

A study titled “ [Potential effects of the African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\) on African agri-food sectors and food security](#) ” conducted by the European Union’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) on request of the African Union Commission (AUC) shows that to make the AfCFTA a success, African Regional Economic Communities and national governments have to focus more on reduction of non-tariff barriers, as this can have an impact on the growth of intra-African trade larger than reduction in tariffs.

African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and national States should therefore heavily invest in efforts to ensure that cross-border trade is facilitated, by eliminating unnecessary red tape that hinders the integration of the African economies. Concrete efforts should be made to ensure that measures that hinder or limit the flow of goods across borders are reduced or completely removed.

In this regard, a recent [policy research paper from the World Bank](#) came to the same conclusion, estimating that two Regional Economic Communities, in particular EAC and SADC, will outperform all the other African RECs in terms of boosting intra-REC trade, due to their strong commitment to trade facilitation, to the high level of synergy between regional agendas and national goals in their member States, the density of economic activity and the advancement in the quantity and quality of regional infrastructure. Recently, also the [World Customs Organisation](#) has commended the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member States because they are actively working towards the interconnectivity of their Customs systems to enable exchange of Customs data and to leverage opportunities for mutual cooperation, improved data integrity and quality and systems interoperability.

The study also reveals that although trade liberalization under the AfCFTA will result, in the short term, in a loss of tariff revenues for African countries (due to the waiver to collect customs duties and other taxes on imports from other African countries), the new Free Trade Area will stimulate general economic activity within the various member States that will result in the collection of increased revenues from other tax classes. This will compensate the loss of tariffs caused by the tariff liberalization process under the AfCFTA.

The final recommendation is that national governments in Africa should not be worried about the initial tariff revenue reductions, trying to look at the long term results and by facilitating companies in adapting to a more open international trade and strengthening trading partnerships within Africa and beyond. The study also offers an [interactive dashboard](#) that

allows the visualisation of data gathered for conducting the research with a series of forecasts in terms of intra-african trade and tariff revenues changes within a 2035 time horizon.