June 24, 2020

Office of United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

2020 AGOA Eligibility Review Comments – Nigeria and South Africa

Docket No. USTR-2020-0020

NPPC submits these comments in response to a Federal Register Notice (Document No. USTR-2020-0020) requesting comments on the eligibility of sub-Saharan African nations to receive Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) benefits.

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) is a national association representing 42 state producer organizations and the federal and global interests of 60,000 U.S. pork operations. The U.S. pork industry is a major value-added enterprise in the agricultural economy and a significant contributor to the overall U.S. economy.

The United States is the top global exporter of pork, shipping nearly 2.6 million metric tons (MT), valued at over $6.9 billion to more than 100 nations in 2019. Gaining and expanding access to markets around the world is paramount to the continued success of the U.S. pork industry. NPPC supports the objectives of AGOA to expand U.S. trade and investment with sub-Saharan Africa, to stimulate economic growth, to encourage economic integration, and to facilitate sub-Saharan Africa’s integration into the global economy. NPPC also supports AGOA’s trade preferences that allow those eligible countries to enter the U.S. market duty-free.

We understand very well the responsibility governments hold for ensuring the health of domestic livestock herds and food safety. U.S. pork producers work diligently with the USDA and other government bodies to meet the highest standards of animal health and food safety. We are also committed to the removal of unjustifiable market access barriers, disguised as precautionary sanitary measures, that restrict trade.

South Africa

In 2019, the value of U.S. pork exports to South Africa was $135,000. The market potential is $37 million. In South Africa, pork is an important source of protein, yet only 0.5 percent of the world’s pork is produced in South Africa. Pork consumption is 200,000 tons of pork per year (fresh and processed). The following unwarranted, non-science-based restrictions are inconsistent with international standards and prevent the United States from gaining fair access to the South African pork market:

- No market access for pork offals, heat treated/canned products and casings.
- U.S. exporters have been seeking clarification on a requirement that lymph nodes must be
removed from shoulder cuts. South Africa has yet to provide guidance on this restriction.

- South Africa imposes stringent trichinae-related freezing requirements for imported pork. The United States does not consider such requirements to be necessary for U.S. pork products.
- South Africa imposes a restriction on pork cuts allowed for importation due to concerns related to Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome. This restriction appears to be inconsistent with current international standards.

South Africa is currently the largest non-oil beneficiary of AGOA. South Africa also takes advantage of the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Although South Africa is pleased to receive $879 million in benefits from the U.S. preferential trade program, it remains unwilling to extend even customary equitable treatment to imports of pork from the United States. Accordingly, NPPC calls for the removal of South Africa’s eligibility for AGOA benefits.

**Nigeria**

The United States currently has no access for meat or poultry products in Nigeria. Nigeria has a rapidly growing population of 191 million people with increasing protein-consumption trends. Nigeria is also seen as a potential hub for exporting products to neighboring African countries. We believe the market potential for U.S. pork to be valued at approximately $26 million. NPPC is working to gain market access without any mitigations and encourages the requirement of science and risk-based policy and practices. Nigeria’s no-access policy for U.S. meat and poultry is non-science based. For that reason, we call for the removal of Nigeria’s eligibility for AGOA benefits.

As previously noted, NPPC is an active supporter of open trade and has strongly advocated for free trade agreements as well as non-reciprocal U.S. tariff preference programs, such as AGOA and the GSP. We have not attempted to tie specific trade concerns to our overall support for those programs but do seek a better balance in trade with nations that reap the rewards of preferential tariff treatment while unfairly disparaging our product as unsafe.

Thank you for your consideration.

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