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Brazil Eyes Food Leadership Amid U.S.-China Trade Rift

According to *Africa News*, Brazil is positioning itself as a global food security leader amid escalating U.S.-China trade tensions, according to Agriculture Minister Carlos Fávaro. Speaking after a BRICS agriculture summit in Brasília, Fávaro highlighted Brazil's rising importance, especially following China's suspension of beef imports from 395 U.S. plants. The meeting, which included representatives from Brazil, Russia, China, South Africa, India, and Iran, focused on agricultural cooperation, land restoration, and trade integration. Fávaro noted that Brazil has restored over 9.9 million acres (4 million hectares) of degraded land into productive use in the past two years. The move bolsters Brazil's status as a dependable food exporter, particularly for the expanding Chinese market.

China Races to Beat U.S. Tariffs with Export Surge

Meanwhile, *Africa News* reports that China's exports rose by 12.4% in March 2025 compared to a year earlier as businesses rushed to ship goods ahead of a 145% U.S. tariff hike, while imports dropped by 4.3%. For Q1, exports increased

5.8% and imports declined 7%, resulting in a $76.6 billion trade surplus with the U.S. The strongest export growth was to Southeast Asia (up nearly 17%) and Africa (up over 11%). President Xi Jinping's regional tour to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia is expected to bolster alternative trade ties amid escalating tensions with Washington. China's customs agency emphasized the country's resilience, pointing to its diversified trade partners and vast domestic market.

Trump Administration Revives US-Kenya Trade Talks Amid AGOA Uncertainty

Business Daily reports that the Trump administration has signaled a resumption of comprehensive free trade agreement (FTA) talks with Kenya, positioning the deal as a model for post-AGOA trade frameworks with Africa. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer called his recent talks with Kenya's Trade Minister "fruitful," emphasizing a return to reciprocal trade negotiations abandoned under the Biden administration's non-binding Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership (STIP). With AGOA set to expire in September 2025 and Kenyan exports already facing a 10% tariff, a bilateral FTA is seen as a strategic pivot. The original Trump-era negotiations initiated in 2020 had stalled, but renewed interest suggests a shift away from STIP's focus on non-tariff issues toward tariff liberalization. The move reflects broader dissatisfaction in Congress with delays under the Biden administration and a preference for binding trade agreements.

Trump's Tariffs Threaten Ivory Coast's Cocoa Economy

According to *Africa News*, Ivory Coast's cocoa farmers are reeling from a 21% U.S. import tariff imposed by President Donald Trump, affecting their ability to sell to one of their key export markets. Cocoa is vital to the livelihoods of nearly 6 million Ivorians and contributes 15–20% of the national GDP, making the new trade barrier particularly damaging. Farmers, already struggling with poor weather conditions, now face full storage rooms and falling demand due to the tariff. While the Ivorian government considers alternative markets like Europe, global chocolate demand has stagnated, and climate-related challenges have pushed cocoa prices higher. A 90-day pause on some tariffs was announced, but a universal 10% duty still applies.

Suez Canal Revenue Falls by Nearly 61% Amid Regional Conflict

Africa News reports that Egypt's Suez Canal revenues plummeted from $10.25 billion in 2023 to $3.99 billion in 2024, a nearly 61% decline, due to heightened regional instability. Houthi rebel attacks on commercial vessels, in protest of the Israeli bombing of Palestine, severely disrupted maritime trade, sinking two ships and killing four sailors. Traffic through the canal fell by 50%, with only 13,213 ships passing compared to over 26,000 the previous year. The canal, a vital trade route handling about 10% of global commerce, remains operational despite security threats, according to canal chief Osama Rabie. The disruption has sharply impacted Egypt's foreign currency earnings and global shipping patterns.

WTO Warns Trump's Tariffs Threaten Global Trade and Growth

According to *Africa News*, the WTO forecasts a 0.2% decline in global trade volume in 2025 due to U.S. President Donald Trump's evolving tariff policies and his trade standoff with China. North America is expected to see sharp declines, with exports projected to drop 12.6% and imports 9.6%. If Trump enforces his most severe "reciprocal" tariffs, global trade could slump by 1.5%, significantly disrupting business confidence and economic activity. The WTO warned that trade uncertainty poses serious risks to vulnerable economies and global growth. Meanwhile, Trump has temporarily paused some tariffs for 90 days while raising duties on Chinese imports to 145%.

Chinese Exporters at Canton Fair Eye New Markets Amid U.S. Tariff Hikes

Africa News reports that at the opening of the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, Chinese exporters expressed concern over the intensifying U.S.-China trade war, as sweeping U.S. tariffs disrupted orders and payments. Some companies, like Bella Intelligent Information Technology, have had U.S. and European orders suspended due to high tariffs and currency issues, though they remain hopeful for recovery. U.S. tariffs recently rose to 145%, prompting China to respond with a 125% duty. Companies like Chigo, which exports to 180 countries, acknowledged short-term setbacks and are now exploring new markets. The fair, featuring 31,000 companies, continues through May 5.

Ethiopia’s Sea Access Bid Framed as Regional Opportunity, Not Threat

All Africa reports that Ethiopia's push for sea access is a strategic move tied to national survival, sovereignty, and economic development, according to Dr. Kaleb Demerew of West Texas A&M University. With over 130 million people, Ethiopia's lack of direct maritime access hampers trade and regional integration. Kaleb emphasized that this pursuit is not a threat but a chance for the Horn of Africa to strengthen regional economic cooperation. He noted that Ethiopia historically had maritime access until it was severed by Italian colonization of Eritrea. Restoring access, he argued, could stabilize the region and promote mutual prosperity.

African Leaders Urge Unified Response to U.S. Tariffs Amid AGOA Uncertainty

According to *All Africa*, former Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Mohamed Higazy has urged African governments to negotiate as a bloc in response to the recent U.S. tariffs, emphasizing that a unified position could help secure concessions benefiting the continent. He warned that failing to do so could push Africa further into China's orbit and weaken U.S.-Africa relations. Speaking at a journalist training in Cairo, he also encouraged African media to highlight local success stories to promote continental unity and collaboration. Ambassador Ahmed Haggag echoed the call for unity and advocated leveraging the African diaspora for economic self-sufficiency. The U.S.'s 10% tariff on countries including Ghana signals a shift away from AGOA's duty-free trade benefits and raises concerns about the future of U.S.-Africa trade ties.

China Urges Global Unity and Deepens China-Africa Diplomatic Ties

At a seminar hosted by China Foreign Affairs University on April 15, 2025, CPC Secretary Amb. Wang Shifting emphasized the urgent need for global cooperation amid escalating geopolitical tensions and regional conflicts, reports *All Africa*. He promoted President Xi Jinping’s initiatives—Belt and Road, Global Development, Security, and Civilization—as China's roadmap for addressing global challenges and achieving shared prosperity. The seminar, marking the 80th anniversary of WWII’s end and 25 years of China-Africa cooperation, gathered African diplomats and highlighted youth training and community-building. Ambassador Wang reiterated China’s commitment to building a China-

Africa community with a shared future and praised the outcomes of the 2024 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The event underlined China's vision of modernization and multilateral diplomacy grounded in fairness and justice.

Trade as a Pillar of Peace and Prosperity Amid Disruptive U.S. Tariff Wars

Writing for the *Vanguard*, Charles Onunaiju opines that international trade is not only vital for development and prosperity but also for peace and mutual understanding among nations. Onunaiju criticizes the Trump administration's trade wars, especially the tariffs against China and African nations, as destabilizing and counterproductive, ignoring the internal structural issues of the U.S. economy. In contrast, China's role as Africa's largest trading partner—through tariff-free access and initiatives like the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo—offers Africa pathways to economic diversification and stability. Trade, particularly under frameworks like the AfCFTA and Agenda 2063, is presented as essential to Africa's long-term peace and development. Ultimately, Onunaiju warns that U.S. trade disruptions reflect inward nationalism that undermines global cooperation, and urges expanded trade, not less, to address economic grievances.

Egypt and Tunisia Deepen Economic Ties with Joint Bank, Trade Routes

All Africa reports that Egypt and Tunisia are advancing plans to establish a joint bank and new trade routes to boost bilateral economic cooperation. During an official visit to Tunis, Egypt's Investment Minister Hassan El-Khatib discussed initiatives with Tunisian Prime Minister Sara Zaafarani, including the potential opening of Egyptian bank branches in Tunisia and the creation of a regular maritime shipping line. A tripartite committee with Libya is being considered to explore both sea and overland transport routes to enhance regional connectivity. The countries also aim to expand cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector and streamline customs procedures, product certification, and business visa access. These steps are part of a broader push to facilitate investment, trade, and private sector collaboration between the two North African nations.

U.S.-South Africa Tensions Threaten Broader Africa Policy

Charles A. Ray, writing for the *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, argues that U.S.-South Africa relations have become increasingly strained under the Trump administration, with implications for US engagement across Africa. Long rooted in a complex history marked by apartheid, Cold War politics, and uneven cooperation, the relationship is now challenged by South Africa's foreign policy alignments—particularly its ties to Russia and China through BRICS, its ICJ genocide case against Israel, and alleged arms transfers to Russia. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a key pillar of US-Africa trade, is at risk of excluding South Africa due to these geopolitical rifts. A February 2025 executive order further escalated tensions by halting US aid and creating a refugee program for white South African farmers, sparking diplomatic fallout. Without reconciliation, this fractured partnership may undermine regional trade, security cooperation, and US credibility across the continent.

Sahel Trade Tariff Risks Regional Fragmentation Amid Global Uncertainty

Taiwo Hassan, writing for the *Responsible Statecraft*, reports that the Alliance of Sahel States (AES)—comprising Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger—has imposed a 0.5% tariff on goods from ECOWAS countries, escalating tensions and threatening regional free trade. The move, which exempts only humanitarian aid, may trigger retaliation and worsen food insecurity in AES nations, all of which are landlocked and reliant on ECOWAS neighbors for imports. The AES bloc, formed after recent military coups and aligned with Russia, is distancing itself from Western allies and intensifying its rivalry with ECOWAS. This internal African trade dispute comes at a precarious time as U.S. President Trump's new global tariffs threaten African access to the American market under AGOA, further destabilizing trade prospects. The AES-ECOWAS rift underscores the urgent need for deeper continental integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as intra-African trade remains low and vulnerable to political fragmentation.

Zimbabwe Courts U.S. Favor with Tariff Cuts and Farmer Payouts

Aljazeera reports that Zimbabwe has become the first country to suspend tariffs on U.S. goods in response to President Trump's global tariff hikes, aiming to foster a "positive relationship" with Washington. Simultaneously, the

government has begun compensating white farmers for land seized during the early 2000s expropriation program, with an initial disbursement of $3.1 million out of a $3.5 billion agreement. While these moves may be intended to soften U.S. sanctions and win political favor amid internal power struggles, experts warn the tariff removal could harm Zimbabwe's fragile economy and provoke tensions with other trade partners like China and South Africa. Critics argue the economic benefits will likely favor the political elite, especially amid allegations of corruption and smuggling. Whether these overtures will appease Trump remains uncertain, particularly given ongoing disputes over the scale and sincerity of compensation to white farmers.

Events – 04/18/2025

"10th Annual AGOA CSO Network Spring Conference." AGOA Civil Society Network. *Washington D.C*. 23 April 2025.

"AfCFTA Digital Trade Forum." AfCFTA. *Lusaka, Zambia*. 8-10 May 2025.

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