# FOCAC 8 AT ONE:

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

A LOOK AT THE TRADE FACILITATION INITIATIVES

# Table of Contents

# 1. Introduction

The Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) remains the longest and the most important standing mechanism for cooperation between China and Africa. FOCAC was established in 2000 at the request of African governments for more coordination in their bilateral relationships with China, there is a belief and narrative that FOCAC itself has strengthened the cooperation between China and African countries. FOCAC meetings over the years have resulted in different initiatives and mechanisms (Table 1).

Table 1: Key Trade outcomes from FOCAC meetings

| FOCAC MEETINGS | YEAR | MAJOR OUTCOME(S) |
|---|---|---|
| FOCAC 1 | 2000 | • Expansion of trade, investment, joint projects, and increased cooperation in the fields of agriculture, transportation, medical care.<br>• Proposed the establishment of China-Africa Joint Business Council as a mechanism for the further promotion of trade. |
| FOCAC 2 | 2003 | • China announced its decision to grant zero-tariff treatment to exports from least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa. |
| FOCAC 3 | 2006 | • The number of DFQF eligible export items was increased from 190 to 440.<br>• Setting up of 10 Agricultural Demonstration Centres across Africa.<br>• US$5 billion China-Africa Development Fund announced. |
| FOCAC 4 | 2009 | • China promised to gradually grant tariff-free treatment to 95 percent of all exports from African LDCs.<br>• Increase of ADTCs this to 30 (from the 10 promised in FOCAC 2) |
| FOCAC 5 | 2012 | • Grant tariff-free treatment increased from 95% percent of all exports from African LDCs number to 97%. |
| FOCAC 6 | 2015 | • US$35 billion financial commitment |
| FOCAC 7 | 2018 | • US$5 billion special fund for financing imports from Africa. |
| FOCAC 8 | 2021 | • Creation of Green lanes to improve supply chains.<br>• US$ 300 billion in total imports from Africa to China by 2024. |

In 2021, the eighth FOCAC Ministerial Conference (FOCAC 8) was held under uniquely difficult circumstances – the Covid- 19 pandemic – the biggest heath crisis facing the world at the time and was simultaneously driving the world economy into a recession. FOCAC 8 outcomes focused on trade, finance, agriculture, climate change, and security. A 2035 Vision for China-Africa Cooperation was also agreed - the first mid- to long-term cooperation plan jointly developed by China and Africa, including trade commitments.

While trade was not a new area of focus, from an African perspective this was the first FOCAC since the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a key flagships project of as the African Union's Agenda 2063. FOCAC 8 provided an opportunity for African and Chinese leaders to consider how Chinese trade relations might compliment and boost the AfCFTA. Despite the various commitments under previous FOCACs, by FOCAC 8 most African countries maintained large trade deficits with China. While this is not unusual (African countries have trade deficits with most G20 countries)[1] given China's large manufacturing base, it meant many African countries were heavily reliant on Chinese imports. The challenges of this trade imbalance were thrown into stark relief in the wake of Covid-19, as global supply chains slowed, and costs rose. In turn, trade facilitation measures to reduce trade imbalances between African countries and China become even more essential.

These brief analyses three specific trade facilitation measures announced at FOCAC 8, and whether they have been implemented or had impact over the past year and asks whether they are enough. The analysis proceeds as follows. Part 2 provides context to the challenges regarding Africa-China trade prior FOCAC 8 to explain the importance of the three trade pledges. Part 3 focuses on the green lanes and its implications for African producers accessing the Chinese market. Part 4 looks at the growth in demand for African goods due to the online shopping festivals on Chinese e-commerce platforms Part 5 discusses the financing to support African exports to

[1] Development Reimagined, What Impact is the G20 having on African Trade? Exclusive Analysis, 2019, Development Reimagined. Available at https://developmentreimagined.com/2019/06/24/is-the-g20-helping-to-increase-african-trade/

China. Finally, Part 6 makes conclusions and recommendations. The report is based in desk top research, and analysis of the current empirical data.

## 2. Trade Challenges

FOCAC 8 was held in the wake of the Covid- 19 pandemic, which had caused health and economic challenges for African countries. The impact of Covid-19 also heavily impacted Africa-China trade specifically.

In terms of trade between African countries, the pandemic exposed further the challenges that African businesses have experienced in their quest to access the Chinese market. Research shows that over the past decade, as China's ever-increasing consumer market has developed a growing appetite for unique foreign products, and in particular, food and beverage products, including from Africa, this demand has created opportunities for many African economies. Nevertheless, Africa is still one of China's smallest trading partners, accounting for only around 4% of China's global trade. Although Africa's agriculture trade with China has grown at an average annual rate of 17.3% from 2000 to 2018, reaching US $6.92 billion, this remains just over a third of the US $18.48 billion that China imported from the ASEAN region in 2018. Trade of value-added products is even less, and apart from roasted coffee and South African wine, few other value-added African products in China are known or popular.

African products face seven key challenges when accessing the Chinese market, particularly:

1. **There are supply side constraints**: African countries face challenges in developing sectors – from agriculture to textiles to vehicle manufacturing – especially with the majority of Africa's agricultural sector being comprised of smallholder farmers, whose individual ability to access finance to invest in value-addition, packaging and/or break into large international markets, such as China, is limited.

2. **Overcoming non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** For example, China's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS), which fresh agricultural products must successfully meet before accessing the Chinese market can be tough to meet. For instance, some SPS requirements require purchasing certain technology (equipment), pesticides or medicines to meet the standards. For instance, **it took more than two years for Kenya's avocado farmers to comply with Chinese standards.**[2]

3. **Some tariffs remain high**: For example, for certain key African agriproducts like cashew nuts and cocoa beans **tariffs are as high as 30%.**

4. **African businesses are often unfamiliar with China's specific customs procedures:** For example, the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) number, specific labelling and packaging requirements, the inspection certificate of the AQSIQ (General Administration of the PRC for Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine) and other licenses of safety and quality. While many of these are similar in nature to those required to export elsewhere, for China these must be generated specifically – **those used in one market can't be then used in China.**

5. **There are logistical challenges in exporting products to China including limited and costly transport options:** The low added-value of African products can itself be a constraint to Africa-China trade cooperation as raw agriproducts often take up more space and weight in containers and are more vulnerable to

[2] Victor Amadala, Avocado Farmers hopeful as First Export hits Chinese Market, The Star, 2022. Available at: https://www.the-star.co.ke/business/kenya/2022-08-02-avocado-farmers-hopeful-as-first-export-hits-chinese-market/

international price fluctuations. Most African countries still have immature cold-chain logistic capabilities, which limits their ability to export fresh products.

6. **Most Chinese consumers are not aware of what products Africa has to offer:** This is especially true when it comes to value-added products. **Most Chinese consumers favour products from regions, such as Europe, Asia, and the USA.** Thus, despite the appeal of African products, there is relatively low demand for them at the moment, and especially without additional marketing and due to the fact that African firms have weak packaging, branding and marketing capabilities.

7. **Language barriers compound all of the above**: Most African governments and businesses do not have Chinese language resources available to research, discuss and implement all the above, and have limited Knowledge of China's digital infrastructure.

Considering the above, all FOCAC 8 pledges on trade are important, especially if they are targeted at overcoming the key challenges that prevent African SMEs from exporting more goods to China and in turn contribute to boosting their domestic economies. To date, three particular trade facilitation commitments from FOCAC 8 have shown signs of been implemented, an assessment of which we now turn.

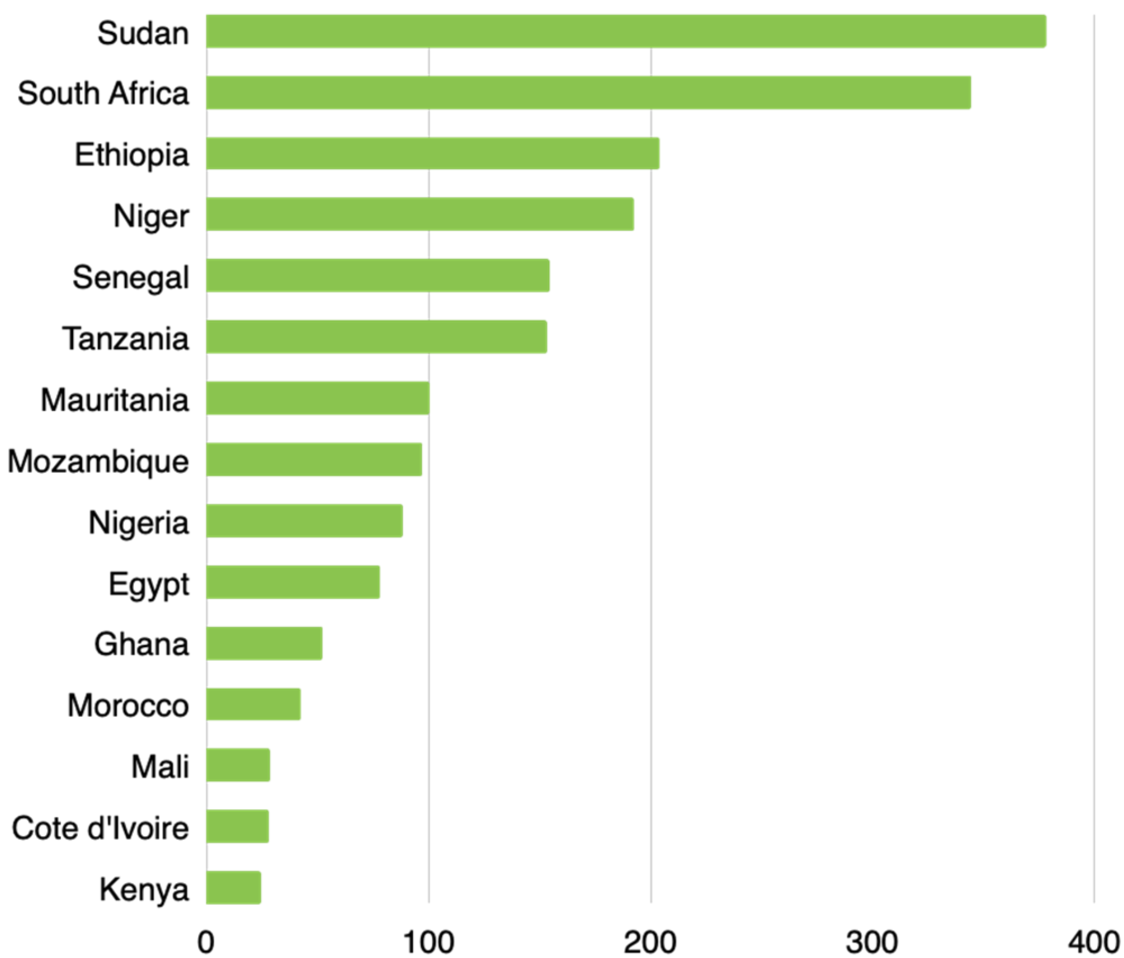
# 3. FOCAC 8 Trade Commitment 1: Have China's New "Green Lanes for Agricultural Products" Worked?

According to China's White Paper on China-Africa Cooperation published in 2021, over 350 kinds of agricultural products from Africa can be exported to China. In addition, in the FOCAC 8's Dakar Action Plan, Beijing announced the opening of "Green Lanes" to increase African agricultural exports to China by "speeding up the inspection and quarantine procedures for agriproducts, and further increasing the scope of products enjoying zero-tariff treatment for the least developed countries (LDCs) having diplomatic relations with China."[3] Green lanes are intended to help fulfil another of FOCAC8's pledges – "to reach US$ 300 billion in total imports from Africa to China by 2024, compared to US $5.03 billion worth of agricultural imports from Africa in 2021." Also, at FOCAC 8, China announced duty free treatment of 98% of products from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Africa, an increase of 1% of products from a commitment in 2012.

[3]FOCAC, FOCAC Dakar Action Plan, FOCAC, 2022, Available at: http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/202201/t20220124_10632444.htm

From 2015-2021, the top African agricultural exporting countries to China have been Sudan, South Africa, and Ethiopia (Figure 1), with the most popular agricultural exports, including oleaginous fruit, coffee, ground nuts, mollusks, and frozen fish. Even though overall, a trade deficit still exists between China and African countries, this deficit has been decreasing over time, and the newly announced Green Lanes initiative seeks to further decrease this imbalance (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Top 10 African countries exporting agricultural exports to China 2015-2021.

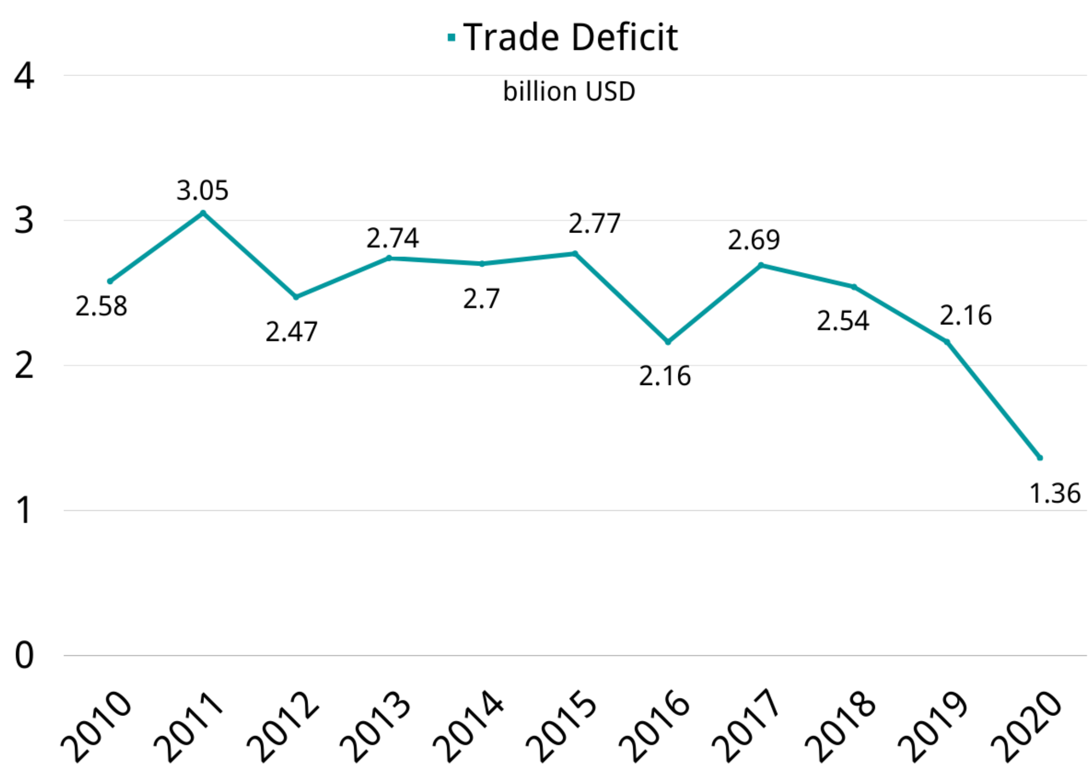



Source: UNCOMTRADE

Specific actions that underline Green Lanes include:

1. Prioritising African agricultural products for risk assessment.
2. Accelerating the risk assessment process for the same product from different countries or similar products from the same country.
3. Simplifying the Chinese market registration process for enterprises that produce the relevant products.

Figure 2: China-Africa Agricultural Trade Deficit 2010-2022.




Source: UNCOMTRADE

It seems that these lanes are having some impact. Since FOCAC 8, several African agricultural products have newly come into China. For example, Kenya signed a phytosanitary agreement with China in January 2022, which allowed Kenya to export fresh avocados to China for the first time. The Chinese government also reduced tariffs on the avocados from 30% to 7%. 15 Kenyan traders of Haas avocados were approved, and this impacted Kenya's overall horticultural export values, which grew by 3.9% in 2021. The first batch of 45 tons of fresh Kenyan avocados arrived in China in August 2022. By November 2022, Kenya had exported 1,700 tons of avocado to China[4]. Because avocados attract a higher price[5], it has been reported that this relatively small number of avocados compared to Kenya's total annual capacity of around 80,000 tons[6] nevertheless earned Kenya around US $55 million (7 billion shillings) within three months[7], illustrating the significance of this kind of market access if the momentum is maintained.

Similarly, during Tanzania's President Hassan's November 2022 visit to China, Tanzania signed two agreements that include a protocol on inspection, quarantine, and veterinary sanitary requirements for the export of wild aquatic products from Tanzania to China, and a protocol of phytosanitary requirements for the export of fresh avocados like Kenya. The 98% duty-free treatment provides a strong incentive for Tanzanian avocado exporters. Other agricultural products that have already benefited from 'green lanes' include citrus from South Africa, sesame from Tanzania and dry chili from Rwanda[8].

As China opens up further in 2023 after a period of Covid-19 restrictions, enabling easier inspection of more agricultural products from African countries, alongside likely increasing consumer demand, we can expect to see more similar agreements signed

[4] Gerald Andae, Avocado exports to China earn Kenya Sh7bn in three months, Business Daily Africa, 2022, Available at: https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/markets/commodities/avocado-exports-to-china-earn-kenya-sh7bn-in-three-months-4014462

[5] The Standard, Kenya gains fresh access to China avocado market, 2022, The Standard, Available at: https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/farmkenya/market/article/2001452586/kenya-gains-fresh-access-to-china-avocado-market

[6] Juan Carlos, What are the main trends of Kenyan avocado exports, 2022, Tridge, https://www.tridge.com/market-guides/posts/what-are-the-main-trends-of-kenyan-avocado-exports

[7] Gerald Andae, Avocado exports to China earn Kenya Sh7bn in three months, 2022, Business Daily Africa, Available at: https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/markets/commodities/avocado-exports-to-china-earn-kenya-sh7bn-in-three-months-4014462

[8] Shanghai Customs District, 绿色通道"成果显现非洲输华农产品络绎不绝, 2022, Shanghai Customs District, Available at: http://nanning.customs.gov.cn/shanghai_customs/423446/423448/4600012/index.html

between African countries and China and more growth in agricultural exports from Africa to China.

That said, there are still many structural challenges that are preventing the Green Lanes from reaching their full potential and widely benefiting African traders and farmers, as explained in Part 2 of this report.

So, what can African countries and the Chinese government do to realize the potential of Green Lanes to enhance agricultural trade between China and Africa?

First, African governments and agri-exporters should familiarize themselves with the phytosanitary standards of China regarding agricultural imports and encourage the Chinese government to continue increasing access to the Chinese market.

Second, they should seek domestic and foreign investment into technologies that can process agri-products, decrease agricultural residue, and improve their packaging/branding so they can be imported into China.

Third, African embassies and brands can collaborate with Chinese marketing experts to increase the appeal and reputation of African agricultural products in China.

Beyond signing more SPS agreements with African countries, decreasing tariffs, or reducing trade barriers, the Chinese government can provide more technical training to African exporters to help them meet China's import regulations. Additionally, Chinese investors can help boost African countries' production and agro-processing and packaging and branding capacities to make

African agriproducts more exportable to China and resilient to international price fluctuations of commodities.

This will be particularly crucial to initiate as soon as possible in countries that have already announced that they will ban the export of raw products to all destinations, and these products are already consumed in China – for instance Benin.

Some of the proposed US $10 billion could be targeted towards all these actions on both the African and Chinese sides.

# 4. FOCAC 8 Trade Commitment 2: Did new online shopping festivals bring in new African products, brands, and trade into China?

The pledge to create online shopping festivals and campaigns to promote African products and brands was announced at FOCAC 8 to increase Chinese consumer demand for value-added exports, and ultimately, to help fulfil the pledge “to reach US$ 300 billion in total imports from Africa to China by 2024.”

This is because most exports from Africa to China are still made up of unprocessed, lower-value products, such as, minerals, metals, agricultural products, crude oil, and agricultural products from a handful of countries. In fact, South Africa, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zambia accounted for 71% of Africa’s exports to China in 2021 of mainly minerals and oil.

For this reason, up until recently, most Chinese consumers have been unaware of what value-added products Africa has to offer. This is a missed opportunity for African brands looking for new export markets given China has one the fastest growing middle-class populations in the world, and one that is keen to spend their disposal income on foreign products. Thus, the promotion of value-added African products, at this moment in time, is arguably more important than the sales volume to increase demand over time.

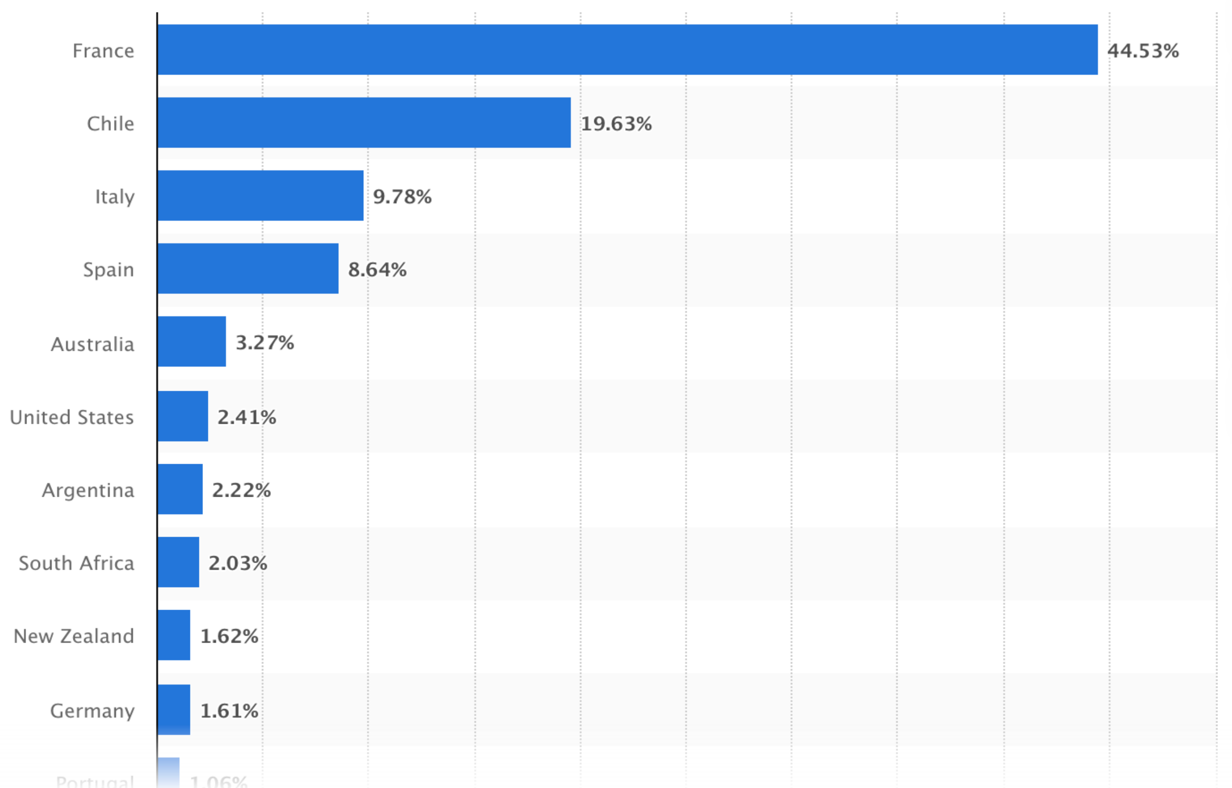
To date, the African value-added, agricultural-based products that have entered the market are roasted coffee, wine, dried mango, and roasted nuts. Their entry has partly been subsidized by the Chinese government. To date, meaning overall exports of these value-added products from Africa to China have increased.

For example, China is quickly becoming a main destination for Ethiopian coffee as both the volume and value has been rapidly growing each year. In 2021, Ethiopia exported 11,936 metric tons of coffee to China, earning US $65.31 million, up by 84% year on year. Similarly, South Africa's wine exports to China have more than doubled over the past two years.[9]

However, there is still much work to be done, as even these imports, such as Ethiopian coffee and South African wine, lag far behind other regions' exports to China. For example, French, Chilean and Italian wine still dominate China's wine imports (Figure 3) and China's coffee imports by Malaysia, Vietnam and Japan.

[9]Wines of South Africa, South African wine industry statistics, 2021, Wines of South Africa, Available at: https://www.wosa.co.za/The-Industry/Statistics/SA-Wine-Industry-Statistics/

Figure 3: China's 2021 top wine imports by country.




Source: Statista

Other countries have been promoting their exports to Chinese consumers consistently for a much longer period. Africa's value-added exports, on the other hand, have only recently started to be sold and promoted largely through B2B channels, which has reduced Chinese consumers' awareness of and exposure to these products. Thus, online shopping festivals and campaigns to sell and promote African products and brands can play a key role in increasing demand.

The "4th Brand and Quality Online Shopping Festival and Quality African Products Online Shopping Festival," the result of the pledge at FOCAC 8, was held from 28 April to 12 May 2022. During this festival, more than 100,000 African brands were reportedly showcased on over 300 Chinese e-commerce platforms including the largest platforms Tmall, Taobao and JD, and events held in several Free Trade Zones focused on Africa-China trade in Hunan, Zhejiang, and Anhui provinces were livestreamed on Douyin (China's version of TikTok), WeChat, CCTV and CGTN. In principle, this was the biggest online shopping festival for African products and brands in China in terms of the number of products, brands, e-commerce platforms, media campaigns and activities involved, as well as its reach across China and East Africa. However, only products and brands that have already entered the market prior to the festival – namely, South African wine, tea, roasted coffee, Rwandan chili oil, roasted nuts and dried fruits were the focus of the activities. Both African and Chinese owned companies or brands of African products were able to participate, although the majority of participants were Chinese owned.

The online shopping festival was officially overseen by China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and designed to "expand domestic demand, coordinate the work of epidemic prevention and control and online consumption promotion, and to promote the continuous recovery and upgrading of consumption, and better serve the construction of new development pattern."

The events and activities included:

- Chinese and African Influencers and African students introducing the products and brands during live-streaming events.
- Offline exhibitions of value-added African products where Chinese businesspersons were invited to facilitate business deals.
- Broadcasting of the brands' promotional videos on social and media channels.
- A coffee tasting and business matchmaking event.
- Sales festivals on and discount coupons for selected products on e-commerce platforms and food ordering apps, such as Meituan.
- Livestreaming of Chinese consumer good experts introducing products from Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and South Africa.
- Ceremonies and broadcasting of speeches by high-level MOFCOM representatives, the African Ambassadors to China, Chinese Ambassadors to African countries and the leaders of the Provincial Department of Commerce.

The shopping festival reportedly "resulted in high sales volumes and awareness raising of African products across China," although exact figures are unknown. Since the festival, exports of products, such South African wine and Ethiopian coffee have continued to rise, which suggests an impact could have been made. For products such as Kenya's Java House roasted coffee, roasted nuts and chili oil that were featured in the more specialised and high-profile events (influencers introducing African products during livestream events), these achieved more success and become best sellers on Chinese e-commerce platforms, such as Kiliselect.

Foreign brands that are new to the Chinese market can spend a fortune on marketing and advertising given China's consumer market is vast and extremely competitive. This festival was a cost-free way for African brands to have their products advertised to consumers across China and therefore an unmissable opportunity.

So, what next, for both the African and Chinese side?

First, despite successes, the drawback of such shopping and promotion festivals is that they are intermittent, whereas effective advertising needs consistency. Regular advertising of these products and the e-commerce platforms on which they are sold, needs to be carried out throughout the year to create consumer demand for these products into the future.

The products also could have and could yet be advertised on a wider number of platforms. For instance, apps such as "Little Red Book (Xiao Hong Shu)" – China's cross between Instagram and Pinterest – should also be utilized. On Little Red Book, users and influencers post pictures and videos using and reviewing products resulting in trusted user-generated content, word of mouth advertising, and online community-building. It is a very useful platform for foreign brands to introduce new products into the Chinese market and gain a following.

Furthermore, the shopping festivals could start to diversify the products they promote beyond food and beverage items, for example, organic skincare and fashion items, both of which are popular luxury items in Chinese market and which Africa has many high-quality brands in both sectors. This would also increase the participation of

African brands in the festival and therefore extend the benefits of trade more directly to smallholders and more widely across African countries.

Finally, MOFCOM could also consider inviting African cross-border e-commerce stores to also partner and participate in the shopping festival, which would enable a larger number and variety of African brands to promote their products in China, including brands that have not yet even considered entering the Chinese market.

# 5. FOCAC 8 Trade Commitment 3: How is the US$10 billion of Trade Financing Been Spent?

At FOCAC 8, China committed US$10 billion worth of credit lines to African financial institutions with a special focus on SMEs to support African exports entering the Chinese market. However, China did not reveal exactly how these funds will be disbursed. In principle, this commitment presents a crucial opportunity for African SMEs to gain support to tackle several of the barriers to their sustained entry into the Chinese market. SMEs can be described as one of the significant drivers of economic growth in low- and middle-income countries. On the African continent, SMEs account for almost 90% of companies while they employ 60% of the workforce in the formal sector. If the informal sector is included, this percentage would be far greater.

It is therefore unsurprising that supporting African SMEs is a top priority for African governments. However, African SMEs are constricted in their pursuit to expand. The greatest obstacle is access to finance and technology.

> As of 2021, around 80% of SMEs in Sub-Saharan Africa lack bank financing contributing to a huge finance gap of US$330 billion, according to the World Bank.[10]

This financial gap prevents many SMEs from both producing and exporting quality, value-added exports – including to China.

Based on our research and work supporting African brands with entering and breaking the Chinese market, our understanding is that the US$10 billion trade financing has to date been spent on supporting the implementation of a range of activities, but evidence of exact spending is unknown.

First, funds could have been spent on the Green Lanes, including funding for the creation of a direct flight path from Kenya to Changsha – although fresh avocados were shipped to China not flown - and an advanced customs procedure.

Second, funds were likely spent to support the online shopping festivals and promotion campaigns for African products and brands, as well as a number of (mostly online) business match-making events between African SMEs and Chinese business partners in 2022.

Third, it is also likely that some funds have been promised (although not necessarily spent as yet) to provide/subsidise loans for Chinese firms to invest in increasing production of certain products such as soybeans from Tanzania or fish farming from or dried chills from Rwanda, which already had market access prior to FOCAC 8 or gained access more recently but have yet to scale.

These are all useful and important activities for funding, however, given that one of the greatest challenges that prevents African SMEs from exporting more value-added products to China is a lack of finance to process and prepare their products for the Chinese market, channeling additional funding through African organisations and financial institutions could ensure African SMEs directly benefit from the funds, rather

[10]IFC, IFC SME Finance forum target solutions to Africa's $331 billion SME finance gap, 2018, IFC, Available at: https://pressroom.ifc.org/all/pages/PressDetail.aspx?ID=17513

than just Chinese firms, and a wider impact of the funds beyond the raw agricultural sectors and/or food and beverage sectors. Furthermore, channelings support through fintech platforms could also be of interest, especially given that it is estimated that across Africa, 46% of citizens do not have access to a bank account at all, including business owners.[11]

Doing so would not have to create extra bureaucracy for China. For instance, the principal financier of the US $10 billion could be CDB, CAFIC or CAD Fund and their role would be to oversee disbursement to one or more identified African fund managers, such as AfriExim Bank, Trade and Development Bank, and so on.

There is also the potential to create special instruments to target certain challenges faced by African firms in entering the Chinese market, for example a lack of equipment and technology to add value to or package their products. A qualified Chinese entity could for instance, register qualified Chinese Manufacturers of Equipment and in partnership with one or more African fund managers - – both local banks but also potentially other financiers such as fintech platforms, operating in one or more African countries – target and seek SMEs for loan applications to access relevant equipment from approved suppliers, and conduct due diligence and monitoring of the borrowing SMEs.

Other portions of funding could be channeled directly to well-established regulatory organisations such as Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service and other similar organisations across the continent to help agriculture producers to build capacity to meet China's export requirements.

Finally, another portion of the pledged finance will also be needed to consistently promote these products directly to Chinese consumers, as well as to potential Chinese distribution partners – including hotels, retail outlets and more. Now that China has relaxed COVID19 controls, match-making events and tours in China as well as on the

[11]Talent2Africa, The access to financial services in Africa, 2019, Talent2Africa, Available at: https://talent2africa.com/financial-services-in-africa/ bi

African continent – including linked to tourism - could also be significantly more fruitful.

# 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The three major trade facilitation focused FOCAC 8 commitments were important, especially in the context of the AfCFTA which should not only stimulate increased intra-African trade but also lead to a shifting of Africa's global trade positioning over time. The analysis above has explained how the three measures are starting to overcome supply chain, demand, and non-tariff barriers to African trade with China. However, the analysis not only shows that these three measures are not enough on their own, but across the board they all could be implemented in a way that more directly benefits African entities, and a wider set of products. Specifically, the following five recommendations for immediate action jump out from the analysis:

- The first recommendation is to expand the scope of the products that are heavily promoted during the e-commerce shopping festivals and then can access the Green Lanes.
- Secondly, is increased financing for African producers to obtain, install and use the technology needed to meet China's SPS requirements and invest in the processing of agricultural products within Africa.
- Third, increased funding to expand trade enhancing measures such as creating more free storage space in Chinese ports for African products and more agencies that can support African exporters with registering

for their GACC numbers and improving their branding to match Chinese consumers' tastes.

- Fourth, African countries should increase information exchange especially as regards China's standards and make this information available for the exporters who are accessing the Chinese market.
- Fifth, channelling funding through African financial institutions and fintech platforms to increase efficiency and reach a wider variety and number of African SMEs.

As we move towards FOCAC 9, which will be held in China in 2024, it will be crucial to continue to improve and assess the trade facilitation as well as other agreed trade commitments and ensure they all deliver real win-win cooperation.