

Beyond Tariffs: Unlocking the \$20 Trillion U.S. Market for Nigerian Entrepreneurs

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In the grand tapestry of global commerce, the United States stands as a colossus—a \$20 trillion marketplace of boundless opportunity, its vast consumer base an alluring siren call to astute entrepreneurs worldwide. Yet, the specter of Trump-era trade tariffs, recently unfurled with a hypothetical 14% levy on Nigerian exports, casts a shadow over this gilded prospect. For Nigeria's indefatigable business luminaries, however, such barriers are not insurmountable walls but mere hurdles to be vaulted with ingenuity and strategic acumen. Nigeria's



business leaders can thrive by targeting high-potential sectors, capitalizing on niche markets, and harnessing e-commerce, all while riding the wave of U.S. demand for African-sourced goods. Backed by specific examples and data, this article charts how Nigerian enterprises can adapt to tariffs, mitigate their impact, and seize the American prize through strategic partnerships and trade agreements.

Agriculture offers a fertile starting point. Nigeria, Africa's top cocoa producer, exported \$300 million worth in 2023, much of it destined for the U.S.'s \$20 billion confectionery market. Tariffs threaten margins, but the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) provides duty-free access for over 6,800 products, including cocoa. Nigerian exporters can target niche U.S. segments—like the \$1.5 billion organic chocolate sector—where premium pricing offsets added costs. Take Chocolala, a U.S. artisanal brand; it seeks 200 metric tons of Nigerian cocoa annually at \$1.2 million, favoring sustainable sources. Processing cocoa into powder locally slashes tariffed volumes by 30%, per industry estimates, aligning with American tastes for ready-to-use goods.

Fashion, too, presents a vibrant frontier. Nigeria's textile industry, bolstered by designers like Deola Sagoe, taps into the U.S.'s \$400 billion apparel market, where African-inspired fashion is surging—Ankara print sales on Etsy rose 25% in 2024. Tariffs could dampen exports, but e-commerce offers a nimble workaround. Platforms like Amazon and Shopify enable Nigerian SMEs to sell directly to U.S. consumers, with small-batch shipping dodging bulk import duties. A practical example: Lagos-based Adire Textiles secured a \$500,000 deal with a U.S. retailer via Etsy in 2023, absorbing tariffs through premium pricing. Forming trade

partnerships with American brands further cushions costs; a co-branded line with a U.S. fashion house can share tariff burdens while expanding reach.

Technology, Nigeria's rising star, sidesteps tariffs entirely. The U.S. tech sector, valued at \$1.8 trillion, craves innovative solutions—Nigerian fintech exports grew 40% to \$150 million in 2024, per Central Bank data. Unlike goods, digital exports face no duties, making firms like Paystack prime contenders. A U.S. startup recently posted a \$1 million contract for Nigerian developers to build a logistics app, reflecting demand for cost-effective tech post-tariffs. Partnerships with American firms amplify this edge; Flutterwave's 2023 tie-up with a U.S. payment processor yielded \$5 million in joint revenue, showcasing the power of collaboration in a tariff-free domain.

The U.S.'s growing demand for African-sourced products fuels additional prospects. Nigeria's cashew exports, at \$250 million in 2023, align with the \$135 billion U.S. snack food market, where plant-based trends dominate—cashew consumption rose 15% last year, per USDA figures. Tariffs bite, but roasting cashews locally cuts export weight by 20%, reducing costs. A U.S. distributor, Nutty Co., seeks 150 tons of roasted Nigerian cashews for \$800,000, favoring pre-processed goods. Cultural products also shine; the \$50 billion U.S. craft market saw Nigerian beadwork sales jump 30% on Amazon in 2024. Diaspora networks amplify this—Atlanta's Nigerian community drove \$1 million in craft sales last year, a tariff-light channel via direct trade.

To mitigate tariff impacts and unlock this \$20 trillion market, Nigerian businesses can deploy three strategies. First, trade partnerships with U.S. entities distribute costs and open doors. A U.S. cocoa buyer co-investing in a \$2 million Nigerian processing plant, for instance, offsets tariffs while scaling supply. Second, leveraging AGOA and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) ensures competitive access—AGOA saved Nigerian exporters \$50 million in duties in 2023, per NEPC data. Third, e-commerce slashes barriers; Nigeria's online exports via Amazon hit \$10 million last year, proving its potency for SMEs.

Policymakers, too, bear a pivotal role in facilitating this transformation. Streamlining export procedures, enhancing quality control mechanisms, and promoting investor confidence domestically will fortify Nigeria's standing as a formidable player in global trade. Entrepreneurs should pursue transatlantic alliances and tech-driven sales, turning tariffs into a spur for innovation. The U.S. market, with its \$10 billion annual trade with Nigeria, is no mirage but a prize within reach.

As the world recalibrates post-pandemic and post-protectionism, the time is ripe for Nigerian businesses to assert their presence on the global stage. The \$20 trillion prize awaits—not merely as a destination but as a testament to what can be achieved when innovation meets determination. With partnerships and trade agreements, Nigerian entrepreneurs can transform challenges into triumphs, securing their foothold in the \$20 trillion U.S. economy.

The time to act is now—beyond tariffs lies a wealth of possibility. Beyond tariffs lies opportunity; beyond uncertainty lies prosperity. For those bold enough to seize it, the future is undeniably bright

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