-by-case basis.

Second, authorities should strengthen emergency support for vulnerable businesses and workers. Temporary relief, where financially feasible, could help viable firms meet essential operating expenses while restrictions remain in place. Assistance should be targeted, transparent and linked to verified losses.

Third, the government should work with industry to improve communication about movement restrictions, permitted trade and the conditions required to reopen affected markets. Clear guidance would help farmers, processors and retailers plan purchases, manage inventories and reduce uncertainty.

Finally, Namibia should accelerate efforts to diversify markets and processing capacity. Meat Corporation of Namibia has highlighted the potential role of its Rundu abattoir, which is certified for export and halal production, in serving African and Middle Eastern markets. Alternative facilities and markets could provide some resilience, although their usefulness will depend on disease-control requirements, logistics and approval by destination markets.

Protecting Livestock and Livelihoods

Namibia's foot-and-mouth disease outbreak demonstrates how an animal-health emergency can quickly become a food-price and economic challenge. Consumers face higher meat prices, small businesses struggle to secure supplies, and farmers risk accumulating costs without corresponding income.

Disease containment must remain the immediate priority. However, its effectiveness should be matched by practical measures to protect affected businesses, workers and farming households.

The longer-term lesson is equally important: stronger surveillance, resilient supply chains, diversified markets and accessible emergency financing are essential to reducing the economic damage of future outbreaks.

Containing the disease will protect the livestock sector. Ensuring that businesses and households can withstand the disruption will determine how quickly the wider economy recovers.

Ethen Masendu is an Economics Graduate Trainee at AEDS



"Turning agricultural potential into an export Machine"



Kundai Gorejena

"The future millionaires of Africa will not be coming from the Gas and oil sector, but rather from Agriculture", these were the words of Mr Similo Nkala at the National Agriculture Conference and Expo held on the 24th-25th of September 2026 in Harare Zimbabwe.

It has been highlighted that agriculture employs approximately 54% to 70% of our population, contributes around 16% directly to GDP, and accounts for 53% of export earnings. The Minister of Agriculture Mr Anxious Masuka mentioned that the need to invest in our rural communities and take advantage of the population in those areas, is particularly important because rural communities also need to contribute to and benefit from agricultural development.

"Move up the value chain"

Turning agricultural potential into an export machine requires shifting from raw commodity sales to high-value agro-processing, structured market linkages, and strategic investments. Zimbabwe's main focus should be on transforming raw crops like maize, soybeans, fruits, and tobacco into higher-value foods, beverages and oils instead of exporting them unprocessed only to buy them back at a higher value.

It should also focus on value chain investments such as, focusing on capital from high-impact sectors such as blueberries, dairy, beef and horticulture that command premium global pricing. Partnering major export enterprises with local growers by supplying certified seeds, fertilizers and technical guidance to guarantee a consistent, high-grade harvest will potentially contribute to an increase in the agricultural gdp.

"Make rural producers part of the export strategy"

Another issue is aggregation. Many rural communities do not produce sufficient volumes to meet export demand. Exports are a game of numbers. More than 80% of our fruit and vegetable exports go to Europe, mostly to the Netherlands. Other destinations include Germany, China, Hong Kong, and France. This is the profile of our horticultural export markets.

The blueberry production has been performing and expanding well. However, we have only about 850 hectares of blueberries according to figures confirmed by the Horticultural development Council. This is a crop that is high in demand and offers considerable potential for improving our exports. There is considerable rom for us to expand production of selected crops and become a leading exporter of horticultural produce.

There has also been a substantial demand for avocados. Previously most of them were going to Europe, but there is now potential to export to the Chinese market, as there is a recently signed protocol with China. Citrus also presents a significant opportunity.

"Turning agricultural potential into an export Machine"

More than 60% of enquiries are coming from oranges and farmers in Beightbridge mentioned that their entire production has already been committed for the next three years. This demonstrates an opportunity to invest in and expand citrus production and exports. In addition to crop production, there is considerable potential to export meat-related products; including beef and pork. The market in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is estimated at around US 2.1 billion. The UAE imports approximately US$479 million, why Saudi Arabia imports around US$1.4 billion. This is a substantial market. However, compliance is critical, requirements of these markets must be met in order to export successfully.

"Meeting Demand, Building Supply and Unlocking Export Competitiveness"

Accelerating the agricultural sector requires us to first meet demand and then build supply. The market is there and peas as one of our leading export produce, are exported to Europe between April and August or September. During that period, there are certain months when, as the Horticulture Development Council can confirm, Zimbabwe is among the few suppliers to that market.

Demand can be so strong that farmers should not feel they need to hide their crop from their neighbours. The market is large enough to accommodate increased supply so we therefore need to meet demand, build supply, and address logistical constraints, including road access and cold-chain management. We must also move up the value chain by investing in processing, branding, intellectual property, and the development of premium export products.

Also, Sugar, as a processed product, has been leading for quite some time. Structurally, however, it was mainly being exported to Europe and the Far East, and Zimbabwe's participation in regional markets was not particularly strong. We were also mainly exporting raw material, which was then further processed in destination countries according to their specific requirements.

What then do we need to do to export into the region, compete effectively and displace existing sugar suppliers? The first step is to move away from supplying a vulnerable primary commodity and add value. This is partly what we are doing through processing.

Zimbabwe historically was a breadbasket and had the competence and experience to perform. At one stage, we had the largest sugar-processing mill in Africa. We therefore have a history of leadership, competitiveness and reliable supply, and we need to reclaim that status.

Export barriers often arise from policies and regulations. With free trade and regional trading blocs such as SADC and COMESA, we have access to markets in those countries. To enter them, we need to make use of our natural advantages.

Where will the surplus sugar be sold?

Earlier, it was noted that Zimbabwe has water resources that can sustain production for years, even during drought. Some countries in the region rely on rain-fed sugarcane and experience fluctuations in availability when rainfall is poor. Zimbabwe's irrigation capacity can therefore help us become a reliable regional supplier.

The sugar industry recently developed a 10-year strategy that aims to double sugar output over that period. Since current production is broadly sufficient for domestic consumption, the key question is where the additional sugar will be sold. The regional market is a potential destination.

In the region, several countries do not produce sugar, including Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and Comoros. Other countries have production deficits, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Tanzania and Madagascar, and Malawi have also experienced a deficit in the previous years. Taken together, the region has an estimated sugar deficit of 1.1 million tonnes.

At the same time, some countries produce a surplus. Zimbabwe produces approximately 100,000 tonnes more than it requires. Eswatini, Zambia and South Africa are also surplus producers. The question, therefore, is how Zimbabwe can compete with these suppliers and improve its performance in regional markets.

> **"The market is large enough to accommodate increased supply so we therefore need to meet demand, build supply, and address logistical constraints, including road access and cold-chain management"**

Kundai Gorejena is an Economics Graduate Trainee at AEDS

The credibility dividend: Turning a Real-Rate cushion into a growth platform



Tapiwanashe Mangwiro

For a country with Zimbabwe's monetary history, the Reserve Bank's third-quarter numbers read like a different economy. Annual ZiG inflation was 3.7 percent in September, after touching 2.9 percent in August, the lowest local-currency reading since 1980. Monthly inflation has averaged 0.4 percent this year. The ZiG has held between 25 and 27 to the US dollar and closed the quarter at 26.80. The IMF has now completed the second review of the Staff-Monitored Programme, noting that all quantitative targets and structural benchmarks were met.

This is a combination of policy discipline and a supportive external environment, and the combination is working.

A cushion that creates room to ease

The policy rate was cut from 35 percent to 30 percent in June and to 27.5 percent in September. With inflation at 3.7 percent, the real policy rate is wide. That is a deliberate buffer, and the IMF describes the stance as appropriately tight. The encouraging part is what the buffer makes possible.

Inflation expectations are anchored, with the Bank's business survey showing respondents expecting annual inflation of around 5 percent or below in the fourth quarter. That gives the Monetary Policy Committee space to keep normalising gradually.

Each step down lowers the cost of capital for firms without endangering price stability. Few emerging economies have this much room to manoeuvre. The savings side is already responding. The ZiG term deposit bills have raised about ZiG958 million across three issues, and the September offer was 98 percent subscribed at 8 percent for 30 days. Positive real returns on local-currency instruments are how a domestic savings culture is built, and they give the Bank a growing yield curve with which to manage liquidity.

Credit is also moving as the weekly loan growth averaged 0.76 percent for ZiG loans and 0.89 percent for foreign currency loans in the quarter, steady and consistent with the aim of sustaining lending to productive sectors without feeding inflation.

Foreign currency inflows are the engine

The external numbers are the strongest part of the story. Foreign currency receipts reached about US$15.9 billion in the first nine months, up 33.7 percent from US$11.9 billion a year earlier. Tobacco, lithium sulphates and favourable prices for gold and platinum group metals powered the gain.

Payments were US$11.6 billion, leaving a cumulative surplus of US$4.3 billion. The current account is estimated to have recorded a surplus of about US$1.38 billion in the third quarter, against US$791 million a year earlier, and the Bank projects at least US$3.5 billion for 2026, up from US$2.1 billion in 2025. The composition of inflows is a quiet positive. Exports account for 69 percent of receipts, diaspora remittances 15 percent and loan proceeds 9 percent. A broad mix is more resilient than reliance on any single source.

Reserves are building

This strength is feeding into reserves. Foreign currency reserves rose from US$1.4 billion in June to nearly US$2 billion in September, about two months of import cover, and the Bank expects to go beyond that by year end. Reserves cover reserve money about six times, and the Bank has set out a continuing accumulation strategy. Reserve money growth is contained within the SMP targets.

One housekeeping suggestion: the snapshot gives cover of ZiG deposits as both about 1.4 times and about 2 times in different places. Publishing one consistent figure would make an already strong story easier to cite.

The parallel market is narrowing

The parallel market premium has narrowed to around 15 percent, and the stable exchange rate has meant only marginal movement in the nominal and real effective exchange rates, which supports export competitiveness. The IMF welcomes progress toward a more transparent foreign exchange trading platform and a gradual, sequenced move toward a more market-based system. As that platform beds in, the premium has every reason to keep narrowing.

The Bank's barometer for the transition to a mono-currency stands at 54.9 percent, up from 50.1 percent in August, driven by better reserve performance and sustained single-digit inflation.

The Bank has been clear that the transition is conditions-based, not date-based, and that existing foreign currency accounts and US dollar contracts will be honoured. That clarity is itself confidence-building. ZiG transactions now account for more than 40 percent of payments, a meaningful base to grow from.

What would make this durable

The IMF itself notes the risks: an El Niño-related drought that could slow growth to 3.5 percent in 2027, and energy prices, with oil above US$100 a barrel in September.

However, a stable currency, rising reserves and a strong current account are precisely the buffers that make shocks manageable. The priorities are clear: keep accumulating reserves beyond two months of cover, continue gradual easing as inflation allows, and deliver the foreign exchange platform on schedule.

Zimbabwe spent a long time being asked whether stability was possible. The third quarter offers a data-backed answer. The task now is to convert a credibility dividend into a growth dividend.

Tapiwanashe Mangwiro is a Senior Economist at AEDS.

Saving the Windfall Before the Drought



Tapiwanashe Mangwiro

When the IMF completes a review and reports that every quantitative target, structural benchmark and continuous commitment was met, it confirms something Zimbabwe has not often been able to show: a track record. The second review of the Staff-Monitored Programme, announced on October 7, says implementation through end-June was strong, revenue exceeded expectations and the primary balance came in stronger than programmed. In fiscal terms, that is a good position from which to plan.

An SMP is an informal arrangement with IMF staff and carries no Board endorsement or financing. Its value is reputational; a documented sequence of commitments made and kept.The Fund says this record supports arrears clearance, debt resolution and re-engagement with the international community. Each completed review is another entry in that ledger, and creditors and development partners read ledgers carefully.

Revenue strength gives choices

The scale of the revenue opportunity was already becoming apparent during the IMF's first review of Zimbabwe's Staff-Monitored Programme. In its initial 2026 fiscal projections, the Fund estimated that Government revenue would reach US$9 billion, equivalent to 16 percent of GDP.

This projection incorporated an estimated US$233.9 million in additional revenue from tax policy and administrative measures, representing approximately 0.5 percent of GDP. The figure was based on the expectation that improvements in revenue collection would strengthen the tax base and improve compliance. The IMF identified several measures behind the projected gains. These included raising the VAT rate from 15 percent to 15.5 percent, enhancing taxation of electronic commerce, enforcing presumptive tax collection, improving rental income tax collection, migrating some taxpayers from presumptive taxation to self-assessment, and applying VAT to imported services.

The Fund also anticipated stronger ZIMRA performance through improved voluntary tax compliance, customs and excise collections, post-clearance verifications and audits, and the registration of new taxpayers, particularly in the informal sector. Tax administration was expected to account for US$217.8 million of the projected US$233.9 million yield.

However, developments since that first review suggest that the eventual revenue outturn could be considerably stronger than the initial projection. ZIMRA collected US$4.71 billion during the first half of 2026, exceeding its target by 16 percent, with particularly strong performances in corporate income tax, VAT on imports, mining royalties and customs duty.

The October second-review announcement subsequently confirmed that fiscal revenue had exceeded expectations and contributed to a stronger-than-programmed primary balance. This points to a revenue windfall potentially exceeding the additional US$233.9 million initially anticipated from the identified tax and administrative measures, although the IMF has not yet disclosed the precise value of the second-review over performance. The implication is that Zimbabwe may have a larger fiscal opportunity than initially envisaged. The challenge is to ensure that stronger collections translate into savings rather than an expansion of recurrent expenditure. The discipline is now institutional

One of the less celebrated achievements sits at the boundary of monetary and fiscal policy. Reserve Bank lending to government is nil, and the programme's ceiling on central bank credit to the non-financial public sector was met. This is a structural change from past decades.

It means the budget is financed openly, through revenue and identifiable borrowing, and it is a large part of why inflation sits at 3.7 percent. Fiscal and monetary policy are pulling in the same direction, a point the Bank's own snapshot makes when it credits complementary fiscal measures for stability.

The only indicative target not observed was the floor on protected social and priority spending, which the Fund attributes to implementation bottlenecks in key programmes. In proportion, this is one gap in an otherwise clean review, and it concerns delivery speed rather than funding. The authorities have adopted a program-by-program financing and execution plan for the rest of the SMP, which is the right response.

Clearing bottlenecks is largely a project-management challenge, and given revenue performance, the resources exist. Getting it right matters because it ensures stabilisation shows up in people's lives, which is what sustains public support for reform.

Preparing for the dry season

The Fund projects growth of 5 percent in 2026, with the current account in surplus and inflation in single digits. Growth is expected to moderate to 3.5 percent in 2027 because of El Niño-related drought, then recover in 2028.That is a slowdown, not a collapse, and a forecast known in advance can be planned for. Buffers built in a year of revenue over performance, together with the Reserve Bank's rising reserves, give the authorities tools to cushion food-security needs. Growth of 3.5 percent in a drought year would still be a respectable result.

Governance as a growth enabler

Oversight of Mutapa and other state-owned enterprises is, in fiscal terms, about knowing what the state owes. Borrowing controls for Mutapa and its subsidiaries, published audited financial statements and more systematic disclosure of enterprise financial health all limit direct and contingent liabilities.

The planned anti-corruption strategy, with a clear policy matrix, will add to confidence. These steps are inexpensive relative to what they unlock, because investors and creditors price governance and better disclosure lowers the price.

The road to re-engagement

The Fund identifies the next steps: continued implementation of the remaining commitments, further progress in reconciling debt data and a credible, fully financed approach to arrears clearance and debt resolution. These are achievable, and the record so far suggests the authorities can deliver. Each step adds momentum to discussions with creditors and development partners.

Three markers will show how the story develops: the execution rate on protected social spending at the next review, the revenue assumptions in the 2027 Budget, and progress on reconciling debt data. If all three move the right way, Zimbabwe will enter the 2027 drought year with buffers in hand, a clean programme record and a stronger case for re-engagement.The economics of a good year are simple; spend what is durable, save what is cyclical, and let the buffer work when the weather turns. Zimbabwe has the numbers to begin.

Tapiwanashe Mangwiro is a Senior Economist at AEDS.

At a Glance

Africa's Top Agricultural Exports in 2026: From Farms to Global Markets





Ethen Masendu

Africa's agricultural potential extends far beyond feeding its domestic population from coffee and cocoa to avocados, spices and cut flowers, the continent produces a wide range of commodities that serve growing international markets. Yet, unlocking their full economic value requires more than increasing agricultural output. It demands investment in processing, quality standards, logistics, market access and the capacity to meet the evolving needs of global consumers.

As the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) creates opportunities for greater regional trade, African agribusinesses also have an opportunity to expand their presence in international markets. Demand for traceable, sustainably sourced and higher-value agricultural products presents an avenue for countries to diversify exports, earn foreign currency, create employment and strengthen rural economies.

The following nine commodities offer important opportunities for African producers and exporters in 2026.

1. Coffee: Africa's Liquid Gold

Coffee remains one of the world's most widely traded agricultural commodities, and Africa occupies a distinctive position in the industry. Africa exported around 1.18 million metric tonnes in 2025 whilst Uganda and Ethiopia account for nearly 80% of shipments and East Africa now representing close to 12% of global exports. Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee, and Uganda are among the continent's leading producers and exporters, supplying international markets in Europe, Asia and North America.

Current estimates put Africa's 2025/26 production at around 23.8 million bags, up from roughly 22.78 million bags the previous year. Ethiopia is forecast at a record 11.6 million bags for 2025/26 and exported 7.81 million bags worth US$2.65 billion in its fiscal year ending July 2025. Uganda is forecast at 6.875 million bags for 2025/26 and shipped 8.6 million bags between June 2025 and May 2026, worth US$2.3 billion, overtaking Ethiopia as Africa's largest coffee exporter. Kenya is forecast at 0.85 million bags, Côte d'Ivoire at 1.3 million bags, and Tanzania at 1.45 million bags for 2025/26.

African coffee is valued for its distinctive flavours, particularly in specialty markets where consumers increasingly appreciate origin, quality and sustainable production. Beyond roasted and brewed coffee, the beans provide raw material for instant coffee, caffeine extraction and other industrial applications. However, capturing greater value requires African producers to move beyond exporting unprocessed beans.

Investments in roasting, packaging, branding and specialty coffee production can enable businesses to command better prices while building internationally recognised African brands. Ethiopia's coffee is often estimated at 10% of GDP; continent-wide GDP shares vary widely. In Ethiopia 15 million people depend directly or indirectly on coffee. For Uganda coffee is major smallholder employer. Ethiopia exported around US$2.65bn in the first year ending July 2025 Uganda exported US$2.3bn (Jun 2025 to May 2026). This in itself proofs that Coffee is a core forex earner for East Africa.

Africa's Top Agricultural Exports in 2026: From Farms to Global Markets

Coffee production is best suited to appropriate highland and tropical growing conditions, with harvesting and post-harvest handling playing important roles in determining quality. Properly dried and stored green coffee beans can remain commercially viable for extended periods, giving exporters flexibility in managing transportation and market timing.

2. Palm Oil: Meeting Demand for a Versatile Commodity

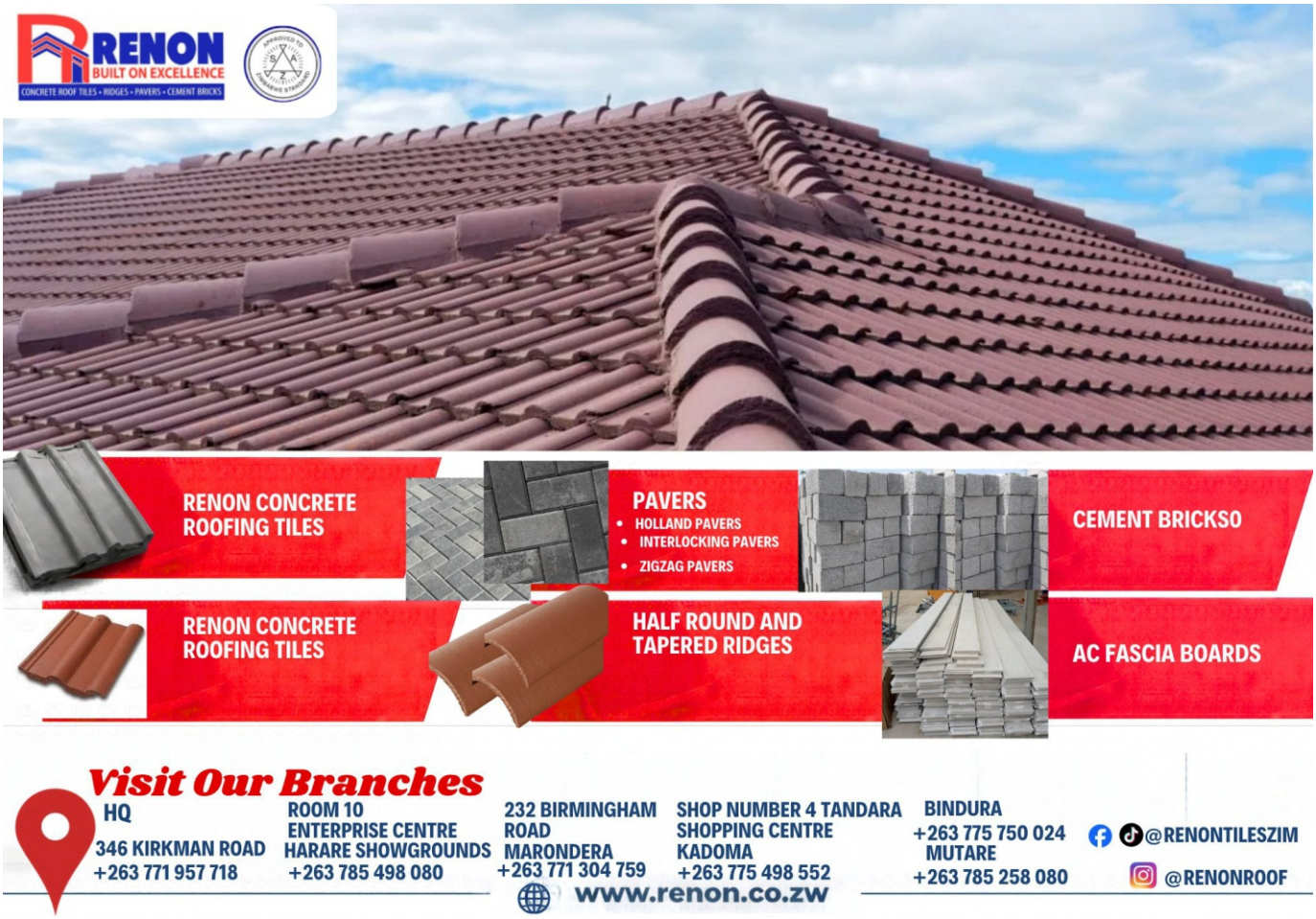
Palm oil is one of the most widely used vegetable oils in the world, serving the food manufacturing, personal care, cleaning products and biofuel industries. Although Southeast Asia dominates global production, African countries, including Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon, have significant potential to expand production and strengthen their participation in international markets. Africa remains a major net importer of palm oil: production reached approximately 3.4 million tonnes in 2024 against consumption of about 9.1 million tonnes, leaving a deficit of nearly 5.7 million tonnes met by imports. Nigeria, Africa's largest producer, produced 1.4–1.57 million tonnes in 2025, although domestic demand absorbs nearly all of it. Côte d'Ivoire produced approximately 575,000 tonnes of crude palm oil in the 2024/25 season and exported palm oil worth US$339 million in 2024. Cameroon's output is estimated at 465,000 tonnes in a recent year, though it also imported 92 billion FCFA worth of palm oil in 2025.

Demand comes from major importing economies such as India and China, as well as manufacturers in Europe that require reliable supplies meeting increasingly stringent sustainability standards. One of palm oil's principal advantages is its high oil yield per hectare compared with many other oilseed crops. This makes it commercially attractive in suitable tropical regions. Nevertheless, expanding production requires careful management of land use, environmental impacts, processing capacity and supply-chain traceability.

Unlike crops that can be stored for extended periods immediately after harvesting, fresh oil-palm fruit bunches must be processed promptly to preserve oil quality. This makes investment in mills, transport infrastructure and efficient supply chains essential. For African producers, the opportunity lies not only in expanding cultivation but also in developing domestic refining, packaging and downstream manufacturing industries. These activities can generate additional employment and retain a greater share of the commodity's value within the continent. Nigeria's direct GDP contribution is limited because output is below domestic demand and the sector is a net-import replacement opportunity. Mostly smallholders, plantations and mills and formal national employment data are weak. Africa is a net importer 3.4m tonnes production vs 9.1m tonnes consumption (2024). Côte d'Ivoire exported US$339m in 2024.

3. Cocoa: Capturing More Value from the Chocolate Industry

Africa is central to the global chocolate industry, accounting for the majority of the world's cocoa production. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are the continent's leading producers, with Nigeria and Cameroon also playing important roles.



Africa's Top Agricultural Exports in 2026: From Farms to Global Markets

Côte d'Ivoire grows roughly 2 million tonnes annually and accounts for about 40% of global supply; its cocoa exports reached 1.78 million tonnes in the current marketing year, up 6.6% year-on-year. Ghana produces roughly 650,000 tonnes annually, with 2025/26 production projected at 650,000 tonnes, an 8.3% increase. Nigeria produces roughly 325,000 tonnes annually, and cocoa represented approximately 35% of Nigeria's non-oil export value in the first half of 2025. Combined, the four leading producers generate roughly 3.3 million tonnes annually, valued at an estimated US$19 billion in raw bean value at recent prices.

Cocoa beans supply chocolate manufacturers, confectionery producers and companies that produce cocoa butter and other ingredients used in food, cosmetics and personal-care products. Major processing and consumption markets include the Netherlands, Belgium and the United States. Despite its importance to global supply chains, Africa has historically captured less value from cocoa than countries that specialise in processing and manufacturing finished chocolate products. This presents a substantial opportunity for African businesses to invest in cocoa grinding, cocoa butter production, powder manufacturing and branded chocolate. Developing these industries would help diversify export earnings, create skilled employment and reduce dependence on raw commodity exports.

Cocoa cultivation requires suitable climatic conditions, careful management of pests and diseases, and effective post-harvest practices. Fermentation and drying are particularly important in determining the quality of the final product. Properly processed and stored cocoa beans can remain commercially viable for extended periods, allowing exporters to manage shipping schedules and market conditions. The strategic challenge is to transform Africa's dominant position in cocoa production into greater participation in the more profitable stages of the chocolate value chain.

4. Cotton: From White Gold to Textile Manufacturing

Cotton remains a critical raw material for the global textile and apparel industry. African producers, including Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso, supply international markets, particularly textile manufacturing centres in Asia. Africa accounts for roughly 1.5–1.7 million tonnes of global cotton lint production (global total: 26.5 million tonnes in 2025/26). Benin is Africa's biggest producer, with output of about 250,000 tonnes of lint in 2025/26; Mali 179,000 tonnes; Burkina Faso 139,000 tonnes; Côte d'Ivoire 122,000 tonnes; and Cameroon 115,000 tonnes.

The commodity supports a wide range of industries, from clothing and household textiles to medical and industrial applications. Its established international market makes it an important export option for countries with suitable growing conditions and competitive production systems. However, exporting raw cotton captures only part of its potential economic value. The greater opportunity lies in building integrated textile value chains that connect farmers to ginneries, spinning mills, fabric manufacturers and garment producers.

Such integration can create employment beyond the farm, stimulate industrial development and diversify export earnings. Countries that combine reliable cotton supplies with competitive energy, efficient logistics and supportive industrial policies can position themselves to attract textile investment.Cotton production requires appropriate temperatures, sufficient water and effective pest management. After harvesting, the crop must be ginned and handled carefully to preserve fibre quality. When kept dry and properly stored, baled cotton can be transported and held for extended periods without the perishability challenges associated with fresh produce.

For Africa, the long-term prize is not simply exporting more cotton, but producing more of the yarn, fabric and finished garments that international markets demand.

5. Tobacco: A High-Value Export with Complex Considerations

Tobacco remains an important source of agricultural export earnings for several African economies. Zimbabwe is particularly prominent in the production and export of flue-cured tobacco, while Malawi is another established producer. Export markets include China, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia. Zimbabwe's 2025 output reached 355 million kilograms, worth US$1.2 billion; in value terms it remains the largest unmanufactured tobacco supplier in Africa, comprising 59% of total African exports. Malawi is projected to produce 175 million kilograms in 2025, a 31% increase from 133 million kilograms the previous year. Africa accounted for around 11% of global tobacco output in 2024.

The crop can generate substantial foreign-currency receipts and support employment across farming, processing, grading, warehousing and logistics. Its relatively long storage life after appropriate curing and handling also makes it suitable for international trade. Nevertheless, tobacco presents considerations that distinguish it from other agricultural exports. Production can be labour-intensive, and curing requires reliable energy supplies and careful quality control. The sector is also exposed to changing public-health regulations, taxation policies and international tobacco-control measures.

For African economies that depend heavily on tobacco exports, diversification is therefore essential. Improving productivity and value retention within the existing industry should go hand in hand with developing alternative agricultural exports, including horticultural products, oilseeds and food crops. The objective should be to manage the economic contribution of tobacco while reducing vulnerability to regulatory changes and fluctuations in global demand. Zimbabwean tobacco is roughly 10% of agricultural GDP (not total GDP) and Zimbabwe's tobacco value chain supports >500,000 people and also about 135,000 growers. Tobbaco contributed US$1.2bn in 2025 which translates to 25% of foreign exchange and 59% of African unmanufactured tobacco exports. Malawi also depends heavily.

6. Cut Flowers: Competing in a Time-Sensitive Global Market

Cut flowers illustrate how African agriculture can compete internationally through quality, specialised production and efficient logistics rather than commodity volumes alone.

Kenya is a major global flower exporter, with Ethiopia also supplying international markets. Roses, carnations and other flowers are shipped primarily to Europe, where they serve retail, hospitality, wedding and other event markets. Africa's cut-flower industry is worth an estimated US$1.4 billion annually. Kenya, the world's fourth-largest exporter, earned US$799 million from flower exports in 2025 (6.6% of global flower bouquet exports); earlier data showed US$835 million in 2024.

At a Glance

Africa's Top Agricultural Exports in 2026: From Farms to Global Markets

Kenya supplies about 40% of Europe's cut-flower imports, and roses account for over 65% of its export value. Ethiopia, Africa's second-largest exporter and a top-four global supplier, exported US$303 million in flowers in 2025 (2.5% of global exports).

The sector creates employment in cultivation, harvesting, grading, packaging, cold storage and air freight. It also demonstrates how agricultural exports can support relatively sophisticated supply chains. Unlike grains, cotton or dried spices, flowers are highly perishable. Their commercial value depends on maintaining quality from harvesting through packaging, transportation and delivery. Reliable cold-chain infrastructure and access to air cargo services are therefore critical.

Production can also require substantial investment in irrigation, greenhouses, labour and environmental management. Businesses must meet stringent phytosanitary and quality requirements while responding quickly to changing consumer demand. For African exporters, opportunities lie in improving productivity, diversifying flower varieties, strengthening direct relationships with overseas buyers and investing in efficient post-harvest systems. In this market, even small improvements in handling and delivery can make a significant difference to profitability.

7. Spices: High Value from Relatively Small Volumes

Vanilla, ginger and cloves offer African producers opportunities to earn export revenue from products that can command high prices relative to their weight. Africa produces about 12% of the world's spices, though most are consumed locally. Madagascar's 2025 vanilla production is estimated at approximately 3,000 tonnes, nearly 80% of global supply, with farm-gate prices around US$50/kg.

Tanzania produces approximately 8,582 tonnes of cloves, primarily from Zanzibar and Pemba, although export volumes fell from 3,900 tonnes in 2023/24 to 1,200 tonnes in 2024/25. Nigeria's ginger output is estimated between 160,000 and 523,000 tonnes annually, depending on source and season, with production projected to reach 523,000 tonnes in 2025.

Madagascar is particularly important in the global vanilla trade, while Tanzania is well known for cloves and Nigeria is among Africa's ginger-producing countries. These commodities supply food manufacturers, restaurants, fragrance producers and companies producing essential oils and other specialised products. Their commercial appeal lies partly in their value density. Dried spices can be transported in relatively small volumes compared with bulky agricultural commodities, making them attractive to small and medium-sized exporters.

However, production requirements differ considerably. Vanilla cultivation can be labour-intensive because pollination often requires manual intervention, while ginger production depends on suitable soils, moisture and effective disease management. Quality control is equally important. Buyers require consistent flavour, aroma, moisture content, cleanliness and traceability. Producers who meet these requirements can pursue premium markets rather than compete solely on price.

Processing offers further opportunities. African businesses can move beyond exporting raw spices into cleaning, grading, drying, grinding, packaging and producing extracts and essential oils. These activities can increase the value earned from each harvest while creating additional employment.

8. Tea: Building on Africa's Established Export Strength

Tea is another important agricultural export, with Kenya serving as one of the world's leading exporters, particularly of black tea. Other African producers also contribute to the international market. Kenya's 2025 export volumes reached 652.8 million kilograms, a 9.81% increase from 594.5 million kilograms in 2024, with earnings rising to KSh 186.91 billion (approximately US$1.44 billion). Adverse weather earlier in 2025 led the Tea Board of Kenya to project production would fall to 580 million kg for the year, down from 594 million kg in 2024; the strong export volumes were partly driven by clearance of unsold stocks carried over from previous years.

African tea supplies consumers and manufacturers across markets such as Pakistan, Egypt and the United Kingdom. Demand is supported by traditional tea consumption, while speciality blends, ready-to-drink products and tea-based ingredients create additional commercial possibilities. Tea cultivation is suited to particular climatic conditions, including the highland environments found in parts of East Africa. As a perennial crop, tea can provide income over many years, although it requires regular harvesting, careful field management and consistent processing. The opportunity for African businesses extends beyond bulk tea exports. Branding, blending, packaging and the development of specialty teas can help producers build closer relationships with consumers and retailers.

Investments in quality assurance, energy-efficient processing and sustainable farming can also strengthen competitiveness. By developing consumer-facing products, African exporters can capture a larger share of the value generated between the plantation and the final customer. Kenya's tea is about 2% of GDP and a large share of agricultural GDP. Kenya supports several million livelihoods (estimates ~5–6 million) direct employment is in the hundreds of thousands. Kenya: KSh186.91bn (~US$1.44bn) in 2025 that is roughly 20–25% of export earnings third major forex source after diaspora remittances and tourism.

9. Avocados: Capitalising on the Global Demand for Healthy Foods

Avocados have evolved from a relatively specialised fruit into a widely consumed product in international markets. Their popularity is supported by demand for fresh produce and ingredients used in food, cosmetics and personal-care products.

Kenya and South Africa are among Africa's established avocado exporters, supplying markets that include Europe and the Middle East, with opportunities to expand into other destinations where market access permits. African avocado exports reached 430,432 tonnes in 2025, a 16.7% increase from 368,845 tonnes in 2024.

Morocco overtook Kenya to become Africa's leading exporter, shipping 141,000 tonnes in 2025 a 90% year-on-year surge supported by a 40% expansion in harvested area between 2022 and 2024. Kenya's shipments declined 19% to 105,164 tonnes, constrained by Red Sea logistics disruptions that doubled transit times to Europe. South Africa's exports declined 6% to 80,423 tonnes, also due to Red Sea shipping disruptions. Africa's avocado production is expected to reach a record ~694,000 tonnes in 2025, climbing further to ~727,000 tonnes in 2026.

Africa's Top Agricultural Exports in 2026: From Farms to Global Markets



The fruit offers several commercial pathways. Premium-grade avocados can be sold fresh, while suitable lower-grade fruit can be processed into avocado oil and other products. This creates opportunities to reduce waste and diversify revenue streams, provided processing is commercially viable. Avocado farming, however, requires patience and careful investment. Trees generally take several years to reach commercial production, and yields depend on suitable varieties, soil conditions, water availability and orchard management.

Exporting fresh avocados also presents logistical challenges because fruit ripens after harvesting. Careful picking, grading, temperature management and suitable packaging are necessary to preserve quality during transportation. For African producers, the opportunity is to combine reliable production with processing capacity, effective certification systems and direct access to international buyers. Developing cold-chain infrastructure and meeting destination-market requirements will be crucial to sustaining growth.

Turning Agricultural Potential into Export Wealth

The nine commodities illustrate the breadth of Africa's agricultural export opportunities, but production alone does not guarantee competitiveness. Successful exporters must understand international demand, meet quality standards, manage logistics and establish dependable relationships with buyers. There are also important differences between commodities. Coffee, cocoa, cotton and tobacco can generally be stored for longer periods after appropriate processing, while flowers and fresh avocados require more demanding logistics. Palm oil depends on timely processing after harvesting, and spices offer opportunities for value addition through drying, grading and packaging.

These differences mean that countries should prioritise commodities according to their climatic advantages, existing production capacity, access to finance, infrastructure and realistic market opportunities rather than pursuing every export market simultaneously. Governments have an important role to play in providing reliable transport infrastructure, efficient border procedures, agricultural research, extension services and predictable export regulations. They can also facilitate access to finance and help producers meet international sanitary, phytosanitary and sustainability requirements.

For the private sector, the priority is to invest in storage, processing, packaging, traceability, market intelligence and commercially viable production systems. Cooperatives and contract-farming arrangements can help smaller producers' aggregate sufficient volumes to meet export orders, while partnerships between farmers, processors and exporters can improve coordination throughout the value chain.

AfCFTA can complement these efforts by expanding regional markets, supporting the development of cross-border value chains and enabling African businesses to build scale before competing more extensively in global markets. Ultimately, Africa's agricultural export opportunity is not simply about shipping more raw commodities overseas. It is about retaining more value through processing, manufacturing, branding and the development of competitive agricultural industries.

The countries and businesses that succeed will be those that connect their production strengths to clear market demand, invest in the infrastructure required to deliver consistently and treat agriculture as a foundation for industrial development rather than merely a source of raw materials.

Ethen Masendu is an Economics Graduate Trainee at AEDS

FINALLY HERE!



Celebrating a new chapter with the upgraded ZiG notes.
Stable, secure, and ready for your world.

NOW AVAILABLE - (10 ZIG, 20 ZIG & 50 ZIG)
TO FOLLOW (100 ZIG & 200 ZIG)



Stable, Secure, Sustainable

RESERVE BANK OF ZIMBABWE