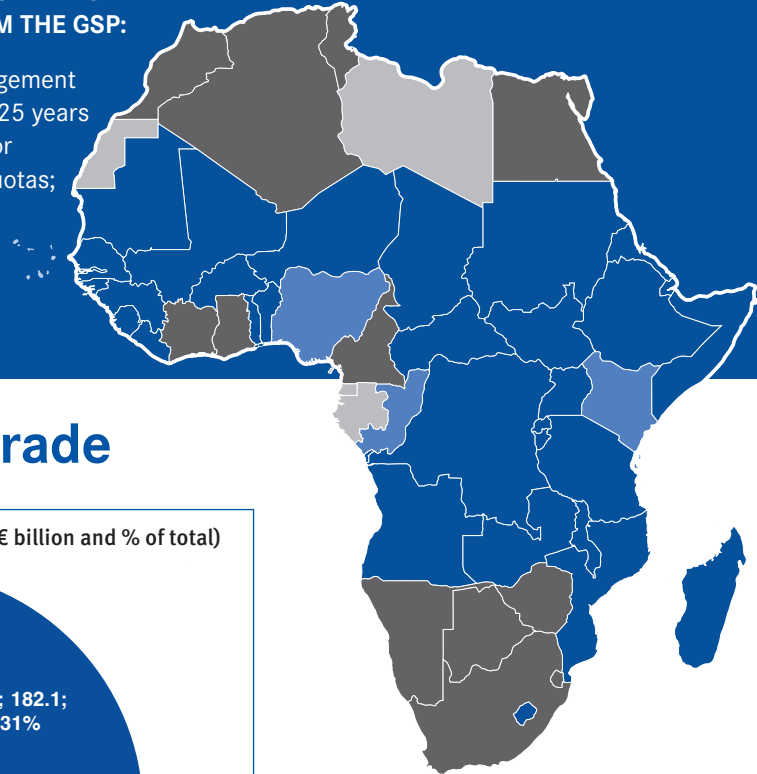


The EU GSP and Africa: Unlocking Africa's Trade Potential with the EU

OF AFRICA'S 55 COUNTRIES, 51 ENJOY PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO THE EU MARKET. 37 COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA BENEFIT FROM THE GSP:

- 33 are beneficiary countries of the Everything But Arms (EBA) arrangement which was introduced in its current form and on a permanent basis 25 years ago in 2001. This means that all of their exports to the EU, except for arms and ammunition, can enter the EU market without duties or quotas;
- Three – the Republic of Congo, Kenya and Nigeria – are beneficiary countries of the standard GSP; and
- One (Cabo Verde) is a beneficiary country of the GSP+.

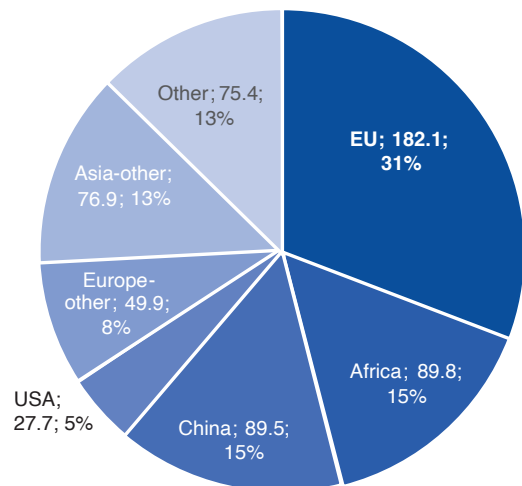


Some facts about African-EU trade

THE EU IS AFRICA'S MAIN EXPORT MARKET

About 31% of all goods exported by Africa in 2025, worth €182 billion, went to EU countries.

Africa's goods exports by destination, 2025 (€ billion and % of total)



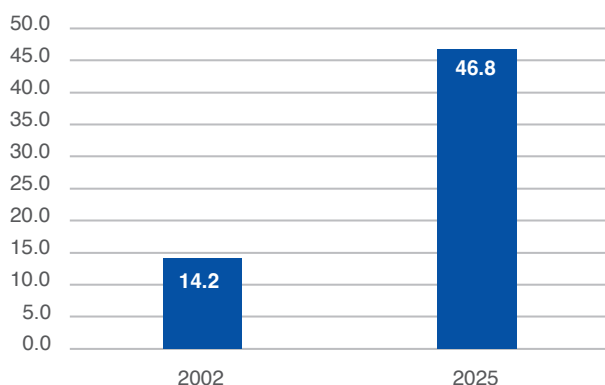
Source: Based on ITC Trademap data

■ EBA
■ GSP
■ TRADE AGREEMENT
■ GSP+

EXPORTS FROM AFRICAN GSP COUNTRIES TO THE EU HAVE MORE THAN TRIPLED SINCE 2002

Exports of the current 37 GSP countries increased from €14 billion in 2002, the year after the current EBA was introduced, to €47 billion in 2025.

EU imports from African GSP countries (€ billion)

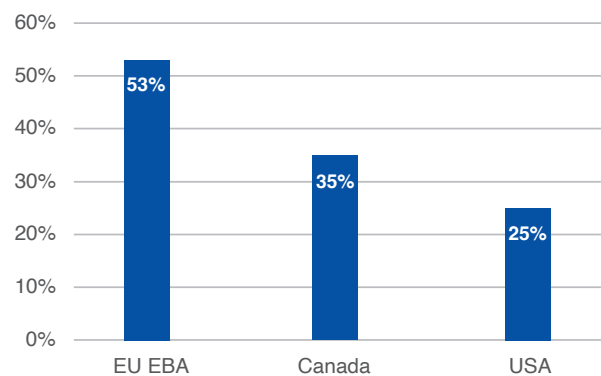


Source: Eurostat data

EXPORTS TO THE EU ARE DIVERSIFIED:

Exports under the EBA comprise many different products, covering 53% of all tariff lines (in 2022) – a much higher share than similar schemes offered by other countries.

Share of importing economy tariff lines under which imports from LDCs took place in 2022 (%)

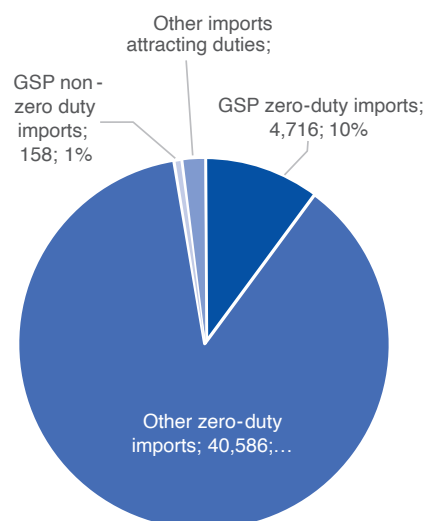


Source: WTO

ALMOST ALL EXPORTS OF AFRICAN GSP BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES TO THE EU ARE DUTY-FREE

In 2025, 97% of all exports of the African GSP countries – worth €45 billion – entered the EU without paying duties.

EU imports from African GSP countries by tariff regime, 2025 (€ million and % of total)

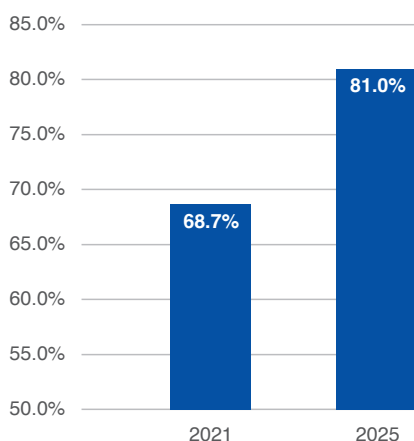


Source: Based on Eurostat

AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE MAKING BETTER USE OF THE GSP PREFERENCES

The preference utilisation rate of African GSP beneficiary countries has increased from 69% in 2021 to 81% in 2025.

Utilisation of EU GSP preferences by African GSP countries, 2021 and 2025



Source: EU GSP statistics.

A CASE IN POINT: MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS MADE IN AFRICA MAKE USE OF THE PREFERENCES



Almost all furniture and toys exports from Rwanda (worth about €800 thousand) and Cabo Verde (worth about €1 million) benefited from GSP preferences in 2025. In Madagascar, exports of machinery, as well as furniture and toys have preference utilisation rates above 50%. Madagascar's duty-free exports of these products under the EBA in 2025 reached almost €7 million.

A CASE IN POINT: CIRCULAR ECONOMY BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA BENEFIT FROM GSP ZERO-DUTY PREFERENCES



iDRATE is a leading PET plastic recycling company in Nigeria. Founded in 2019, its main products are PET flakes, including clear, green and blue flakes, which can be used as raw material for fibres and new food and beverage packaging. It processes more than 10 million bottles per month, collected in Nigeria, and supplies recycled PET to customers in Europe, Asia and America.

Under the GSP, Nigeria benefits from zero-duty access for recycled PET flakes to the EU market; the standard tariff is 6.5%. In a highly price-sensitive market where international freight, collection, processing and logistics already represent substantial costs, the zero-duty preference has a significant impact for the competitiveness of Nigerian recycled materials in the EU market.

iDRATE started exporting recycled PET materials to the EU in 2022. Since then, the EU has become an important strategic market for the company. Using the GSP, the company's strategy is to build long-term relationships with EU buyers and progressively scale their export volumes.

The company notes: "We see preferential access to the EU market under the GSP as an important opportunity for Nigeria's recycling industry. It creates a direct link between our country's waste-management challenges and international demand for recycled raw materials, while also supporting local jobs and investment in recycling infrastructure."

Overall, the EU's imports of PET flakes and similar materials from Nigeria have rapidly increased from almost zero around 2020 to €4.3 million in 2025.

A CASE IN POINT: STRONG UTILISATION OF EBA PREFERENCES BY MAURITANIA'S EXPORTS OF FROZEN OCTOPUS



Mauritania is an example of strong utilisation of EBA preferences. In 2025, the EU's preference-eligible imports from Mauritania amounted to around €577m, of which about €567m – 98% – actually used the preferences. The main beneficiary sector by far is fish and crustaceans, with the main import products being molluscs, especially frozen octopus. Mauritania is the EU's second provider, after Morocco, representing 24% of the EU's total imports of frozen octopus. In 2025, Mauritania exported €414m worth of frozen octopus to the EU, with a preference utilisation rate of 99.5%; this rate has consistently been high for frozen octopus. Without the EBA, Mauritania's frozen octopus exports would face an EU tariff of 8%.

Some benefits of the GSP and EBA for Africa

EU PREFERENCES OFFER LARGE TARIFF SAVINGS

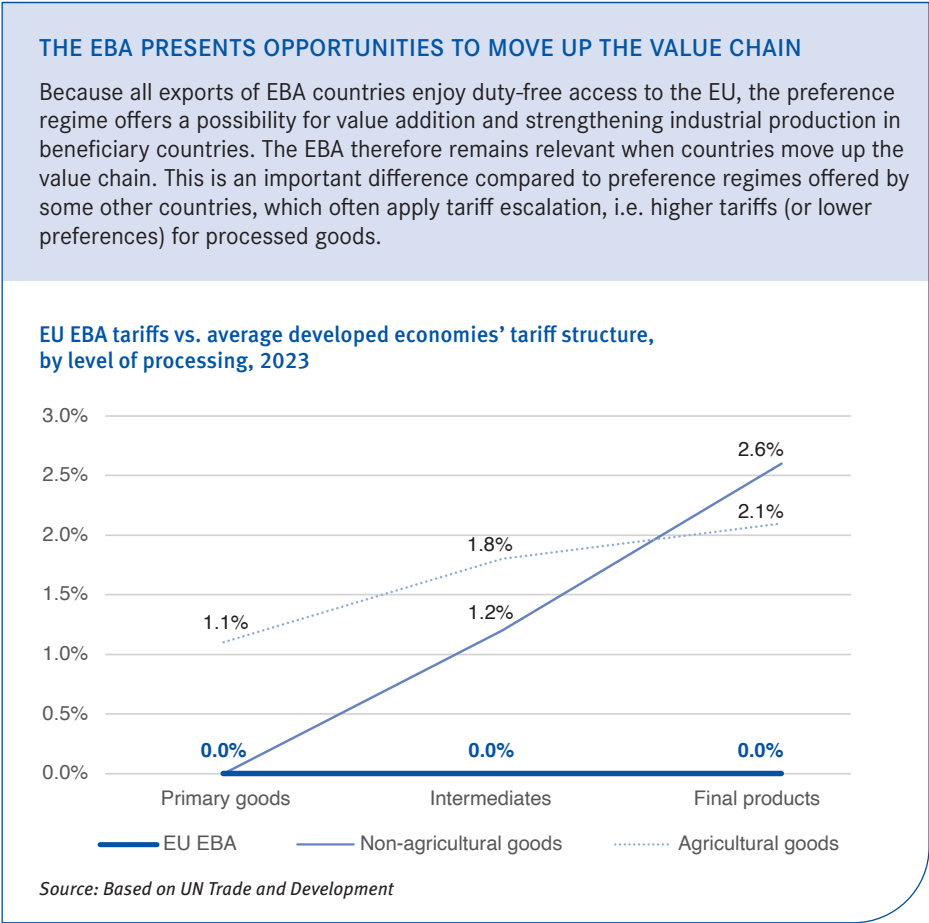
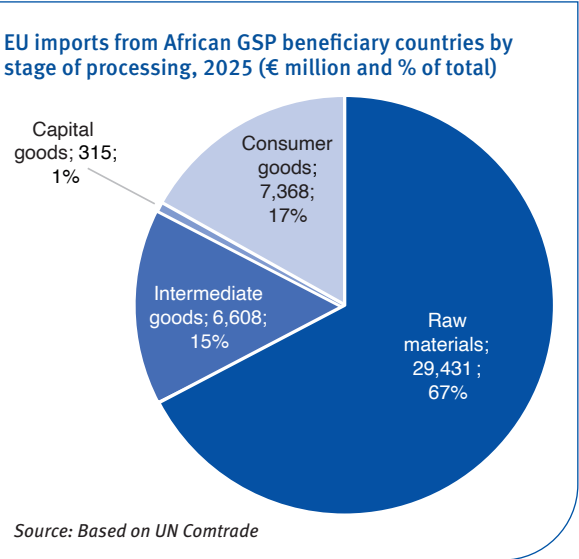
According to UNCTAD, the EBA offers the largest tariff savings in absolute terms compared to similar schemes from the US, Japan and Canada.

€ 213 MILLION

Value of exemption from EU import duties in 2024 for African EBA beneficiaries thanks to duty free access under the EBA.

THE EU MARKET SUPPORTS HIGHER-VALUE EXPORTS

African exports of intermediate, capital and consumer goods to the EU accounted for about one third of total exports to the EU in 2025, up from less than a quarter in 2024. Notably the EBA supports economic diversification as it provides duty free market access also for exports of processed agricultural products and semi-finished and finished manufactures.



A CASE IN POINT: EXPORT EXPANSION AND VALUE ADDITION IN BENIN, DRIVEN BY THE EBA AND AIDED BY SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURE

The Program to Support the Implementation of the Program to Support Sustainable Development in the Agricultural Sector (PADDSA) provided budget support (€55 million) for the implementation of agricultural sector reform and related sectoral policies and was complemented by for institutional support, capacity building and pilot actions for the sustainable development of agriculture (€15 million).

Helped by the reforms supported by PADDSA, the value of agricultural exports increased from €220 million in 2014 to €527 million in 2020 (with 2020 figures down by 10% compared to 2019 due to the pandemic). Products benefiting include cotton and cotton products, cashews, shea butter and pineapples. For example, EU pineapple imports from Benin passed from €0.9 million in 2017 to €6.3 million in 2025. But of particular interest is the cotton value chain: Benin is rapidly transforming into a regional textile hub, exporting “Made in Benin” garments to the EU, driven by the local processing of cotton. Key exports now include high-value apparel like t-shirts, leggings, and home textiles for major European brands, leveraging duty-free, quota-free access under the EBA. Preferential textile and apparel exports were largely absent until 2022 but already exceeded €15 million in 2025.

THE EBA PROVIDES PREDICTABILITY FOR INVESTMENT IN AFRICA

The EBA stands out not only for its automatic eligibility, but also for its absence of an expiry date. This unique feature provides long-term certainty for investors and exporters, offering significant benefits for African beneficiary countries. By removing the need for periodic renewals typical of other GSP schemes, the EBA fosters investor confidence, facilitates strategic investment decisions and encourages the diversification of export structures.

Even when a country graduates from LDC status – recognising their economic growth and development achievements – the EBA provides an additional three-year transition period during which EBA benefits continue to apply. This helps mitigate possible trade flow shocks and allows recently graduated countries to adapt gradually to their new status.

EXPORTERS IN EBA BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES ENJOY GENEROUS RULES OF ORIGIN

Producers can use inputs from third countries and still use the preferences to a larger extent than in other preference regimes. For example, rules of origin for preferential exports of textiles (single transformation instead of double) and agriculture are more liberal, allowing more flexibility in sourcing raw materials.

A CASE IN POINT: RAPID GROWTH OF GARMENTS IMPORTS FROM ETHIOPIA CREATES FORMAL EMPLOYMENT FOR WOMEN



The single transformation rule allows EBA beneficiary countries to use imported fabrics (rather than imported yarns for producing fabrics domestically) for their garment production and exporting these duty-free to the EU. Aided by this rule, the EU's preferential imports of garments from Ethiopia increased by 84% over the period 2022 to 2025, from €56 million to €103 million.

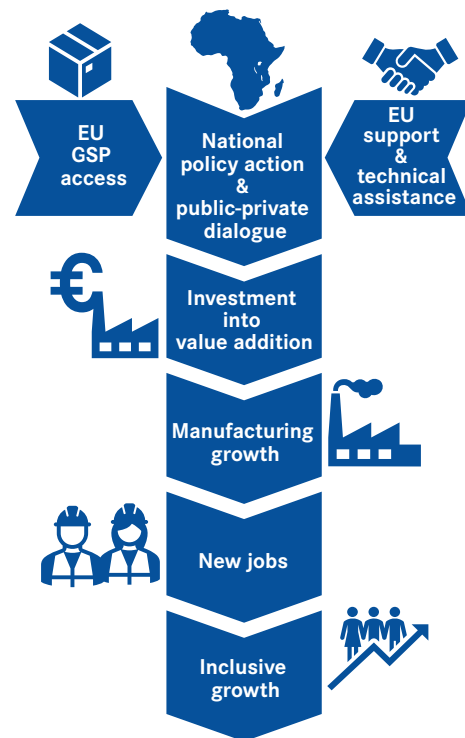
The flexible rules of origin under EBA have helped to create formal employment mostly for women, many of whom migrate from rural regions to find employment in the export-oriented factories. According to the Ethiopian government, in 2026 about 40,000 workers in Ethiopia, more than 80% being women, are employed in garment production destined for European countries.

SMALL TRADERS CAN ALSO BENEFIT FROM THE PREFERENCES

There is sometimes the impression that compliance with the requirements for making use of the GSP preferences – such as proving origin – is too burdensome or costly. In fact, for exports of up to €6,000 (value of origination products in one consignment) exporters can self-declare origin, and exporters registered in the Registered Exporter System (REX) can also self-declare origin for larger consignments. This reduces compliance costs and times.

THE GSP WORKS TOGETHER WITH EU SUPPORT TO DRIVE INDUSTRIALISATION

Technical assistance provided by the EU to EBA countries further supports the creation of manufacturing industries and value addition to raw materials, thereby creating more jobs and contributing to equitable and inclusive development.



A CASE IN POINT: EAC MARKET ACCESS UPGRADE PROGRAMME



The Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP), now in its second phase (running from 2023 to 2027), is a regional development initiative that aims to contribute to the economic growth of the East African Community (EAC). More specifically, it aims to support increased exports of agribusiness and horticultural products, promote regional integration and access to the European market. MARKUP assists small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda by targeting specific agricultural commodities (avocado, cocoa, coffee, spices, tea and horticulture).

Some achievements of MARKUP phase I:

- More than USD 16 million in sales and exports generated for at least 115 companies
- USD 1 million in investment for at least 70 MSMEs in the EAC
- More than 43,000 indirect beneficiaries (farmers, etc.) in the EAC
- Facilitated USD 12 million in finance for more than 50 companies
- 42 BSOs in the EAC reported having improved their performance because of MARKUP technical assistance, including increased sustainable finances, and financing environmentally friendly, climate-smart offerings.

More information:



Access2Markets website: detailed information for traders.



GSP Hub Africa page: links to country-specific information.



Global Gateway in Sub-Saharan Africa



EU-Africa Partnership



Disclaimer: This factsheet was financed by the European Commission and prepared by BKP Economic Advisors GmbH (BKP). Any views expressed in this document are those of BKP and do not represent an official view of the European Union. Prepared October 2026.