United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

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AfCFTA Business Toolkit: Practical Digital Tools for Enterprise Coaching and Trading

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1- Introduction

This guide is intended for exporters, importers, manufacturers, SMEs, chambers of commerce, trade-support institutions, customs brokers and logistics operators seeking to use opportunities available under the AfCFTA. Before planning an export transaction, businesses should verify whether the importing State Party is currently implementing AfCFTA tariff concessions for the product concerned and whether the applicable tariff offer has been gazetted and operationalized domestically.

The document provides a selection of practical digital tools and resources that can assist businesses in identifying market opportunities and potential business partners, determining applicable AfCFTA tariffs and rules of origin, reporting non-tariff barriers, conducting due diligence on trade counterparts, and facilitating cross-border payments.

2- Selection of practical AfCFTA digital tools

This document provides a selection of practical digital tools and resources that can assist businesses in identifying market opportunities and potential business partners, determining applicable AfCFTA tariffs and rules of origin, reporting non-tariff barriers, conducting due diligence on trade counterparts, and facilitating cross-border payments.

Steps	Tool	Function	Link
Market access *Use the Africa Trade Observatory (ATO) to identify African markets...*	**Africa Trade Observatory (ATO) for market opportunities**	Provides trade and market intelligence to help businesses identify potential African markets, analyze trade flows, assess export opportunities and understand market trends. It also provides information on applicable	https://ato.africa/en https://ato.africa/fr

Businesses should assess not only market demand but also market accessibility, logistics costs, tariff preferences, regulatory requirements and the presence of competing suppliers.		regulations and requirements for packaging, labelling and standards in both exporting and importing countries, and includes an origin self-assessment module to help businesses verify whether their products are eligible for AfCFTA preferential treatment. It can therefore serve as a first step in identifying products and markets with potential under the AfCFTA and assessing the requirements for entering them.	
	Africa Trade Exchange (ATEX)	ATEX is a marketplace that connects African businesses with suppliers in other African nations, helping them source, buy and sell products. It is designed for businesses and focuses on commodities needed for production and supply chains. Products are currently grouped into four categories: agricultural products; fertilizers and inputs; food and beverages; and other product.	/ https://www.atex.africa/
	AfCFTA Glossary (International Trade Centre)	Explains key terms and concepts related to the AfCFTA, helping businesses understand the	https://au-afcfta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Unpacking-the-African-Continental-Free-Trade-Area-A-Glossary_03-April-2023.pdf

		terminology used in the Agreement and its implementation.	
	Business due diligence: MANSA Africa	Provides a pan-African repository of customer due diligence (CDD) and Know Your Customer (KYC) information on African companies, SMEs and financial institutions. Businesses can use MANSA to conduct due diligence on potential customers, suppliers, distributors and other African business partners and to increase the visibility and credibility of their own company.	https://www.mansaafrica.com https://www.mansaafrica.com/?locale=fr
	Other ITC tools*	1-Trade Map: analyse import/export values, growth, market shares, competitors, and potential destination markets by HS code. 2-Market Access Map (MacMap): check tariffs, trade agreements, tariff preferences, quotas, and other market-access conditions. Particularly useful for assessing the potential AfCFTA tariff advantage. 3-Export Potential Map: identify products and destination markets with the greatest unrealized export	https://www.trademap.org https://exportpotential.intracen.org https://www.macmap.org https://www.standardsmap.org https://findrulesoforigin.org https://procurementmap.intracen.org https://www.investmentmap.org

		potential to identify untapped markets 4-Standards Map: assess sustainability standards, certifications, and market requirements relevant to the product. 5-Procurement Map: identify public procurement opportunities in African and other markets. 6-Investment Map: understand foreign investment and industry presence when assessing market-entry opportunities. 7-Rules of Origin Facilitator: check applicable rules of origin and origin requirements under trade agreements. 8-Global Trade Helpdesk: combine trade statistics, tariffs, regulations, procedures, and market information in one place. *All the above tools are also accessible from the African Trade Observatory	
Tariff schedule *Important: Before planning an export transaction,*	**AfCFTA e-tariff book**	Enables businesses to identify the preferential tariff applicable to a product traded between AfCFTA State Parties. Users can search by	 https://qaafcfta.z6.web.core.windows.net/mapsearch User guide

businesses should verify whether the importing State Party is currently implementing AfCFTA tariff concessions for the product concerned and whether the applicable tariff offer has been gazetted and operationalized domestically.		HS code or product and consult applicable tariff concessions. The platform also includes a Rules of Origin module, allowing businesses to easily determine the product-specific rule of origin that their product needs to fulfil in order to qualify for preferential trade under the AfCFTA.	
Rules of Origin Once a product satisfies the applicable AfCFTA Rules of Origin, exporters should apply for an AfCFTA Certificate of Origin or, where permitted, prepare an approved exporter declaration of origin. Businesses should contact their Customs administration to	**AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual**	Provides guidance on the rules for determining whether a product qualifies as originating under the AfCFTA and on the procedures for applying and administering the rules of origin. Businesses should use this resource to assess whether their products qualify for preferential treatment.	https://etariff.au-afcfta.org/assets/manuals/AfCFTA%20RULES%20OF%20ORIGIN%20MANUAL.pdf When using the AfCFTA e-Tariff Book and Rules of Origin resources, businesses should keep in mind that the applicable rule of origin may vary from one product to another. Each product is subject to its own product-specific rule of origin, which must be carefully reviewed to determine whether the product qualifies for AfCFTA preferential treatment. Businesses should therefore verify the specific origin requirements applicable to their product rather than assuming that a single rule applies across all products.
	World Customs Organization quick guide to	Provides practical guidance on understanding and applying the AfCFTA Rules of Origin.	https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/origin/instrument-and-tools/afcfta-rules-of-origin.aspx

understand the applicable procedures and supporting documentation requirements.	**the AfCFTA Rules of Origin**		https://www.wcoomd.org/fr/topics/origin/instrument-and-tools/afcfta-rules-of-origin.aspx
	World Customs Organization Practical Guide for the implementation of the AfCFTA rules of origin	Provides more detailed guidance than the WCO quick guide on the AfCFTA Rules of Origin, including additional explanations and practical examples on how to determine the origin of goods for purposes of obtaining preferential tariff treatment under the AfCFTA. It is intended for both private-sector operators and Customs authorities	https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/origin/instrument-and-tools/practical-guide-for-the-implementation-of-the-afcfta-rules-of-origin.aspx
	TRALAC AfCFTA Rules of Origin training materials and factsheets	Provides training materials, explanatory resources and factsheets to help businesses and practitioners understand the AfCFTA Rules of Origin.	/ https://www.tralac.org/resources/infographics.html
Standards & regulatory compliance	**These are on tariff measures or conditions under which a product legally and technically qualifies to enter the target African market.**	Even when AfCFTA provides preferential tariff treatment, the exporter still has to meet the importing country's applicable technical, health, safety, labeling, packaging, and conformity requirements.*	https://www.standardsmap.org *Businesses should also consult national trade, customs, standards, and regulatory portals, which often provide product-specific information on applicable standards, conformity assessment procedures, import requirements, and other market-access conditions. Such information can help distinguish between legitimate regulatory requirements and barriers to trade.

<u>Non-Tariff Barriers</u> *Check for possible trade barrier* *Before filing a complaint, businesses should collect supporting information, including customs documents, invoices, photographs, correspondence with authorities and records of any charges incurred as a result of the barrier.*	**AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barriers (NTB) Reporting Platform**	Allows businesses and other economic operators to report non-tariff barriers encountered when trading across African borders and monitor the progress of their resolution. Complaints can cover issues such as discriminatory treatment, cumbersome procedures, import restrictions, excessive documentation and other measures that impede trade.	https://tradebarriers.africa User manual: https://tradebarriers.africa/files/eng/public_user_manual.pdf Manuel du système: https://tradebarriers.africa/files/fre/public_user_manual.pdf Before submitting a complaint, businesses are encouraged to verify that the issue concerns a non-tariff barrier and not a legitimate official measure implemented in accordance with national regulations. National NTB focal points can provide guidance on whether a complaint is justified. While non-tariff measures are often legitimate policy instruments, their discriminatory, arbitrary, or unjustified application may transform them into non-tariff barriers.
	Tripartite (COMESA/EAC/SADC) Non-Tariff Barriers (NTB) Reporting Platform	Allows businesses trading within the COMESA–EAC–SADC Tripartite region to report and monitor the resolution of NTBs.	https://www.tradebarriers.org Guidelines: https://www.tradebarriers.org/about

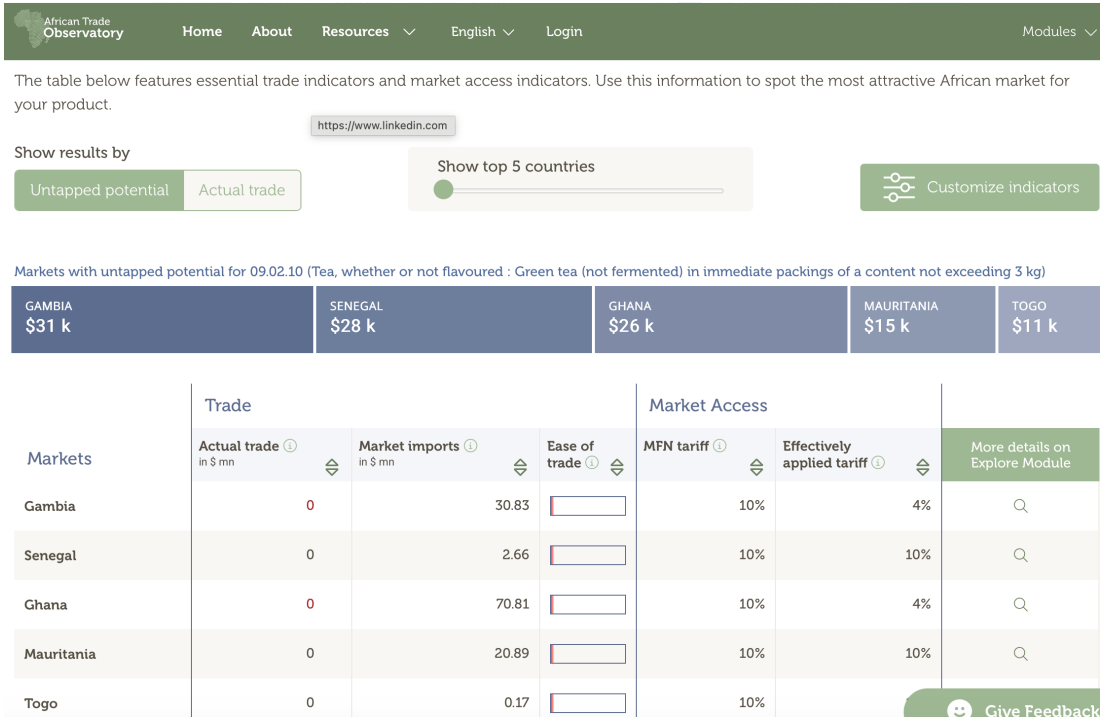
Afreximbank Trade Intelligence Solutions	**Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)**	Facilitates cross-border payments for intra-African trade, allowing businesses to send and receive payments in African currencies through participating banks and payment service providers.	/ https://papss.com
	Afreximbank TRADAR Club	Anchored by Afreximbank's Trade Intelligence Solutions unit, it provides access to digital trade intelligence, strategic advisory services and networking opportunities. Its integrated intelligence offering helps businesses identify and enter African markets, expand across the continent or access markets beyond Africa, combining technology, trade expertise and Afreximbank's extensive network of governments and business stakeholders.	/ https://www.tradar.africa/
	Afreximbank Trade Finance Products	Provides solutions for export financing, letters of credit, guarantees and other trade-finance instruments that support intra-African trade.	/ AfCFTA Adjustment Fund applications: https://afcftaadjustmentfund.africa/application

3- HOW TO USE THESE TOOLS: A PRACTICAL SEQUENCE FOR BUSINESSES

A business considering an AfCFTA export can use the tools above in the following sequence:

Step 1: Identify a market opportunity

Use the Africa Trade Observatory (ATO) to identify African markets where there is existing demand for the product and assess trade flows and market potential. In the example below, the ATO shows the top five African markets where the potential for export of green tea HS code 0902.10 is higher.



Step 2: Look for a potential buyer or seller

Register on the ATEX platform to find potential buyers and suppliers across African markets. ATEX is a B2B and B2G marketplace that connects businesses with potential trading partners, enabling them to source, buy and sell products, particularly agricultural products, fertilizers and inputs, and food and beverages. Use the platform to explore available products, identify potential business partners and expand your sourcing or sales opportunities across Africa.

Step 3: Assess a potential business partner

Use MANSA Africa to conduct due diligence on potential African buyers, suppliers, distributors and other business counterparties. MANSA is Afreximbank's pan-African digital due-diligence repository, designed to facilitate access to reliable information on African businesses and reduce the costs and risks associated with identifying and assessing potential partners. Businesses can also create their own MANSA profile by providing corporate and KYC information, including legal identity, ownership, management, business activities, financial information and other relevant due-diligence information. The information is reviewed as part of the MANSA onboarding process, allowing the organisation to be included in the repository and become more visible to potential business partners, banks and investors. MANSA currently hosts more than 35,000 African entities, with SMEs accounting for 84 percent of the entities onboarded.

Step 4: Check the applicable tariff

Use the AfCFTA e-Tariff Book to identify the HS classification of the product and determine whether the destination country has an applicable AfCFTA preferential tariff (for instance, the export of green tea HS code 0902.10 from Kenya to Nigeria is subject to a 4% ad valorem duty)

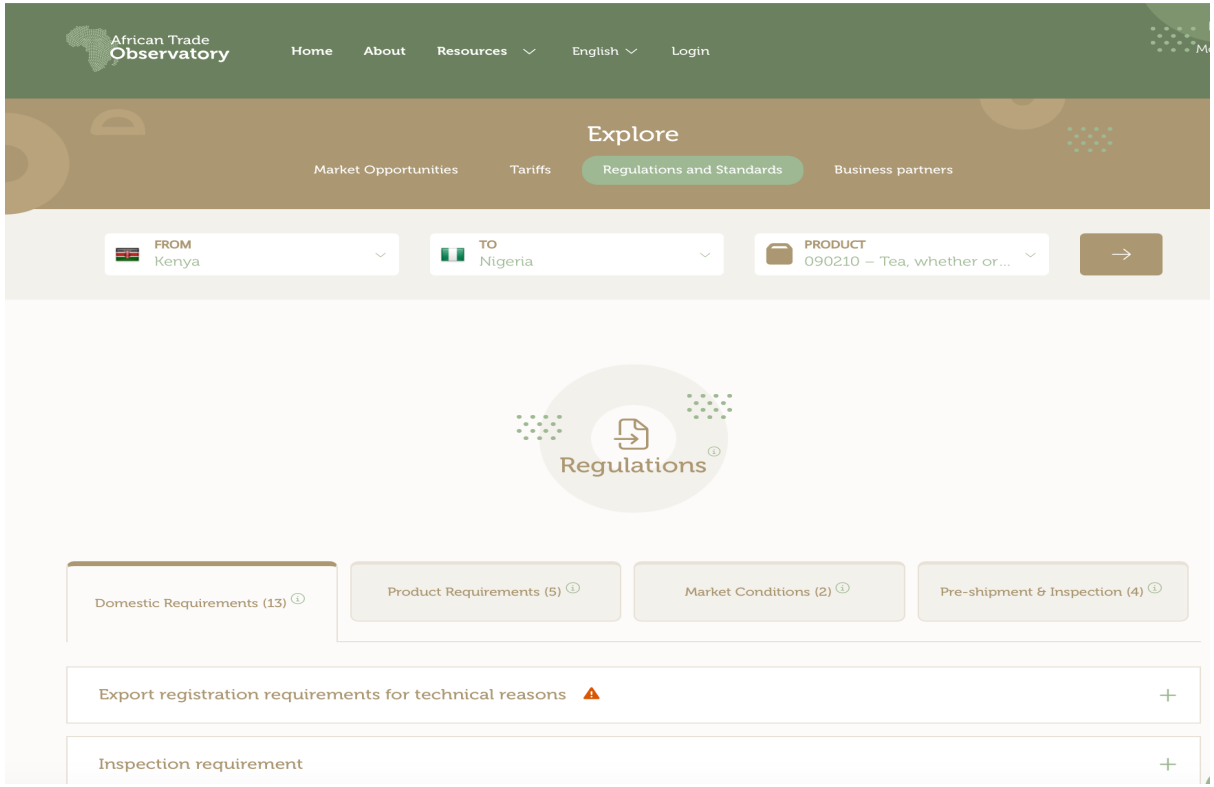


Step 5: Check whether the product qualifies for preferential treatment

Consult the AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual and the other materials in the table above to determine whether the product satisfies the applicable AfCFTA origin requirements.

Step 6: Identify market-access requirements (standards)

Before concluding a transaction, verify the applicable import, standards, conformity assessment, sanitary and phytosanitary, licensing and other regulatory requirements applicable to your product in the destination market. The ATO platform provides this information, helping businesses understand the requirements they must meet to access a particular African market. The example below illustrates the regulatory requirements for placing green tea on the Nigerian market.



Step 7: Check for possible trade barriers

If, during or after a shipment, your business encounters a regulatory, administrative or procedural obstacle that prevents or unnecessarily restricts trade, you can report it through the appropriate Non-Tariff Barrier (NTB) reporting mechanism and monitor its resolution. These mechanisms can help facilitate the removal of trade bottlenecks. You can also consult them before shipping to identify common barriers that may affect the entry of your product into the destination market and take steps to address them in advance.

1) **Tripartite NTB Mechanism:** The regional platform serves the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite region and allows businesses to report and track NTBs affecting trade within the Tripartite area. Complaints are referred to the relevant National Focal Points and REC authorities for follow-up and resolution.
2) **AfCFTA NTB Online Mechanism:** The continental platform allows businesses and other economic operators to report NTBs encountered in intra-African trade. It provides a continent-wide mechanism for reporting and resolving trade barriers, including excessive border delays, ad hoc fees, cumbersome documentation requirements, restrictive standards and other trade-related obstacles.

The two mechanisms are complementary and interconnected. The AfCFTA NTB Online Mechanism provides a continental channel for reporting NTBs affecting trade between AfCFTA State Parties where no applicable regional NTB mechanism covers the specific trade relationship. For example, while Kenya is a member of the EAC and Nigeria is a member of ECOWAS, there is no intra-REC Free Trade Area governing trade between the two countries, apart from the AfCFTA. Therefore, a Kenyan business encountering a trade barrier when exporting to or importing from Nigeria should report it through the AfCFTA NTB Online Mechanism. Businesses must therefore use the mechanism most appropriate to the countries affected by the NTB.

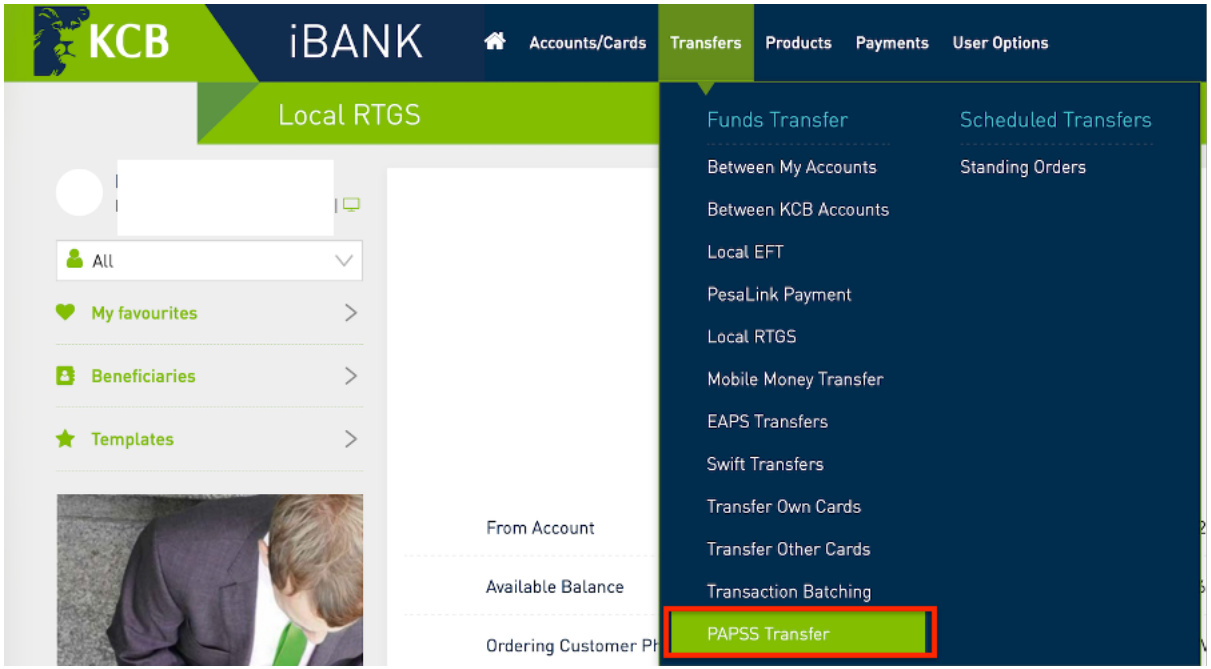
Step 8: Explore financing for AfCFTA-related investment and expansion

Businesses seeking to expand production, upgrade their operations or strengthen their capacity to participate in intra-African trade can explore financing available through the **AfCFTA Adjustment Fund**. The Fund was established by the AfCFTA Secretariat and Afreximbank to support adjustment to the AfCFTA and facilitate effective participation in the continental market. Its market-facing Credit Fund provides financing to eligible private enterprises for commercially viable investments that can support trade, competitiveness, regional value chains and productive capacity.

Businesses can consult the Adjustment Fund application portal (see the link in the table above) to determine the applicable funding window, eligibility requirements and application procedures. The portal provides separate application processes for the Fund's different financing windows. Businesses should note that access to financing is subject to the Fund's eligibility criteria, investment assessment and applicable terms and conditions.

Step 9: Arrange payment

Where available, businesses can use the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) to make and receive cross-border payments in African currencies, reducing the need to use third-country currencies. To use PAPSS, check whether your bank or other payment service provider is connected to the system and whether the destination country, currencies and type of transaction are supported. If so, use your mobile banking platform or ask your bank to process the payment through PAPSS and confirm the applicable fees, exchange rate and documentation requirements.



4- Treatment of goods produced within Special Economic Zones under the AfCFTA:

The specific AfCFTA/AU decision that adopted the Ministerial Regulations on Special Economic Arrangements/Zones (SEZs) is the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, February 18–19, 2023. Paragraph 8 states that the Assembly adopted the Ministerial Regulations on Special Economic Arrangements/Zones so that goods produced in SEZs can be treated as originating goods. Goods produced within a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) can benefit from AfCFTA preferential treatment. However, production in an SEZ does not automatically confer AfCFTA originating status. Under Article 9 of Annex 2 to the Protocol on Trade in Goods, goods produced in a Special Economic Zone are treated as originating goods provided that they satisfy the applicable AfCFTA Rules of Origin.

This means that businesses operating in an SEZ must apply the same origin analysis to their products as other producers seeking AfCFTA preferences. They should therefore determine the applicable product-specific rule of origin and establish that the processing carried out in the SEZ is sufficient to confer origin under that rule. Where non-originating materials or inputs are used, the applicable requirements concerning tariff classification, value addition, specific processing or other criteria must be satisfied.

Businesses established in SEZs should therefore:

a) Identify the HS classification of the final product;

b) Check the applicable AfCFTA product-specific rule of origin in the AfCFTA e-Tariff Book and Rules of Origin resources;

c) Identify all non-originating inputs used in production and determine whether their use is permitted under the applicable rule;

d) Document the production process and origin of inputs sufficiently to demonstrate compliance to the competent authorities;

e) Obtain the appropriate proof of origin required for claiming AfCFTA preferential treatment; and

f) Confirm that the importing State Party is implementing the relevant AfCFTA tariff concession for the product.

Customs authorities also have a role in ensuring the integrity of the declared origin. Where originating goods move through an SEZ, they must remain under Customs control and must not be substituted or mixed with other goods. Where originating products enter an SEZ and undergo further processing or transformation, the applicable AfCFTA origin provisions determine whether the resulting product qualifies as originating.

Example

A company located in an African SEZ imports non-originating inputs from outside Africa and uses them to manufacture a finished product for export to another AfCFTA State Party. The fact that the manufacturing takes place inside an SEZ does not, by itself, make the finished product AfCFTA-originating. The company must demonstrate that the processing carried out in the SEZ satisfies the specific AfCFTA Rule of Origin applicable to that product. If it does, the product may qualify for the AfCFTA preferential tariff, subject to the other applicable requirements.

Key message: SEZ production is compatible with AfCFTA preferential trade, but the preference follows the origin of the product, not simply the location of the factory.

5-Important note- disclaimer

The tools presented in this guide are intended to support business decision-making, provide valuable information and facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA. They do not replace the legal requirements, administrative procedures or official guidance issued by national authorities of the importing and exporting countries. Businesses should always verify applicable tariffs, rules of origin, standards, customs procedures and licensing requirements and regulatory obligations with the relevant national authorities before concluding a trade operation. In particular, the AfCFTA e-Tariff Book itself advises traders to confirm applicable gazetted rates with national customs administrations, as national legislation remains legally authoritative.