



TOP STORIES

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SEPTEMBER
2026



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COMESA BUSINESS FORUM OPENS REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL FIRMS



ZIMBABWEAN business are are set to gain direct access to regional buyers, investors, financiers and policymakers when Harare hosts the 19th COMESA Business Forum and Multi-Sectoral International Exhibition from 19-21 October 2026.

The event will be held on the margins of the 25th COMESA Heads of State and Government Summit and is expected to bring together participants from across the region.

The Summit will run under the overall theme, “One Market, One Future: Advancing Inclusive Industrialisation, Investment and Regional Integration in COMESA.” Ahead of the main Business Forum, the COMESA Green Industries Connect will open proceedings in Harare on 19 October to explore opportunities across priority green value chains.

The Summit will run under the overall theme, “One Market, One Future: Advancing Inclusive Industrialisation, Investment and Regional Integration in COMESA.” Ahead of the main Business Forum, the COMESA Green Industries Connect will open proceedings in Harare on 19 October to explore opportunities across priority green value chains.

The Green Industries Connect is one of three pillars of the COMESA Business Forum, alongside a High-Level Policy Dialogue on 20 October and an

International Multi-Sectoral Exhibition running from 19-21 October at the Harare International Conference Centre.

The Business Forum is being convened by the COMESA Business Council, ZimTrade and the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the COMESA Secretariat and the Government of Zimbabwe.

For local businesses, the event provides a direct route into the wider COMESA market and an opportunity to take greater advantage of the regional trading framework.

COMESA has a market of more than 640 million people, a combined gross domestic product of about US\$1 trillion and merchandise trade exceeding US\$383 billion, offering considerable scope for Zimbabwean companies seeking to expand their regional footprint.

While COMESA represents one of Africa’s largest

potential, with several member states still heavily dependent on exports of primary commodities.

The Forum will therefore place strong emphasis on strengthening regional value chains, expanding productive capacity and encouraging businesses to increase value addition as part of efforts to deepen trade within the bloc.

ZimTrade Chief Executive Officer Mr. Allan Majuru said the Forum would provide exporting businesses with a practical platform to pursue new markets, engage potential partners and take part in discussions affecting regional trade and investment.

"To ensure this is a results-driven event, structured business-to-business, business-to-government and business engagements will form part of the programme, giving participating companies a unique opportunity to contribute to regional policy direction," he said.

Running alongside the Forum will be the Multi-Sectoral

International Exhibition, which will feature country pavilions, a COMESA institutions pavilion and structured networking platforms designed to promote direct interaction among participating businesses and institutions.

Priority sectors will include manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing, the digital economy, financial services and fintech, mining, energy, textiles, leather products, tourism and hospitality.

The exhibition is expected to provide Zimbabwean companies with a platform to showcase their products and services while engaging potential buyers, distributors, investors and business partners from other COMESA member states.

For local exporters, the three-day programme will also provide an opportunity to meet regional financiers, development institutions and Government representatives in one place, reducing the need to approach individual markets separately



19th COMESA Business Forum & Exhibition

19 October 2026

COMESA Green Industry Connect

20 October 2026

Business Forum

19-21 October 2026

Exhibition

Harare International Conference Center

One Market One Future

Advancing Inclusive
Industrialization,
Investment and
Regional Integration
in COMESA



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SHOP@ZIM BUYERS' FORUM 2026 SET FOR NOVEMBER



ZIMTRADE WILL host the 2026 edition of the Shop@Zim Buyers' Forum and the Annual

Exporter of the Year Awards from 2-6 November 2026 in Bulawayo and Harare.

The series of events is expected to provide a platform for meaningful engagement between Zimbabwean exporters, international buyers and policymakers.

The programme is expected to bridge the gap between local businesses and export markets by enhancing understanding of international market trends and fostering connections.

It is designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of global market dynamics, connect Zimbabwean companies with buyers, and align national export strategies with opportunities for growth and value addition.

Buyers from Africa, Europe, and Asia are expected to participate to strengthen bilateral business relationships and explore long-term trade partnerships with local suppliers.

Regarding the importance of these engagements, the decision to structure tailored buyer sessions followed positive feedback and tangible results recorded in previous programmes.

This year the Buyers' Forum will be held in Harare and Bulawayo, to allow for more robust interaction and strategic planning for most exporters in the country.

This format allows for greater participation and more tailored interactions, resulting in partnerships, business deals, and the identification of new markets for Zimbabwean products.

This year's Shop@Zim Buyers Forum will kick off in Bulawayo on 2 November.

The Forum will give local companies in the southern region an opportunity to pitch their products and services directly to selected regional and international buyers.

Buyer engagements will then shift to Harare on 4 November, where the second Shop@Zim Buyers' Forum will take place.

The week's activities will conclude on 6 November 2026 with the prestigious ZimTrade Exporter of the Year Awards, in Harare.

This gala event will celebrate Zimbabwean companies that have demonstrated excellence in exporting and honours businesses that have adopted best practices in growing their international markets.



EXPO 2027 BELGRADE

ZIMBABWE - SERBIA

LAUNCH 2026



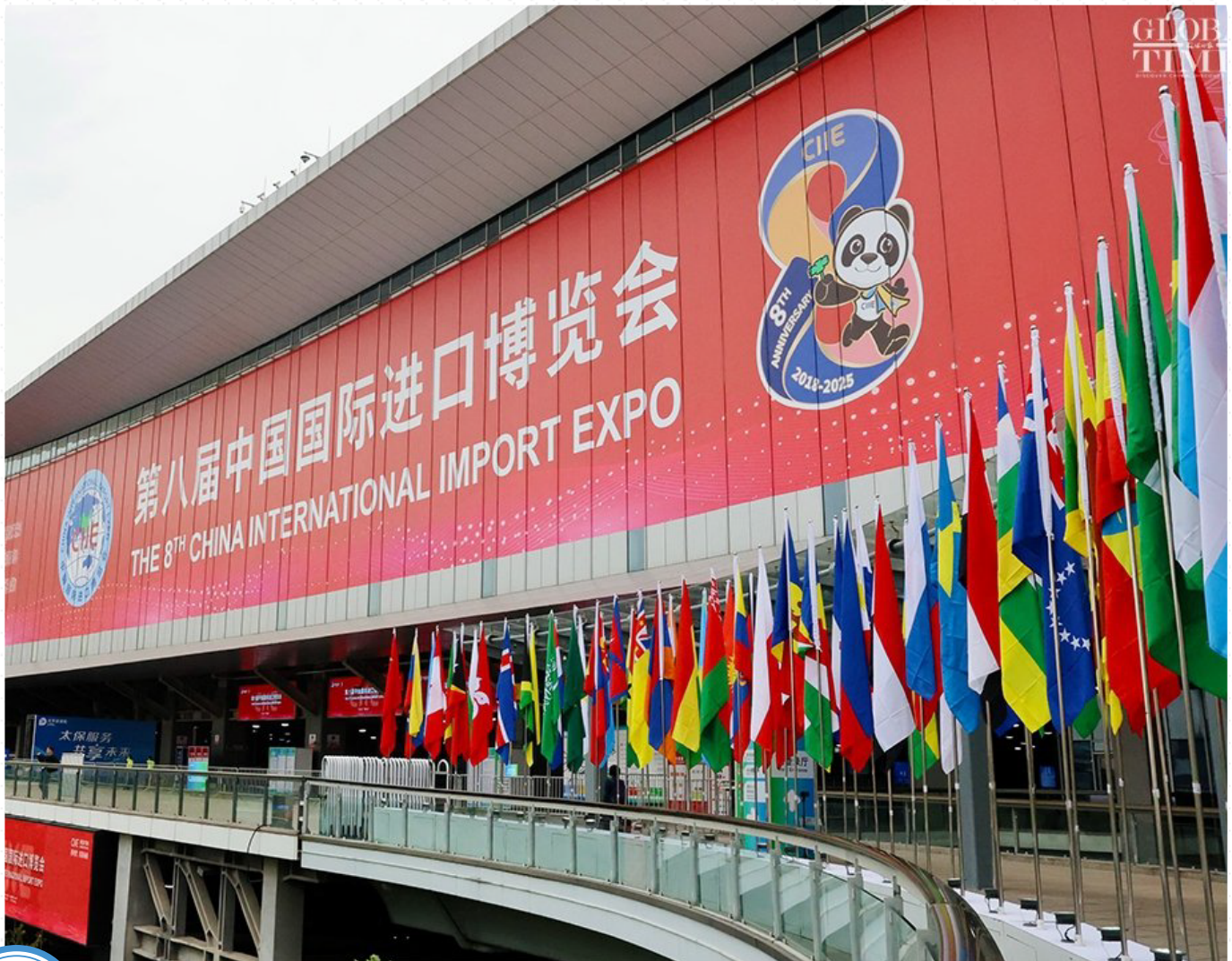
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EXPO 2027
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ZIMBABWE TAKES A BROADER EXPORT PROPOSITION TO CIIE 2026



Nozipho Mphahlele

ZIMBABWE WILL return to Shanghai for the 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE)

from 5 - 10 November 2026, taking a diversified range of products and services to one of the world's largest import-focused trade platforms.

This year's participation comes at an important point in Zimbabwe-China trade relations.

Bilateral trade reached US\$4,4 billion in 2025, up 15,2 percent from the previous year.

Zimbabwe's exports to China stood at US\$2,57 billion, against imports of US\$1,83 billion, giving Zimbabwe a trade surplus of approximately US\$740 million.

CIIE therefore presents an opportunity to build on an already substantial trading relationship, while broadening the range of Zimbabwean products and services reaching the Chinese market.

Zimbabwe's participation at CIIE 2026 will bring together companies from sectors including horticulture and agriculture, processed and heritage-based foods,

leather and leather products, arts and crafts, tobacco, and services including e-commerce.

The mix reflects a deliberate push to diversify Zimbabwe's exports to China.

While minerals and tobacco remain significant, new opportunities are opening for agricultural, processed and value-added products.

Agriculture is already demonstrating this potential. Zimbabwe has secured market access for products including citrus, macadamia nuts, avocados and blueberries, opening pathways into China's large consumer market.

The country's first commercial shipment of blueberries entered China in 2026, joining a growing range of African agricultural products taking advantage of improved market access.

One of the most significant developments for Zimbabwean exporters heading to CIIE this year is China's expanded zero-tariff policy for African countries.

From 1 May 2026, China extended zero-tariff treatment

across 100 percent of tariff lines to all 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations.

Zimbabwe is among the 20 non-least-developed African countries newly covered by the measure, with the current preferential arrangement running for two years.

This changes the commercial equation for Zimbabwean exporters, and qualifying products that comply with the applicable rules of origin and market-entry requirements can enter China without import tariffs, improving their competitiveness in one of the world's largest consumer markets.

Early trade figures show the scale of the opportunity; in May and June 2026, the first two months following implementation of the expanded policy, China imported around US\$28,72 billion, worth of goods from Africa, representing a 23,5 percent year-on-year increase.

Imports of African avocados increased by 130 percent, apples by 89,6 percent and oranges by 27,9 percent.

For Zimbabwe, the opportunity extends beyond simply selling more of what the country already exports.

Zero tariffs strengthen the case for developing processed foods, branded agricultural products, finished leather products, arts and crafts and other higher-value exports for the Chinese market.

Horticulture presents one of the clearest opportunities

with macadamia nuts, citrus, avocados and blueberries having already secured pathways into the market, while the successful entry of Zimbabwean blueberries this year demonstrates how negotiated market access can translate into actual trade.

The response to Zimbabwean sculpture also points to opportunities beyond traditional commodity exports. Zimbabwe's distinctive creative products, handicrafts and natural-material products have the potential to appeal to consumers looking for authentic, differentiated and premium African products.

China is also actively using CIIE, the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo and cross-border e-commerce platforms to connect African products with its market.

These measures complement the zero-tariff policy by addressing some of the practical challenges around market access, customs clearance and distribution.

Against this background, CIIE becomes particularly important.

Unlike conventional trade fairs centred largely on exports from the host country, the Expo was established specifically to facilitate imports into China, bringing international suppliers together with Chinese buyers, distributors, retailers and investment partners.

For Zimbabwean companies, participation therefore provides an opportunity to showcase products, engage potential buyers, understand market requirements and establish the commercial relationships needed to convert preferential market access into orders.





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WHY ZIMBABWEAN EXPORTERS SHOULD BE LOOKING AT THE NAMIBIAN MARKET



IF YOU are a Zimbabwean business considering where to take your products or services

next, Namibia deserves a closer look.

From 7-9 October 2026, ZimTrade will lead an Export Mission to Windhoek, targeting the services and FMCG sectors.

The three-day programme will feature a high-level Business Forum and structured business match-making, designed to help local businesses establish a strong foothold in the market.

The Business Forum is expected to draw a diverse range of participants from both the public and private sectors, bringing together Namibian businesses, senior government officials, policymakers and industry leaders.

Together, they will discuss trade opportunities, explore areas of collaboration and identify practical measures to strengthen bilateral trade.

Participants will also gain valuable insights into market trends, regulatory frameworks and emerging business opportunities in Namibia.

The initiative aims to unlock new commercial opportunities and deepen economic engagement between the two countries by connecting Zimbabwean companies with potential buyers, distributors, investors and strategic partners.

Zimbabwe and Namibia are no strangers in trade terms. Their relationship is underpinned by a shared liberation history and decades of cooperation, which has translated into favourable trade opportunities for local businesses.

These include a Bilateral Trade Agreement that grants qualifying products preferential market access.

Beyond this agreement, both countries are members of SADC, giving local businesses more trade advantages than they would find in other new markets. If logistics are your concern, consider Zimbabwe's

Dry Port at Walvis Bay, one of Namibia's more underrated assets.

It offers Zimbabwean exporters a direct line into one of Southern Africa's most efficient Atlantic ports, with shorter transit times, lower transport costs and a genuine gateway to markets well beyond Namibia.

For a business weighing whether the logistics of exporting are worth the effort, this is the kind of infrastructure that changes everything.

Previous market surveys held by ZimTrade have revealed that Namibia's demand is not limited to a narrow product list. Sectors identified with strong export potential that align with current Namibian demand include, FMCG, mining supplies, and agricultural inputs and implements.

Zimbabwe's export basket to Namibia is already diversifying encouragingly, with cordials, tobacco, sugar, ploughs, iron and steel bars and handicrafts joining the mix.

Perhaps the most exciting opportunity lies in services.

Mining, educational and agricultural services are all being actively pursued in the market.

These are sectors where Zimbabwe holds competitive

advantages, and regional expansion in services can be a faster, lower-overhead route to growth than shipping physical goods.

If your business falls into one of these categories, the mission's Business Forum and structured B2B meetings are designed specifically to connect you with the right partners.

The programme is built for outcomes, not just networking. It opens with a high-level Business Forum that brings together Namibian businesses, government officials and industry leaders allowing local businesses to understand market trends, regulatory frameworks and where the real opportunities lie.

From there, delegates move into structured B2B meetings and exhibitions, where relationships turn into contracts.

This mission also arrives at a convenient time when African countries are pushing hard to grow intra-African trade and make regional integration a reality rather than an aspiration.

For local businesses, this means that they are entering a favorable market where both governments are actively investing in good relations and conducive trade environments.



Strengthening Trade and Economic Partnership between Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Zimbabwe



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ZIMTRADE-HKTDC PARTNERSHIP OPENS A STRATEGIC GATEWAY TO ASIA



Tatenda Machirori

ZIMTRADE has strengthened Zimbabwe's commercial links with Asia through a cooperation

agreement with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC).

The partnership creates a practical platform for connecting local exporters with buyers, distributors, professional service providers and prospective partners in Hong Kong and across wider Asian markets.

The memorandum of understanding was signed at the 11th Belt and Road Summit, held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on 9–10 September 2026.

Co-organised by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and HKTDC, the Summit brought together government officials, business leaders and professionals to explore new opportunities in trade, investment and cross-regional cooperation.

Under the theme “Advancing High-Quality Development • Embarking on a New Journey”, the Summit featured policy dialogue, thematic sessions, project showcases and one-to-one business matching.

For Zimbabwe, the platform offered more than visibility: it created scope to test commercial interest, understand Asian buyer requirements and establish relationships with firms seeking opportunities in emerging markets.

Hong Kong is an international trading, logistics and business-services hub with deep connections to Mainland China and other Asian markets.

For Zimbabwean companies, it can function both as a destination market and as a springboard, a place to identify distributors, test product-market fit and access expertise in finance, logistics, standards, marketing and commercial dispute resolution.

Stronger trade with Hong Kong matters because sustainable export growth requires both competitive products and diversified routes to market.

Engagement through Hong Kong can help Zimbabwean firms reduce dependence on a narrow set of destinations, obtain timely market intelligence and connect value-added products and services with sophisticated regional supply chains.

Promising areas may include premium horticultural and processed food products, leather and creative



goods, minerals and specialised business services.

Converting this potential into orders will require exporters to understand import and product standards, adapt packaging and labelling, demonstrate traceability and maintain consistent quality and supply.

Hong Kong's re-export and distribution networks may also help suitable Zimbabwean products reach customers beyond the territory.

The ZimTrade–HKTDC agreement provides a structured basis for closer commercial engagement between Zimbabwean and Hong Kong enterprises, organisations and entrepreneurs.

Its practical value lies in the exchange of market information, handling of business enquiries and referrals, and joint identification of commercially viable export opportunities.

The two organisations will also cooperate on workshops, seminars, targeted business missions and other trade-promotion activities.

These interventions can help exporters move more quickly from initial market interest to a credible transaction by improving access to buyer intelligence, direct introductions and structured follow-up support.

ZimTrade Operations Director Mr Similo Nkala said the partnership would reinforce export-development and promotion programmes as Zimbabwe seeks to broaden its markets and increase the international presence of value-added products.

“For participating firms, the partnership's greatest benefit will be the combination of market intelligence and trusted networks. Better information can help companies select the right products and price points, while qualified introductions can reduce the time and uncertainty involved in finding credible buyers and channel partners.”

From this point the decisive measure will be implementation.

Zimbabwean exporters will need to use the partnership to obtain market intelligence early, prepare products to specification, participate in carefully targeted missions and maintain disciplined follow-up with prospective buyers.

ZimTrade's export-readiness, promotion and buyer-linkage programmes will be central to helping firms convert these openings into repeat orders.



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The Packaging Portal is funded by European Union, implemented by COMESA, managed by ZimTrade and the Federation of Master printers.

The advertisement features a background image of a person's hands holding a tray with various food and beverage packaging items, including coffee cups, a pizza box, and a paper bag.



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NEW VICTORIA FALLS UNION POSITIONS CRAFT PRODUCERS FOR EXPORT GROWTH



Kudakwashe Tirivavi

THIRTEEN arts and crafts cooperatives have formed the Victoria Falls Arts and Crafts

Cooperative Union, following a capacity-building programme held from 16 to 17 September 2026.

The Union was officially launched on 18 September 2026.

The programme strengthened the cooperatives' understanding of management, regulatory compliance, product development and market access.

ZimTrade presented export opportunities for arts and crafts, focusing on the requirements producers must meet to secure and retain international buyers.

The Union's formation comes as global demand for arts and crafts continues to grow.

According to Trade Map data, world imports within the broader arts and crafts product group increased from US\$276.3 billion in 2021 to US\$319.4 billion in 2025.

This represents growth of 15.6 percent over the period, equivalent to an average annual growth rate of three percent.

The United States was the largest importing market in 2025, with imports valued at US\$50.7 billion.

Other major markets included Hong Kong at US\$29.5 billion, the United Arab Emirates at US\$23.4 billion, Switzerland at US\$15.9 billion, France at US\$15 billion, Japan at US\$14.3 billion, Germany at US\$13.5 billion and the United Kingdom at US\$11.7 billion.

These figures show opportunities across different market levels.

South Africa and Namibia provide accessible regional markets, while Victoria Falls hotels and tourism operators offer an immediate local route to international customers.

Established markets such as the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom offer greater demand, while the United Arab Emirates and selected Asian markets provide further growth opportunities. Worked stone and original sculpture remain Zimbabwe's main strengths.

In 2025, worked stone exports reached US\$4.7 million, while original sculpture contributed US\$1.65 million.

Together, the two product groups accounted for 80.5 percent of Zimbabwe's recorded arts and crafts exports.

Wood décor exports also increased from US\$103,000 to US\$434,000, while basketry exports stood at only US\$137,000, despite a global basketry import market estimated at US\$2 billion.

Other relevant global opportunities include sculpture, valued at US\$4.8 billion, fashion jewellery at US\$7.8 billion, wood décor at US\$2 billion and paintings at US\$22.3 billion.

These figures support the development of products beyond the traditional tourist souvenir market.

Opportunities exist in hospitality interiors, homeware, corporate gifts, fashion accessories and smaller products suited to online sales.

Most members of the new Union are stone and wood sculptors.

Their products already have a market history, including participation at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. Income earned from Japan helped support members during a period of lower tourist traffic in Victoria Falls.

Preparations for participation at Expo 2027 Belgrade, Serbia provide another opportunity to build on this experience and develop repeat international business.

The newly formed Union offers a practical structure for coordinating production and serving larger buyers. It can receive orders centrally, allocate work among specialised groups, apply common product specifications and consolidate goods for delivery.

This will help address the challenges that individual producers face when buyers require higher volumes, consistent quality and fixed delivery periods.

Each product will need a clear specification covering its materials, dimensions, weight, finish, production capacity, lead time and packaging.

An approved sample can then guide production across the cooperatives.

This approach will reduce product differences within an order and make pricing and repeat orders easier to manage.

The Union can also lower the shared cost of packaging, transport and buyer development. It provides a single point of contact for hotels, international buyers and development partners.



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UNDERSTANDING NEW TRENDS IN GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS



Pelatia Choto

FOR MORE THAN three decades, global value chains (GVCs), have been the backbone

of international trade and today, these supply chains are undergoing a profound transformation.

Geopolitical tensions, climate-related policies, and the global race for critical minerals are prompting multinational companies to rethink where and how they source, manufacture, and distribute their products.

For Zimbabwean exporters, this shift presents a timely opportunity to integrate into international markets.

Global value chains have remained remarkably resilient despite the looming threat of deglobalisation.

Although this represents only about 16 percent of the continent's total trade, well below intra-regional trade levels in Asia (59 percent), the Americas (55 percent), and Europe (68 percent), the trend is encouraging.

However the trajectory is beginning to change.

Early 2026 indicators suggest Africa is steadily increasing its participation in global value chains.

Manufacturing and agro-processing are expected to account for nearly half of intra-African trade, signalling a gradual shift away from dependence on unprocessed commodity exports.

Agricultural products and natural resources accounted for around US\$352 billion, exceeding manufactured exports of approximately US\$294 billion.

Limited industrialisation, inadequate value addition, and weak cross-border infrastructure continue to constrain Africa's ability to capture greater value from the global supply chains in which it participates.

Nevertheless, much of this progress is being driven by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Since its launch, the Guided Trade Initiative has expanded from eight pilot countries in 2022 to approximately 39 participating countries trading products ranging from batteries and textiles to processed

foods under preferential tariff arrangements.

More than 40 African countries are now issuing AfCFTA Certificates of Origin.

While implementation challenges remain, particularly in customs modernisation, payment systems, transport infrastructure, and trade facilitation, the momentum towards greater regional integration is steadily building.

For Zimbabwean exporters, these developments create practical commercial advantages.

The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) is reducing foreign exchange transaction costs on cross-border African trade by an estimated 20-30 percent, while AfCFTA Certificates of Origin provide preferential market access across a rapidly expanding regional market.

For many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), neighbouring African markets represent the most realistic and accessible entry point into regional and eventually global value chains.

To capitalise on these emerging opportunities, Zimbabwean businesses should focus on several strategic priorities.

First, exporters should diversify both their markets and customer base.

As international buyers seek to reduce supply chain

risks, firms that establish relationships across multiple markets will be better positioned to benefit from evolving sourcing strategies.

Second, businesses must invest in compliance, certification, and product traceability. International standards are no longer merely regulatory requirements, they have become key competitive advantages that determine supplier selection.

Third, exporters should actively utilise the opportunities created by the AfCFTA.

Making effective use of Certificates of Origin and the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System can reduce transaction costs, improve competitiveness, and facilitate expansion into regional markets.

Fourth, wherever commercially viable, firms should prioritise value addition over the export of raw materials. Zimbabwe's experience in the mineral sector demonstrates the substantial increase in export earnings that can result from processing products before export.

Finally, businesses should explore opportunities in digital and professional services.

These sectors provide relatively low-barrier entry points into global value chains and offer significant potential for growth as international demand for digitally delivered services continues to expand.



EDITORIAL TEAM



Danai Majaha



Karen Bvurere



Kudakwashe Tirivavi



Tenson Wunganai



Nozipho Mphala



Pelatia Choto



Prosper Nzembe



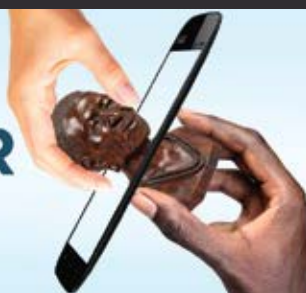
Tatenda Machirori



Melisa Ncube



WHETHER YOU ARE A
BUYER



SELLER
THIS IS WHERE QUALITY ZIMBABWEAN
PRODUCTS ARE FOUND.



SCAN TO LOGIN





8

BEFORE YOU CHASE THE ORDER, IS YOUR BUSINESS READY



Melisa Ncube

FOR MANY Zimbabwean small and medium enterprises,

regional and international markets offer

a clear opportunity for growth.

They can open access to new customers, larger orders and new revenue streams.

But exporting also introduces a different level of competition, and having a good product on its own is not enough.

For an exporter or a business considering exports, the key question is simple, what must the business get right before it enters a new market?

The answer starts with readiness.

An international enquiry can expose gaps very quickly.

A buyer may require volumes the company cannot consistently supply, certification the business does not yet have, packaging that meets different standards, or a price that remains competitive after freight, insurance, clearing and distribution are added.

These are better issues to identify before an order is on the table. ZimTrade's Export Readiness Checker provides a useful starting point.

It allows exporters and potential exporters to assess where they stand and identify the areas that may need strengthening before entering a new market.

For one SME the gap may be certification, for another packaging, production systems or costing, while another may already be technically ready but need better market information or support in Once the business understands its own readiness, it needs to understand the market.

One of the biggest mistakes a potential exporter can make is to produce first and search for a market afterwards.

Before increasing production, a company should know who the customer is, what that customer requires, what volumes are needed, what standards apply, what price the market can support and how the product will reach the buyer.

The principle is straightforward.

Produce for a market, not in anticipation of one.

Finding the market, however, is only part of the process

A buyer is not simply buying one good sample.

They are buying the expectation that the same quality and specification will be delivered every time.

This means the business must be able to supply consistently, maintain quality and meet agreed delivery timelines.

The first order may open the door, but the ability to deliver determines whether the relationship continues.

Standards and certification also need to be considered early. An NCC and International Trade Centre survey found that more than 70 percent of surveyed Zimbabwean enterprises lacked international certification.

Depending on the product and market, businesses may need to meet requirements relating to certification, traceability, packaging, labelling and product specifications.

Waiting until a buyer has already expressed interest can delay or even cost the business an opportunity.

Finance is another practical challenge.

An SME may have a genuine market opportunity but still require working capital to purchase raw materials, increase production, improve packaging, obtain certification or carry the cost of fulfilling an order before payment is received.

This creates a strong case for more dedicated and appropriately structured export finance for SMEs, particularly funding linked to actual commercial opportunities.

Where the buyer, product, volume, delivery period, price and payment terms are known, it becomes much clearer what the business requires finance for.

Exporters must also understand the real cost of reaching the customer.

The relevant price is not simply the factory gate price.

Transport, insurance, clearing, duties where applicable, warehousing and distribution can significantly affect the final landed cost.

A product may be competitive locally but become expensive once it reaches the destination market.

Pricing therefore has to be based on the full route to market.

For smaller businesses, exporting does not always mean doing everything alone.

An international buyer may require volumes that one producer cannot supply, while certification and logistics costs may be too high for an individual SME to carry.

Clusters, aggregators, contract production and established exporters can provide another route into international markets.

The objective should not necessarily be to make every SME a direct exporter, but to increase the number of SMEs participating profitably in export value chains.

The less visible parts of the business matter as well.

Exporters need to respond to enquiries promptly, prepare accurate quotations, understand payment terms, maintain proper documentation, honour delivery commitments and follow up with buyers.

These may appear administrative, but they directly affect whether the business is seen as a reliable supplier.

A good product is therefore only the starting point but what makes an exporter competitive is the business system around that product.

Therefore, for an SME considering exports, securing the first export order might seem important however the stronger test is whether the business can deliver well enough for the buyer to come back for the next one.



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MARKET FOCUS: COMESA



ZIMBABWE HOSTS the 25th COMESA Summit at a time when growth in exports and production is providing a stronger base for continued economic development and deeper participation in regional trade.

Merchandise exports reached approximately US\$9,71 billion in 2025, up 30 percent from US\$7,43 billion in 2024.

Over the same period, the trade deficit narrowed significantly, while value-added exports increased by 30.6 percent, from US\$437 million to US\$571 million.

The significance of this performance extends beyond the increase in export receipts.

It reflects improvements in the capacity of Zimbabwe's productive sectors to supply external markets and provides a basis for further growth in production, value addition and industrial activity.

Export growth also creates demand across supporting value chains, including transport, packaging,

logistics, certification, storage and other business services.

These developments are consistent with the country's broader development focus on strengthening agriculture, mining and manufacturing while increasing the value derived from domestic production.

Zimbabwe remains an important exporter of primary commodities, but greater emphasis is being placed on processing, beneficiation and the development of manufactured products that can compete in regional and international markets.

The growth in value-added exports is therefore particularly important.

It points to a gradual broadening of the export base and creates a platform for further industrial development.

Building and construction material exports, for example, increased from US\$26.4 million in 2024 to US\$103.7 million in 2025, supported partly by increased exports of iron and steel products.

Such growth demonstrates the potential for Zimbabwe

to participate more strongly in regional supply chains for construction, mining, agriculture and industry.

However, continued export growth requires more enterprises to produce to internationally accepted standards, understand market requirements and develop the capacity to supply buyers consistently.

ZimTrade's export-development programmes therefore assist businesses with areas such as product development, standards, packaging, branding, market information and export procedures.

Market surveys and trade intelligence complement this work by identifying demand and guiding businesses towards markets where Zimbabwean products have competitive potential.

An important part of the national export-development programme has also been to broaden participation in trade.

Through the Export Cluster Development Programme, small producers are being organised around specific products and common market requirements.

Many rural producers operate at a scale that makes it difficult to meet export volumes or independently carry the costs associated with certification, traceability, aggregation and logistics.

The cluster model provides a mechanism for coordinating production, improving consistency and aggregating volumes for formal markets.

In the Midlands Province, for example, producers of sugar snap and mange tout peas are being organised around production schedules and quality requirements for the United Kingdom market.

Honey producers in Chikomba and Nyanyadzi are receiving support on certification and compliance, while horticulture clusters are being developed around products such as avocado, citrus, bananas, flowers, strawberries and spices.

These programmes have a wider development significance.

They provide a route for rural production to participate

in formal domestic and export value chains and help connect producers to services and infrastructure required by commercial markets.

As production expands, opportunities are also created in aggregation, transport, packaging, processing, cold-chain services and certification.

A similar approach is being pursued in Honde Valley, where ZimTrade and its technical partners are supporting smallholder farmers and agribusinesses in banana, coffee, tea and avocado value chains.

The emphasis is not only on finding export markets, but also on strengthening production, quality management, processing and certification.

This enables trade development to contribute to economic activity outside the major industrial centres and supports the broader objective of bringing more communities into mainstream economic activity.

The same principle applies to small businesses.

MSMEs account for a significant part of Zimbabwe's productive base, but many require support to meet standards, understand export documentation and establish distribution channels.

Ongoing enterprise-development initiatives are intended to address these gaps and build a larger pool of export-ready firms.

Programmes such as Eagles' Nest have provided a pathway for youth-led enterprises, while the SheTrades Zimbabwe Hub is strengthening opportunities for women-led businesses to participate in regional and international trade.

The cumulative effect is an export-development model that links national trade performance with enterprise growth and wider economic participation. Stronger exports provide markets for increased production; increased production supports value addition and employment; and a broader exporter base spreads the benefits of trade across more sectors and communities.

These are important foundations for sustaining economic development.

They also strengthen Zimbabwe's proposition within COMESA.



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