

# African Export Goods: Categories and Subcategories

## Agricultural Products

Africa's agricultural exports include many high-demand commodities such as **cocoa**, **coffee**, **tea**, and various tropical **fruits** <sup>1</sup>. East African countries, for example, rely heavily on exporting food and drink products like coffee, grains and even **livestock** to global markets <sup>2</sup>. Key subcategories of agricultural goods (excluding any services) include:

- **Coffee Beans** (e.g. unroasted Arabica and Robusta coffee) <sup>1</sup>
- **Cocoa Beans** (raw cocoa, primarily from West Africa) <sup>1</sup>
- **Tea Leaves** (black and green tea, e.g. from Kenya, Malawi) <sup>1</sup>
- **Cotton** (raw cotton fiber and lint for the textile industry) <sup>3</sup>
- **Tobacco** (dried tobacco leaves for cigarette manufacturing)
- **Fruits & Vegetables** (fresh tropical fruits like mangoes, bananas, citrus, and vegetables) <sup>4</sup>
- **Nuts & Oilseeds** (e.g. cashew nuts, groundnuts/peanuts, sesame seeds) <sup>5</sup>
- **Spices** (e.g. **vanilla**, cloves, pepper – African spices exceeded \$2.2 billion exports in 2018 <sup>6</sup>)
- **Cut Flowers & Horticulture** (fresh cut roses, carnations, etc., from East Africa's floriculture sector)
- **Sugar** (raw and semi-processed cane sugar from countries like Eswatini, South Africa)
- **Rubber** (natural rubber from rubber tree plantations – over \$1.2 billion exported in 2018 <sup>7</sup>)
- **Grains** (notably maize and pulses in surplus-producing countries)
- **Livestock & Animal Products** (live cattle, goats, *meat* such as beef and lamb – e.g. Botswana beef exports – plus **hides/skins** and wool) <sup>2</sup>
- **Fish & Seafood** (marine products like fish, shrimp, and seafood from Africa's extensive coasts)

## Raw Materials

Africa is richly endowed with natural resources, and exports of **crude oil**, **natural gas**, and mineral ores form a large share of its trade. From Algerian petroleum and gas in the north to Zambian copper in the south, these raw commodities dominate many African economies <sup>8</sup>. Key mineral exports include **gold**, **diamonds**, **platinum-group metals**, **cobalt** and others essential for global industries <sup>9</sup>. Major raw material categories (in high global demand) include:

- **Crude Oil** (unrefined petroleum – e.g. from Nigeria, Angola, Libya) <sup>8</sup>
- **Natural Gas** (including liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Algeria, Egypt, Mozambique) <sup>8</sup>
- **Gold** (bullion and doré exports from nations like Ghana, South Africa, Mali) <sup>9</sup>
- **Diamonds** (rough diamonds from major producers like Botswana, DRC, South Africa) <sup>9</sup>
- **Platinum & PGM** (platinum-group metals such as platinum, palladium from South Africa and Zimbabwe) <sup>10</sup>
- **Copper** (copper ore and cathode; major export of Zambia, DRC) <sup>8</sup>
- **Iron Ore** (from South Africa, Mauritania, Liberia and others)
- **Bauxite** (aluminum ore, e.g. from Guinea – a top bauxite exporter)
- **Cobalt** (critical battery mineral largely from DRC) <sup>9</sup>
- **Manganese** (important steel alloy mineral from South Africa, Gabon)

- **Phosphate Rock** (phosphates from Morocco, Tunisia – vital for fertilizer industry)
- **Coal** (thermal coal exported by South Africa, Mozambique)
- **Uranium** (uranium ore from Niger, Namibia for nuclear fuel)
- **Timber & Wood** (logs and sawn timber, including hardwoods like teak <sup>11</sup> and mahogany from West and Central Africa)

## Processed Goods

African countries also export a variety of **processed** or semi-processed goods that add value to primary commodities. For example, West African nations export **palm oil** for use in food processing and cosmetics abroad <sup>12</sup>. Refined metals like **copper cathodes** (produced from mined ore) rank among Africa's top export products by value <sup>13</sup>. There is a growing emphasis on moving up the value chain – from raw materials to finished products – to meet global market demand. Key processed goods categories include:

- **Edible Oils** (e.g. palm oil, **olive oil** – Tunisia is a top olive oil exporter <sup>14</sup>, sunflower and sesame oils) <sup>12</sup>
- **Cocoa Products** (processed cocoa such as cocoa butter, cocoa powder, chocolate – value-added from raw cocoa beans) <sup>15</sup>
- **Roasted Coffee & Tea** (finished coffee products like roasted/ground coffee, instant coffee; packaged tea ready for export)
- **Sugar (Refined)** (refined white sugar from sugarcane, e.g. Mauritius, South Africa)
- **Processed Fruits** (dried fruits, fruit pulps, jams, juices – leveraging Africa's \$3.3 billion fruit export industry <sup>4</sup>)
- **Wine & Beverages** (notably **wine** from South Africa – a top-10 global wine producer <sup>16</sup> – plus craft beers, spirits, and soft drink concentrates)
- **Leather (Tanned)** (processed hides and skins converted to finished leather, e.g. from Ethiopia, Nigeria)
- **Textile Yarn & Fabrics** (cotton yarn, woven textiles and African print fabrics, adding value before garment manufacturing)
- **Chemicals & Fertilizers** (phosphate-based fertilizers from North Africa's industries, chemical products, soaps and cosmetic ingredients like **shea butter** and **essential oils** <sup>17</sup>)
- **Refined Metals** (metals processed from ores, e.g. **copper cathodes** and alloyed metals, as well as refined gold bullion) <sup>13</sup>
- **Refined Petroleum Products** (diesel, gasoline, kerosene produced in African refineries – e.g. in South Africa, Egypt – for export to regional markets)
- **Wood Products** (treated or processed wood, such as plywood, veneer, wood pulp, and paper products from South African and West African forestry sectors)

## Manufactured Items

As African economies industrialize, exports of **manufactured goods** have been growing in importance. Several North and East African countries export significant volumes of **apparel and footwear** <sup>18</sup> – for instance, clothing and shoes are the largest export sector in Morocco, Tunisia, and Lesotho <sup>18</sup>. Overall, the continent's textile and apparel exports were estimated around \$6.7 billion by 2023 <sup>19</sup>. Africa is also developing an **automotive** industry: countries like **Morocco** and **South Africa** now produce and export hundreds of thousands of vehicles and components annually <sup>20</sup>. Major manufactured categories include:

- **Textiles & Apparel** (garments, finished clothing, home textiles, technical textiles) <sup>18</sup>

- **Footwear & Leather Goods** (shoes, boots, leather accessories – a key export in countries like Tunisia and Ethiopia) <sup>18</sup>
- **Vehicles & Automotive Parts** (assembled cars, trucks, buses, and auto parts – e.g. wire harnesses, engines – from growing hubs in South Africa and Morocco) <sup>20</sup>
- **Machinery & Industrial Equipment** (manufactured equipment and machinery parts, including mining or agricultural machinery from South Africa, Egypt, etc.)
- **Electrical Equipment & Electronics** (electrical cables/wiring systems – a major Moroccan export, electrical appliances, and modest electronics assembly such as consumer devices or solar equipment from emerging industries)
- **Building Materials** (cement, ceramic tiles, steel products, glass and other construction materials produced for regional export)
- **Chemicals & Plastics** (manufactured chemical goods, plastics, and pharmaceutical products – e.g. South African pharmaceuticals and plastic goods, though a smaller share globally)

## Artisanal Products

Global consumers are increasingly seeking authentic, handcrafted products, and African **artisanal goods** are in growing demand <sup>21</sup>. These are traditional, often handmade products that carry cultural significance and unique artistry. From decorative home items to fashion accessories, African crafts appeal for their uniqueness and ethical, sustainable sourcing. Key artisanal subcategories include:

- **Basketry & Woven Goods** – handwoven baskets, mats, and cane furniture (e.g. sisal baskets from East Africa) <sup>22</sup>
- **Wood Carvings & Sculptures** – hand-carved wooden masks, statues, figurines and even furniture pieces <sup>22</sup>
- **Handcrafted Textiles & Attire** – traditional fabrics (such as kente, Ankara, mudcloth) and garments made or decorated by artisans <sup>23</sup>
- **Beadwork & Jewelry** – beaded jewelry, Maasai beadwork, brass and silver handcrafted jewelry, and other accessories known for distinctive designs <sup>24</sup>
- **Pottery & Ceramics** – handmade pottery and ceramics (e.g. Moroccan ceramic plates and tagines, Nigerian earthenware), often reflecting local heritage designs and increasingly exported as decor pieces.

Each of the above categories and subcategories represents goods (not services) that are commonly exported from Africa, structured for a broad-ranging marketplace. This taxonomy covers primary products (agricultural and mineral), **processed and value-added goods**, industrial manufactured items, as well as **artisanal crafts**, all of which reflect Africa's export strengths and meet actual global market demand in their respective sectors <sup>25</sup> <sup>2</sup>. The list is intended for use in a backend system, providing a clear hierarchy of categories and subcategories to organize listings of African export goods in an application.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>9</sup> <sup>12</sup> Top African Export Products - Istanbul Africa Trade Company

<https://www.istanbulafrica.com/top-african-export-products/>

<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> <sup>8</sup> <sup>10</sup> <sup>18</sup> Which are African economies' biggest exports? | World Economic Forum

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2016/05/which-are-africas-biggest-exports/>

<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup> <sup>11</sup> <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> <sup>19</sup> <sup>25</sup> 17 Incredible Value-Add Products Exported From Africa: Are They Transforming Local Communities? [Facts & Statistics] | by solesforafricanchild | Medium

<https://medium.com/@solesforafricanchild/17-incredible-value-add-products-exported-from-africa-are-they-transforming-local-communities-fact-b55edc7c3841>

13 **Major Exports of the African Countries - A Statistical Overview**

<https://zoetalentsolutions.com/major-exports-of-the-african-countries/>

20 **Morocco Overtakes South Africa to Become Africa's Top Car Producer**

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2024/07/16713/morocco-overtakes-south-africa-to-become-africa-s-top-car-producer/>

21 22 23 24 **The Growing Demand for African Crafts in Global Retail – Mawu Africa**

[https://mawuafrica.com/en-us/blogs/experience-africa/the-growing-demand-for-african-crafts-in-global-retail?](https://mawuafrica.com/en-us/blogs/experience-africa/the-growing-demand-for-african-crafts-in-global-retail?srsltid=AfmBOoopXxqqDrK6RF7OHYneiOJSdb84vqmmJFdwppkbZ8Qz_jkqpDge)

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