

# FAQ: Navigating United States Tariffs

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This document provides basic information to help Western Cape exporters navigate United States tariffs

Updated: 15 April 2025

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**Note: This is an updated FAQ replacing previous versions dated 4, 7, 10 and 11 April. It includes a note on the additional tech products exempt from the Reciprocal Tariffs.**

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## 1. I export to the United States. What do I need to be aware of?

If you are currently exporting goods to the United States from South Africa, you need to be aware that there are various uncertainties relating to tariffs at the moment, and that the situation may remain uncertain for a while. Wesgro is focused on ensuring that businesses can navigate this uncertainty with confidence.

On 2 April 2025, President Trump, using emergency executive powers, introduced a sweeping set of “reciprocal” tariffs on countries around the world, including South Africa. Certain of these tariffs have now been paused until 9 July 2025. He has also introduced various sectoral tariffs that impact South Africa.

## 2. What do we know about the Reciprocal Tariffs right now?

### Implementation

- On 2 April 2025 tariffs were issued by Executive Order<sup>1</sup> that affect almost every country in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Order Regulating Imports with a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices that Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits. 2 April 2025.

- All products (unless excluded) imported into the US are subject to an additional 10% ad valorem<sup>2</sup> tariff, including South African products. This went into effect on 5 April 2025.
- South Africa, together with almost 60 other countries, also face addition “reciprocal” tariffs of varying amounts In South Africa’s case the additional tariff is 30%.<sup>3</sup> (See Annex I of the [Executive Order](#)).
- On 9 April 2025, President Trump issued [Executive Order “Modifying Reciprocal Tariff Rates to Reflect Trading Partner Retaliation and Alignment”](#) (“the Modifying Order”), in which the additional country-specific reciprocal tariffs were temporarily suspended for 90 days (except for China), until 9 July 2025.
  - This means that South Africa will face an additional ad valorem tariff of 10% during this time, and not 30%.
- The additional tariff applies in the case of general and special (preferential) rates of duty. Therefore, the 10% will be additional to the current duty rate, even if AGOA applies.
- This applies to imported products of any country (other than where exceptions apply) entered for consumption, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption on or after 12:01 a.m. Eastern Time on April 10, 2025. For exact wording see section 3 of the [Modifying Executive Order](#).

## Exceptions

- If the product being exported has at least 20% US content, then the additional 10% tariff applies only to the non-US content. See [Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\) Guidance](#) for reporting instructions on this.<sup>4</sup>
- Certain goods are exempt from the reciprocal tariffs, these remain the same as set out in the 2 April Executive Order:
  - Products listed in [Annex II](#) of the [2 April Executive Order](#). Certain of these may face sectoral tariffs in the future. Each specific exempt product is listed by HS code.
    - Note that additional tech product codes were added in a clarification note published by the White House on 11 April. These tariff codes are available

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<sup>2</sup> Duty levied as a percentage of value of the services or goods being imported, rather than on their weight or the number of units.

<sup>3</sup> The initial Executive Order published on 2 April said 31% for South Africa, but this has subsequently been changed to 30% and it has been published in the Federal Register and Harmonized Tariff Schedule as 30%.

<sup>4</sup> [CSMS # 64701128](#). Updated Guidance: Reciprocal Tariffs – Increase in Rate for China and Reversion of Other Country-Specific Rates, Effective April 10, 2025. See also [CSMS # 64701128](#) for additional guidance on Revision of Tariffs, 10 April.

in [Clarification of Exceptions Under Executive Order 14257 of April 2, 2025, as Amended](#).

- Products already facing sectoral tariffs:
  - Steel, aluminium and derivative products (25%)
  - Automobiles and automobile parts (25%)
- A limited list of specific IEEPA<sup>5</sup>-exempt goods.
- According to the 2 April Executive Order and CBP Guidance note,<sup>6</sup> the de minimis statutory exemption, which allows certain shipments valued at \$800 or less to enter the United States duty-free, remains available for now for countries other than China and Hong Kong. The Order indicates, however, that this exemption will only remain in place until “adequate systems are in place” to process and collect tariffs from such shipments. For exact wording see section 3(h) of the 2 April [Executive Order](#).
- Certain countries are exempt, these include:
  - Mexico and Canada
    - Only for products traded in accordance with the United States-Canada-Mexico Agreement (USMCA), and which are not subject to specific sectoral tariffs. This may be subject to change.
  - Countries listed in Column 2 of the US’ tariff schedule. These are countries with which the US does not maintain normal trade relations: Cuba, Belarus, North Korea, Russia.

### **Rationale, Duration and Flexibility**

- These reciprocal tariffs have been introduced over and above existing tariffs, through emergency powers<sup>7</sup> in response to a U.S. national emergency that was declared by President Trump when he introduced the tariffs. This declaration reads that: “foreign trade and economic practices have created a national emergency,” and the Executive Order imposes “responsive tariffs to strengthen the international economic position of the United States and protect American workers.”

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<sup>5</sup> International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

<sup>6</sup> CSMS # 64701128. Updated Guidance: Reciprocal Tariffs – Increase in Rate for China and Reversion of Other Country-Specific Rates, Effective April 10, 2025. See also [CSMS # 64680374](#) Guidance Reciprocal Tariffs, April 5 and April 9, 2025, Effective Dates.

<sup>7</sup> Under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

- According to the Executive Order, the tariffs will therefore remain in effect until President Trump determines “that the threat posed by the trade deficit and underlying nonreciprocal treatment is satisfied, resolved, or mitigated.” For more information see the [White House Fact Sheet](#) on the Declaration of National Emergency to Increase our Competitive Edge, Protect our Sovereignty, and Strengthen our National and Economic Security.
- According to the White House Executive Order, the tariff rates may also be increased or decreased depending upon actions taken by foreign governments. This, therefore, leaves room for negotiation with individual trading partners and revisions to each country’s specific rate. Thus, according to the Order, if South Africa takes “significant steps to remedy” some of the U.S. concerns, the US President may decrease the tariff or limit it in scope. If South Africa retaliates against U.S. exports, the U.S. President may increase the tariff or expand it in scope.
- The Modifying Executive Order notes that after announcement of the Reciprocal Tariffs, more than 75 foreign trading partners, including countries listed in Annex I, have approached the United States “to address the lack of trade reciprocity in our economic relationship and our resulting national and economic security concerns;” and that this has given cause for the temporary suspension of the country-specific reciprocal tariffs.

### 3. How do I know what my tariff will be?

- As of 10 April, the tariff will be the current tariff as applied on your product under normal circumstance +10% ad valorem.
- From 9 July 2025, it would again be +30%.

### 4. What about AGOA?

- Although the AGOA legislation is still in force, these tariffs have been added in addition to all existing tariffs, including preferential rates (with exceptions), thus the reciprocal tariff (10%) will apply in excess of your usual AGOA preferential rate.<sup>8</sup>
- AGOA is, however, set to expire in September this year unless renewed.

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<sup>8</sup> Federal Register. Regulating Imports With a Reciprocal Tariff To Rectify Trade Practices That Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits. 07/04/2025.

## 8. What additional tariffs have been announced?

Besides tariffs that have already been implemented on Mexico, Canada and China, a number of proclamations and sectoral tariffs have been issued by the White House, including the following:

- **America First Trade Policy:** On 20 January, the White House released the America First Trade Policy Memorandum outlining trade priorities for the administration. Priorities are focused on reducing the U.S. deficit and addressing unfair and unbalanced aspects of U.S. trade with foreign partners. Various U.S. Government agencies are directed to complete studies into unfair trade practices by 1 April, 2025.<sup>9</sup>
- **Tariffs on steel, aluminium and derivatives:** On 10 February 2025, the President issued proclamations imposing 25% tariffs on imports of steel and aluminium and derivatives, adjusting the Section 232 tariffs first imposed in March 2018. These tariffs were implemented on 12 March 2025, and thus far the White House has maintained that there will be no exemptions.<sup>10</sup>
- **Tariffs on automobiles and automobile parts:** On 26 March 2025, a proclamation was published announcing that 25% tariffs would be imposed on automobiles and automobile parts. This tariff will be subject to various conditions, in particular pertaining to the United States-Canada-Mexico Agreement, but which may also be of consequence for other trade partners or particular products. Tariffs on automobiles came into effect on 3 April, while tariffs on automobile parts will come into effect no later than 3 May.<sup>11</sup> Additional information about these tariffs can be found in the Federal Register publication, [here](#).

## 5. How do I find the existing U.S. tariff that applies to my product under normal circumstances?

- If you have been exporting to the U.S. you may qualify for AGOA preferences, you may export under a tariff line that is duty free in general, or you may pay a duty (general duty/MFN).
- In order to find out what your current U.S. tariff is, the links listed below may be helpful. In each case you can search by your HS code or the name of your product, but it is best

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<sup>9</sup> The White House: America First Trade Policy. 20 January 2025. [Available here](#)

<sup>10</sup> The White House: Adjusting Imports of Steel into the United States 10 Feb 2025. [Available here](#). And Adjusting Imports of Aluminium into the United States. 11 February 2025. [Available here](#).

<sup>11</sup> The White House: Adjusting Imports of Automobiles and Automobile Parts into the United States. 26 March 2025. [Available here](#).

to use your HS code, as there can be different tariffs on different subsets of the same product.

These websites allow you to look for the tariff for a product being exported from South Africa to the United States. Once you've entered your search criteria, the site should show you the MFN / general tariff as well as the AGOA tariff (zero) if the product qualifies for AGOA.

- AGOA.info: [AGOA Products and Tariff Lookup Tool](#)
- Macmap: [Market Access Conditions](#)
- [Global Trade Helpdesk](#)
- WTO: [Tariff & Trade Data](#)
- [US Harmonized Tariff Schedule](#)

## 9. How do I get in touch with Wesgro?

If you require any further information, please feel free to reach out to us at [hello@wesgro.co.za](mailto:hello@wesgro.co.za).

## References

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