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Tariff-Free access fuels Kenyaâ??s ambition to expand agricultural exports to China

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Duty-free access to the Chinese market is expected to enhance the competitiveness of Kenyan agricultural products and support long-term trade diversification

Kenya is positioning itself to significantly expand exports to China following the implementation of Beijingâ??s zero-tariff policy for products originating from African countries that maintain diplomatic relations with China, creating fresh opportunities for agricultural exporters and manufacturers seeking access to one of the worldâ??s largest consumer markets.

The East African economy is intensifying efforts to capitalize on the preferential trade arrangement, with industry stakeholders targeting higher exports of avocados, coffee, tea and horticultural products as demand from Chinese consumers continues to grow. The policy, which took effect on May 1, is expected to enhance the competitiveness of Kenyan products by eliminating import duties and lowering market entry barriers.

Trade and business leaders view the development as a significant milestone in China-Africa economic relations, offering Kenyan exporters access to a consumer base of more than 1.4 billion people while supporting efforts to diversify export destinations beyond traditional European markets.

The initiative comes as Kenya seeks to strengthen its position as a leading agricultural exporter and create additional value across its supply chains. Industry stakeholders are increasingly focusing on opportunities to expand exports of both fresh produce and processed goods, while also encouraging greater Chinese investment in local manufacturing and agro-processing industries.

Kenya is expected to use the upcoming **9th China International Import Expo (CIIE)** in Shanghai as a strategic platform to deepen commercial engagement with Chinese buyers, investors and distributors. Scheduled for November 5â??10, the event is regarded as one of the worldâ??s largest import-focused trade exhibitions and provides participating countries with direct access to Chinese consumers and business networks.

The country plans to showcase a broad range of products, investment opportunities and tourism offerings through dedicated exhibition spaces, reinforcing its ambition to strengthen economic ties with China and attract long-term partnerships.

Financial institutions supporting cross-border trade have also highlighted the growing importance of facilitating smoother transactions between African exporters and Chinese importers. Increased adoption of local currency settlement mechanisms is being explored as a means of reducing transaction costs, improving payment efficiency and supporting trade growth.

Chinaâ??s continued market opening initiatives are expected to create additional opportunities for African exporters seeking greater access to global value chains. The zero-tariff policy, combined with expanding trade promotion platforms such as the CIIE, is widely viewed as a catalyst for accelerating bilateral trade, investment flows and industrial cooperation.

For Kenya, the combination of preferential market access, growing consumer demand and enhanced business engagement presents an opportunity to increase export volumes, attract investment into value-added production and generate employment across key sectors of the economy.

As China continues to deepen economic engagement with African nations, Kenyan businesses are increasingly positioning themselves to capture a larger share of one of the worldâ??s fastest-growing import markets, with agriculture, manufacturing and services expected to be among the primary beneficiaries.

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