

The African Growth and Opportunity Act

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) legislation has been a key policy tool for the United States to manage its relationship with the African continent by supporting its economic status. Since its passage in 2000, AGOA has given African countries duty-free access to the U.S. This has allowed sub-Saharan African countries to export thousands of goods to America without having to pay taxes. In addition to the over 1,800 products that receive duty-free access from African countries under AGOA, there are other U.S. initiatives that provide this type of economic assistance, including the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program which has similar purposes to the AGOA legislation ([USTR](#)).

There are detailed requirements laid out in AGOA for sub-Saharan African countries to be eligible to receive duty-free access. This includes these nations having established or making progress to establish the protection of human rights, attempting to lower poverty rates, upholding laws, maintaining a market-based economy, and more. The requirements from AGOA for eligibility are mostly similar to requirements under the GSP program. Therefore, African countries have to be eligible to receive duty-free access from GSP to also receive access from AGOA. Currently, most countries that are eligible for GSP benefits are also eligible for AGOA benefits ([ITA](#)) ([USTR](#)).

There have been a multitude of proclamations from American Presidents utilizing AGOA to support the economies of African nations. President Bill Clinton designated over 30 countries in Africa eligible for AGOA benefits in 2000, shortly after the bill passed. These designations continued from multiple Presidents as time

went on. There have also been countries that have lost their ability to receive AGOA and similar duty-free access and later restored, demonstrating the use of this program as a foreign policy tool of the United States ([ITA](#)).

Sub-Saharan African nations that are eligible to receive duty-free access for thousands of products under AGOA include Uganda, Chad, Madagascar, Zambia, Togo, and many more. As of 2024, 32 African countries are in a position to receive the benefits of AGOA ([USTR](#)) ([ITA](#)).

After 15 years of the AGOA program's existence and its continued use by the American government to support Africa, the U.S. Congress renewed the legislation in 2015 with updated elements to improve the program's standing. This extension of AGOA was for 10 years, with the expiration in 2025 ([USTR](#)).

As stakeholders look for renewal of AGOA, many have pushed for changes to the program. This includes having eligible countries increase the amount of products they export to America. This would give confidence to U.S. companies that are looking to invest in Africa. Another proposed change includes creating incentives for companies to expand into the continent's market through a credit system ([Brookings](#)).

While the future of The African Growth and Opportunity Act may not be entirely clear, the United States is keen on continuing to use the program's benefits to help African countries economic growth in an effort to ensure future prosperity for the continent.