U.S. Trade with sub-Saharan Africa, January-March 2012

In the first quarter of 2012, U.S. total trade (exports plus imports) with sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) reached $17 billion, a decrease of 24 percent compared to the same period in 2011. While U.S. exports to the world increased by 8.5 percent, U.S. exports to SSA remained constant at $5 billion (mostly composed of machinery). This January-March quarter, the top five African destinations for U.S. products were South Africa (37th U.S. export partner out of 236), Nigeria (45th U.S. export partner), Angola (66th U.S. export partner), Ghana (71st U.S. export partner), and Kenya (73rd U.S. export partner). Exports to South Africa decreased by 13 percent and to Nigeria by 10 percent. Exports to Angola increased by 65 percent (increase in U.S. exports of electrical machinery), to Ghana by 39 percent (increase in U.S. exports of machinery) to Kenya by 71 percent (increase in U.S. exports of aircraft and fertilizers), to Cote d'Ivoire by 201 percent (increase in U.S. exports of machinery), to the Democratic Republic of Congo by 59 percent (increase in U.S. exports of meat), to Zambia by 65 percent (increase in U.S. exports of machinery and rubber), to Liberia by 33 percent (increase in U.S. exports of machinery), and to Botswana by 290 percent (increase in U.S. exports of chemicals).

This first 2012 quarter, U.S. imports from SSA decreased by 31 percent, falling to $12 billion. This decrease was mostly due to a 38 percent decrease in U.S. mineral fuel and oil imports and a 26 percent decrease of precious stones and metals imports from SSA. U.S. imports (mostly oil) from Nigeria dropped by 53 percent and from Gabon by 81 percent. However, U.S. imports from Niger and from Cameroon doubled. Similarly, U.S. imports from Tanzania increased by 138 percent (increase in U.S. imports of precious stones and apparel), from Zambia by 66 percent (increase in U.S. imports of metal), from Liberia by 64 percent (increase in U.S. import of rubber), from Cape Verde by 2,226 percent (increase in U.S. imports of electrical machinery). U.S. imports from Malawi increased by 80 percent (increase in U.S. imports of tobacco), from Madagascar increased by 44 percent (increase in U.S. import of coffee & spices), and from Zimbabwe by 414 percent (increase in U.S. imports of iron and steel). Finally, U.S. imports from Rwanda doubled (increase in U.S. imports of coffee & spices) to the detriment of a 39 percent decrease of U.S. imports of coffee & spices from Ethiopia. This quarter, U.S. imports from SSA originated, for the most part, in Angola, Nigeria, South Africa, and Chad.

In the first three months of 2012, AGOA imports totaled $8.7 billion, 26 percent less than in the same period in 2011, mainly due to a 29 percent decrease in petroleum product imports.[i] Petroleum products continued to account for the largest portion of AGOA imports with an 87 percent share of overall AGOA imports. *With these fuel products excluded, AGOA imports – almost exclusively dominated by raw materials - were $1.12 billion, increasing by 7 percent as compared to the first three months of 2011.* AGOA imports of chemical and related products increased by 29 percent. However, AGOA imports of minerals and metals decreased by 13 percent, imports of agricultural products by 45 percent, imports of textiles and apparel by 7 percent. Finally, the top five AGOA beneficiary countries were Nigeria, Angola, South Africa, Chad, and the Republic of Congo. Other leading AGOA beneficiaries included Gabon, Cameroon, Lesotho, Kenya, and Mauritius.

[i] Note that AGOA imports are imports for consumption, while all other import figures are general imports. Imports for consumption include only those goods as they enter the U.S. economy for consumption. General imports include all goods as they cross the U.S. border, including those destined for bonded warehouses or foreign trade zones.

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