

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** South Africa's Macadamia Industry Grows Despite Export  
Uncertainty

**Country:** South Africa - Republic of

**Post:** Pretoria

**Report Category:** Tree Nuts

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**Report Highlights:**

South Africa is the world's leading producer and exporter of macadamia nuts. Post estimates that 2025 production will decline by four percent from 2024 due to adverse weather conditions, which have led to yield losses and smaller-sized nuts. However, expansion of planted area and production is expected over the next several years, driven primarily by strong export demand. In 2024, South Africa exported 31 percent of its shelled macadamia nuts to the United States. The macadamia industry is concerned about the 30 percent import duty scheduled to take effect on August 1, 2025, as the United States is the primary market for specific grades, such as halves and pieces, which are widely used in processed foods.

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### Report Highlights

South Africa is the world's top producer of macadamia nuts, with production growing at an average annual rate of nine percent since 2010. This growth has been fueled by expanded planting areas, orchard maturation, and favorable weather conditions. However, production in the 2025 season is estimated to decline by four percent compared to 2024 due to adverse weather conditions.

Domestic consumption of macadamias in South Africa remains minimal, accounting for just two percent of total production. Considered a luxury product locally, demand is primarily driven by export markets. The United States is a major destination for South African shelled macadamia nuts, representing 31 percent of South Africa's share in 2024. South Africa is the leading supplier of shelled macadamias to the United States, holding a 52 percent of the market, followed by Kenya at 24 percent.

South Africa imports macadamias primarily from neighboring countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), leveraging duty-free access. Mozambique is the largest supplier, accounting for 40 percent of in-shell imports in 2024, followed by Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Despite its strong position in global export markets, South African growers face challenges such as fluctuating global prices and rising input costs. To address these issues and maintain competitiveness, producers are investing in precision farming techniques and upgrading processing facilities to ensure high-quality macadamias for export markets, including the United States.

### Report notes

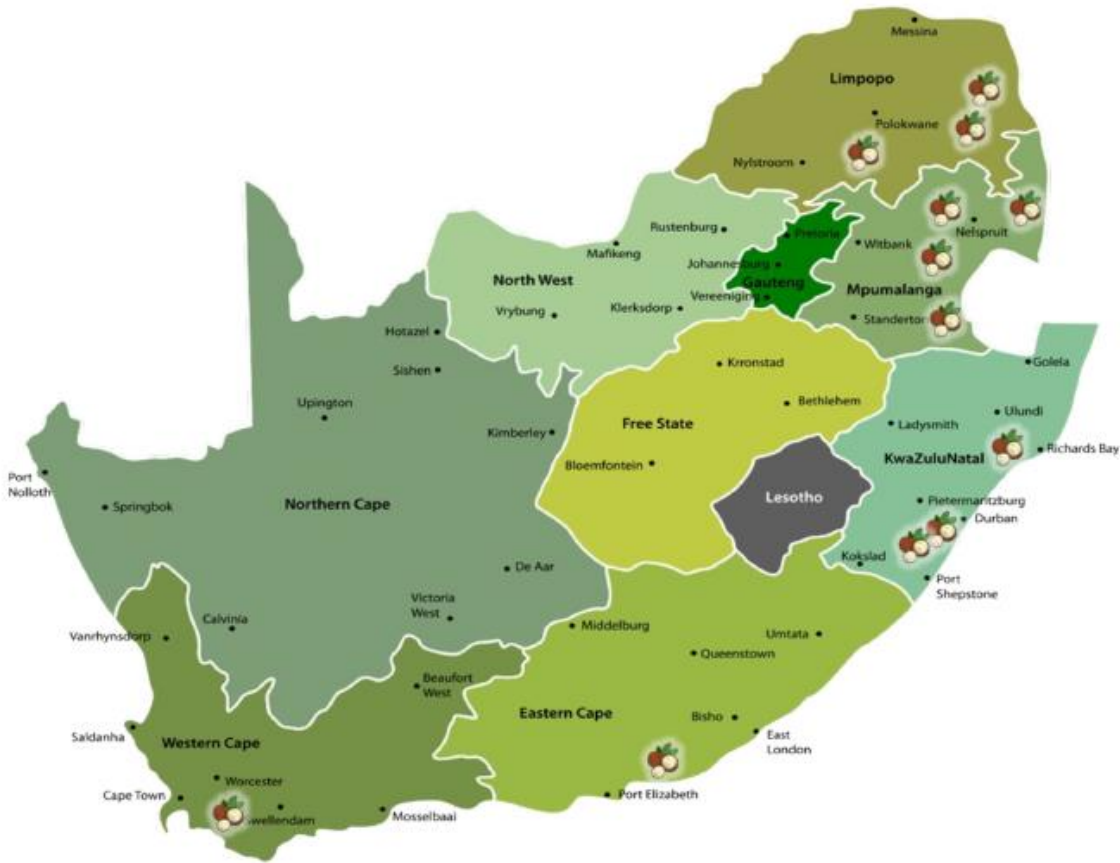
*Table 1: Tree Nuts Conversion Factors*

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>HS Codes</b>	<b>Conversion</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Macadamia	In-shell: 080261 Shelled: 080262	Multiply by 0.3 No Conversion	Convert to shelled basis No conversion

## **Planted Area**

Macadamias are the leading tree nuts produced in South Africa, followed by pecans. The export-oriented macadamia industry has grown significantly over the years, fueled by rising global demand and expanded production areas. Macadamias are primarily cultivated in the Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo provinces (see Figure 1), which offer hot subtropical climates ideal for production. Smaller plantings are also found in the Eastern and Western Cape. KwaZulu-Natal has seen the fastest growth in planted areas, with many orchards younger than 10 years.

*Figure 1: Macadamia Producing Provinces in South Africa*



*Source: SAMAC*

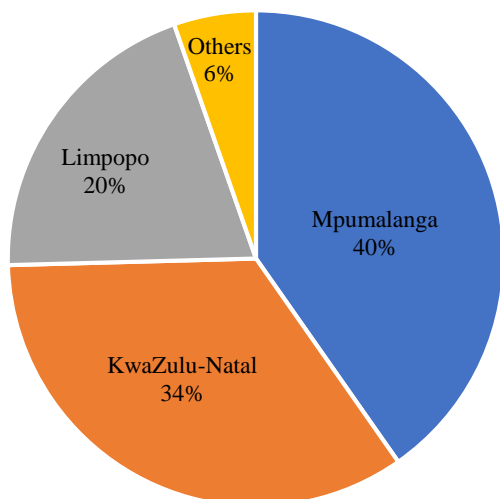
South Africa's macadamia industry includes approximately 1,100 growers who have invested heavily in new orchards and expanded production areas due to favorable returns and strong demand. The planted area has grown from around 6,750 hectares in 2001 to 81,302 hectares in 2024, with macadamias increasingly replacing traditional crops like sugarcane and citrus. Macadamias South Africa (SAMAC), the industry association, collaborates with the University of New England in Australia to map orchards using satellite imagery and industry data.

Despite this growth, the industry has faced financial pressure in recent years due to falling prices and rising input costs. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted sales, and inflation in export markets further impacted profitability. In 2023, macadamia prices dropped by nearly 50 percent, reaching

their lowest levels in a decade. While still below pre-2022 levels, prices have begun to recover; however, the decline has contributed to a slowed rate of area expansion (Figure 3). To address these challenges, growers are investing in precision farming techniques to increase yields and improve nut quality, ensuring better pricing in export markets.

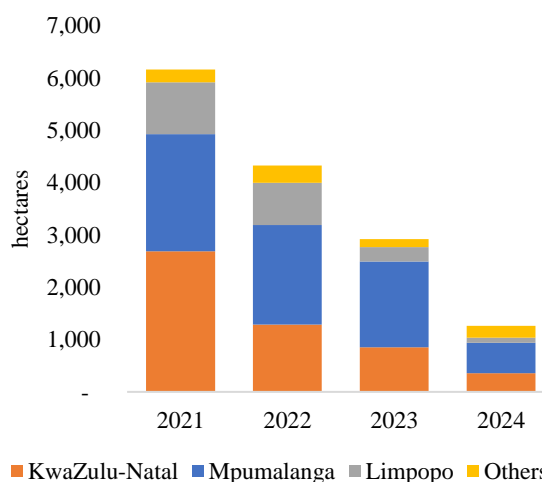
The South Africa macadamia industry has also been negatively affected by deteriorating road infrastructure and logistical challenges at its ports. Additionally, Post contacts report that growers are facing increased security challenges, including theft. These incidents have resulted in increased spending on security measures.

**Figure 2:** Provincial Distribution of 81,302 ha under macadamia production in South Africa: 2024



Source: Macadamias South Africa (SAMAC)

**Figure 3:** Yearly Expanded Area Planted to Macadamias



Source: SAMAC

South Africa produces more than 40 macadamia cultivars, with popular varieties including Beaumont (695), Nelmac 2, Nelmac 1, Nelmac D, 816, 814, A4 (a new and popular variety due to large kernel and high yield), A16, 791, 344, and 788, among others. Each cultivar offers unique characteristics, such as kernel size, yield, and market suitability. For example, the Nelmac variety produces large, high-quality nuts, while the Beaumont variety, known for its thick shell and smaller nuts, is often exported in-shell to China. There are [seven nurseries](#) accredited by the Seedling Growers Association of South Africa to sell macadamia trees to growers. In 2024, approximately 394,000 macadamia trees were sold to local growers, expanding the planted area by 1,260 hectares. South Africa also exported 161,000 macadamia trees, primarily to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, and Mozambique, according to a 2024 SAMAC report.

FAS Pretoria visited a macadamia farm in Mbombela, Mpumalanga, and Figure 4 shows some of the macadamias produced at that farm. The growers planted different cultivars of macadamias, with each cultivar having different markets and price points. The Nelmac variety produces large, good quality nuts. The 816 variety is considered a premium nut and has a good percentage of whole kernels. However, this variety takes about three years longer to reach maturity compared to others. The Beaumont variety is thick shelled, and the nuts are typically smaller. This variety is usually exported in-shell to China.

**Figure 4:** A Sample of Macadamia during FAS Pretoria Farm Visit



Source: FAS Pretoria

Macadamia production in South Africa typically follows industry-recommended standards for tree spacing. Macadamia nut trees are planted four meters apart in the row and eight meters between rows, resulting in almost 312 trees per hectare. However, growers can choose their preferred spacing and plant population. Macadamia trees typically take 7-9 years to reach maturity, with yields increasing for the next 15-20 years. Flowering begins in July, and nuts begin to develop by October, with harvest season running from March through June/July (see Table 2). Harvesting is labor intensive, involving manual collection or mechanical sweepers. One major factor for the global competitiveness of South African macadamia is the low cost of labor. After harvesting, nuts are de-husked, cured to achieve the desired kernel moisture content, and sorted before processing.

**Table 2:** Typical Macadamia Marketing Year in South Africa

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Flower development											
Full bloom and nut set											
Nut development (shell hardening then oil accumulation)											
Harvesting									Harvesting		

## **Production**

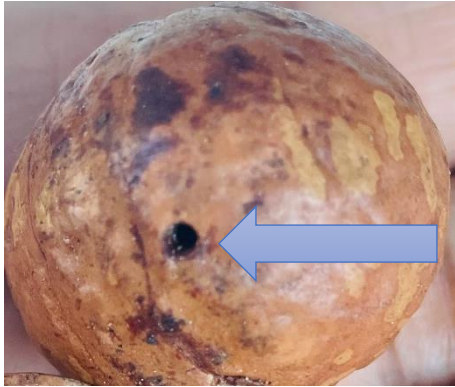
Since 2014/15, South Africa has become the world’s leading producer of macadamia nuts, followed closely by Australia. Growth in production has been driven by favorable weather conditions, the maturation of orchards, and expanded planting areas. Mpumalanga remains the leading production region, followed by KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, as shown in Figure 6. Since 2010, production volumes have grown at an average annual rate of nine percent, although there were notable dips in 2016 and 2020 due to hotter and drier than usual conditions (see Figure 7).

South Africa’s macadamia nut industry continues to adapt to environmental and pest-related challenges while maintaining its position as a global leader in production. Pests such as the stink

bug, a key pest for macadamias in South Africa, and the macadamia nut borer continue to pose challenges for growers, causing damage to the nuts and leading to yield and quality losses.

*FAS Pretoria visited a macadamia farm in Mpumalanga and **Figure 5** shows a macadamia nut affected by the macadamia nut borer.*

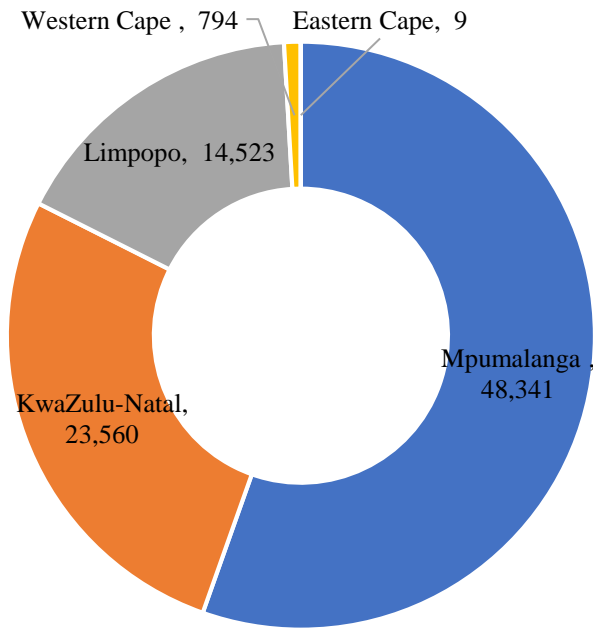
**Figure 5:** *Damage caused by the macadamia nut borer*



*Source: FAS Pretoria*

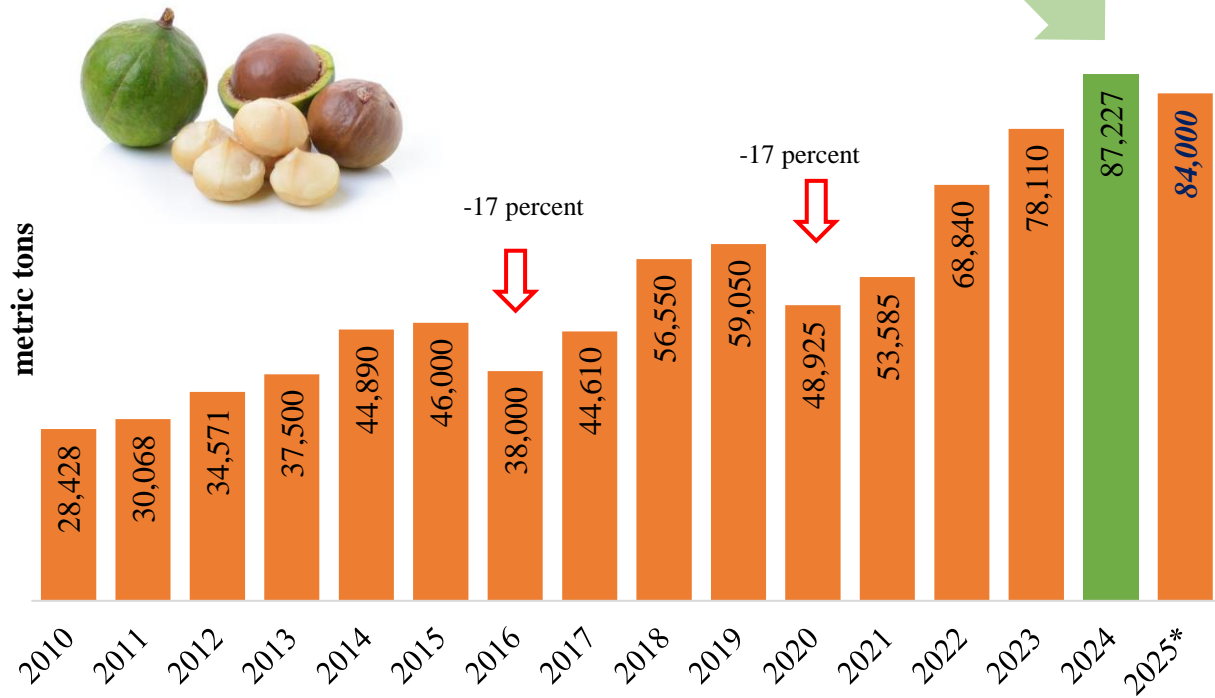
For the 2025 season, Post contacts report that the KwaZulu-Natal province experienced warmer-than-usual conditions in autumn which disrupted flowering. Additionally, the Limpopo province experienced cold conditions that damaged flowers, while Mpumalanga experienced late rains. In addition, some growers were also affected by hail damage. These adverse weather events increased pest pressure, reduced yields, and resulted in smaller-sized nuts. Therefore, Post estimates that production for the 2025 season, which began in March and will continue through mid-August, will decline by four percent as compared to 2024.

**Figure 6: Macadamia Producing Provinces: 2024 Volumes (Metric Tons)**



Source: SAMAC

**Figure 7: Macadamia Nut Production Trend**



Source: SAMAC

\*Estimate

## Consumption

The South African macadamia industry is export-oriented, with only two percent of domestic production consumed locally. Macadamias are considered a luxury product, and demand has traditionally been low due to high prices. However, the 2022 price crash sparked increased interest in macadamias as an ingredient, according to Post contacts.

Macadamia nuts and processed products are becoming more visible in health shops, specialty shops and major retailers such as Woolworths, Checkers, Pick 'n Pay, and Food Lover's market. This growth in domestic demand is driven by shifting consumer preferences towards healthier diets and the effects of urbanization. Macadamias are increasingly used as ingredients in a variety of products, including nut butter, cooking and dressing oils, plant-based milk, granola and muesli, chocolate-covered macadamia nut bars, ice cream, and dessert toppings.

As South African consumers embrace healthier food options, the domestic market for macadamias is showing signs of growth, complementing the industry's strong export focus.

### *Range of Macadamia Products Available in South Africa*



*Picture sources: Woolworths, Checkers and Dischem websites*

## Processing

Steady growth in South Africa's macadamia production has driven an increase in the number of processing facilities, particularly in key production regions. Post anticipates that processing capacity will continue to expand as macadamia production increases, with some processors already investing in upgrades to keep pace with growing production volumes. Currently, there are approximately [29 macadamia nuts processors](#) accredited by Macadamias South Africa (SAMAC). These processors handle key functions such as storage, processing, and marketing of macadamias for both domestic and export markets.

Macadamias are sold either in-shell or as kernels. Processing begins with the nuts being cracked and sorted into various styles. Macadamia kernels are then packaged either as wholes, halves,

pieces, or fines/meals. Fully matured kernels free from significant defects are classified as premium-grade, while commercial-grade nuts may have minor visual defects or slight immaturity. The industry uses standardized grading guidelines, outlined in **Table 3**, to ensure consistency in processed macadamia quality.

As South Africa’s macadamia industry continues to grow, investment in processing capacity and quality standards will play a critical role in supporting the country’s position as a leading global supplier.

**Table 3: Macadamia Style Guide**

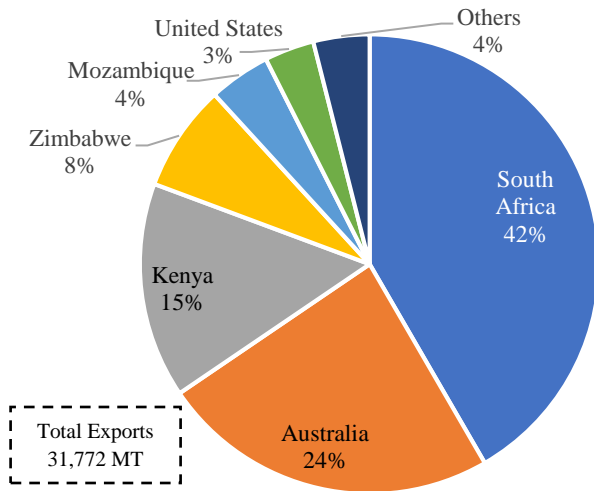
			
Style 0 Min 95 % whole >20 mm sized	Style 1 Min 90 % whole 16 – 20 mm sized	Style 1S Min 90 % whole 13 – 18 mm sized	Style 2 Min 50 % whole 13 – 18 mm sized
			
Style 3 Min 15 % whole >13 mm sized	Style 4L Min 80 % halves >13 mm sized	Style 4S Min 50 % halves 10-14 mm sized	
			
Style 5 Pieces 8-12 mm sized	Style 6 Pieces 5-9 mm sized	Style 7 Pieces 3-6 mm sized	Style 8 Pieces and meal <3 mm sized

*Source: World Macadamia Organization*

## **Exports**

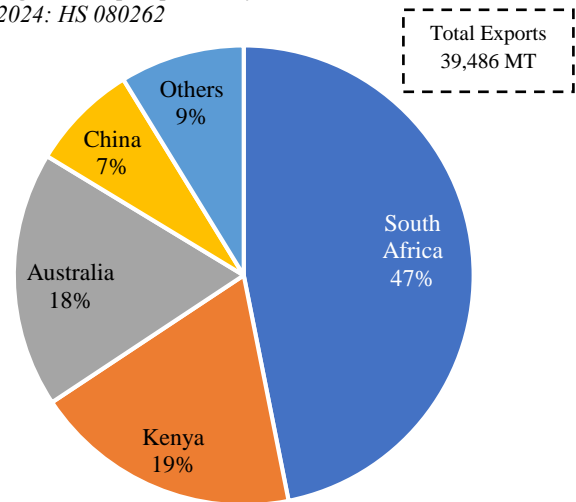
South Africa is the leading exporter of macadamia nuts (see Figure 8 and Figure 9), holding a five-year annual average export share of 41 percent.

**Figure 8: Top Exporters of In Shell Macadamias in 2024: HS 080261\***



\*Adjusted to shelled values using the adjustment factor of 0.3.  
Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.

**Figure 9: Top Exporters of Shelled Macadamias in 2024: HS 080262**

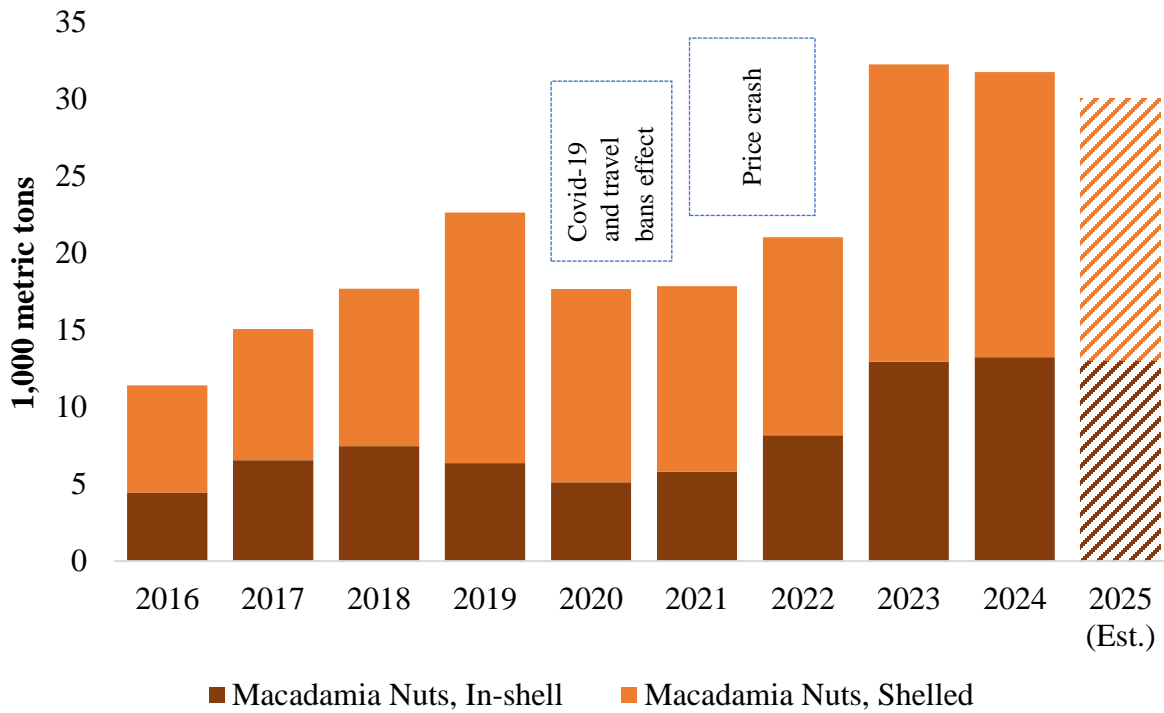


Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.

South Africa exports both in-shell and shelled macadamia nuts. Since 2016, total macadamia exports have grown at an annual average of 16 percent (see Figure 10), driven by expanded domestic production and rising global demand.

However, exports experienced a decline in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, which disrupted supply chains and market access. Additionally, macadamia prices fell between 2021 and 2023 as increased production volumes and higher stock levels from subdued demand in prior years put downward pressure on prices. Post estimates that exports will decrease by five percent in 2025, due to a drop in production. Any future increases in production are expected to be directed towards export markets.

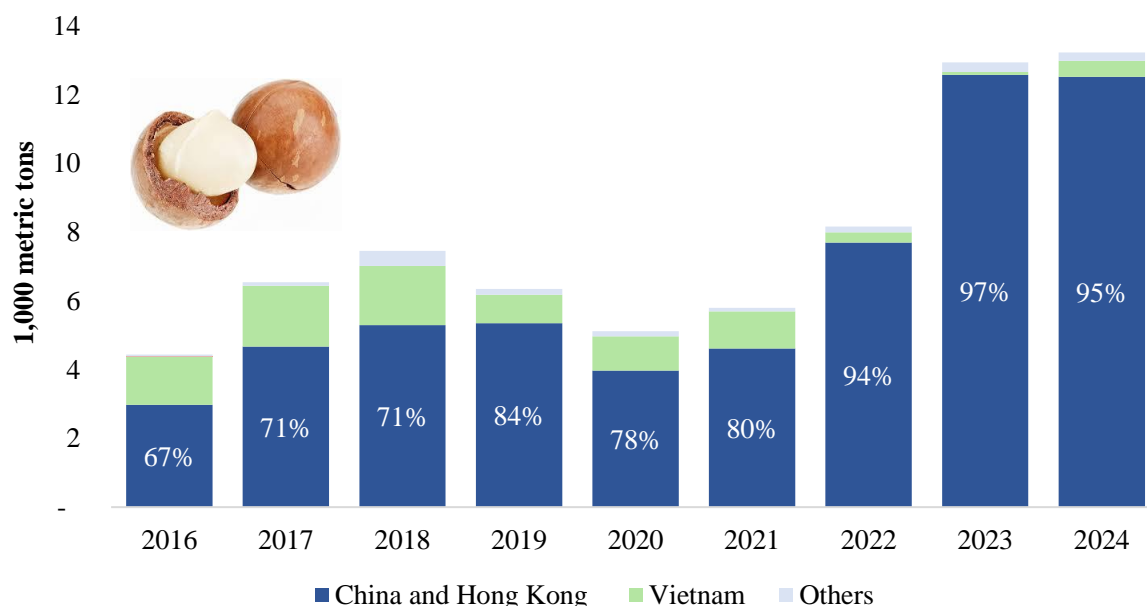
**Figure 10: South Africa’s Exports of Macadamia Nuts\***



*\*In-Shell Macadamia exports have been adjusted to shelled values using the adjustment factor of 0.3.  
Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.*

China is the leading destination for South Africa’s in-shell macadamia nuts, accounting for 95 percent of in-shell exports in 2024. South Africa is the top supplier to China, holding a 51 percent market share, followed by Australia at 19 percent, and Kenya at 18 percent. Demand from China continues to drive export growth, solidifying South Africa’s position as a key supplier in the global market.

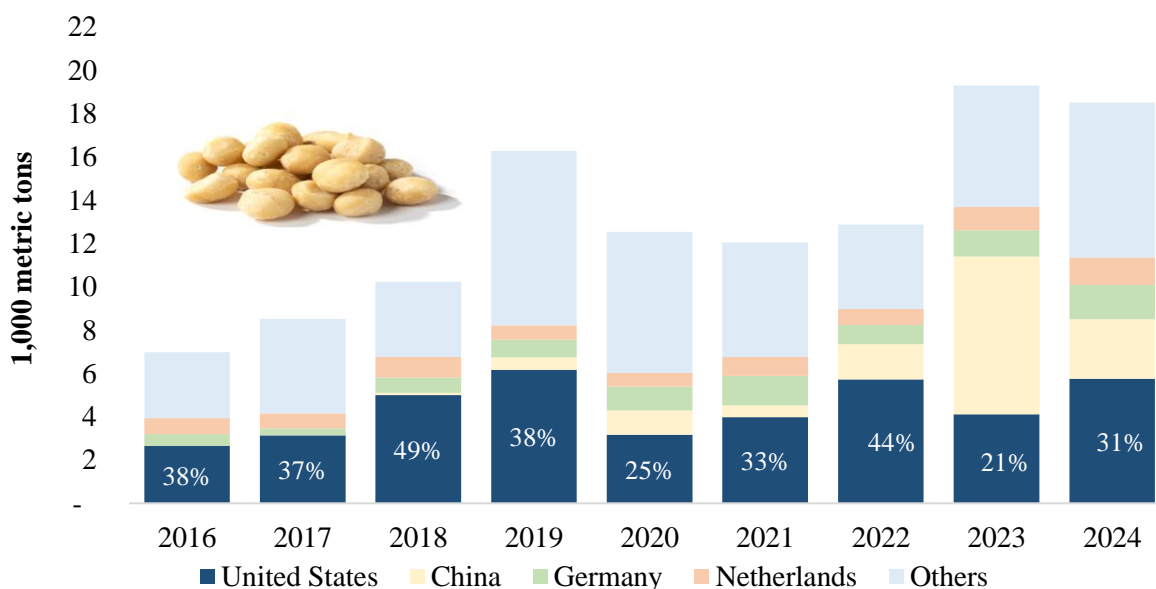
**Figure 11: South African Exports of In-Shell Macadamia Nuts\*. HS: 080261**



\*In-Shell Macadamia exports have been adjusted to shelled values using the adjustment factor of 0.3.  
Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.

The United States is a major market for South African shelled macadamias, representing 31 percent of South Africa’s shelled export share in 2024. South Africa is the leading supplier of shelled macadamias to the United States, holding a 52 percent market share, followed by Kenya at 24 percent. Post contacts report that South Africa’s exports to the U.S. primarily consist of halves and pieces grades, which are widely used in processed foods.

**Figure 12: South African exports of Shelled Macadamia Nuts. HS: 080262**



Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.

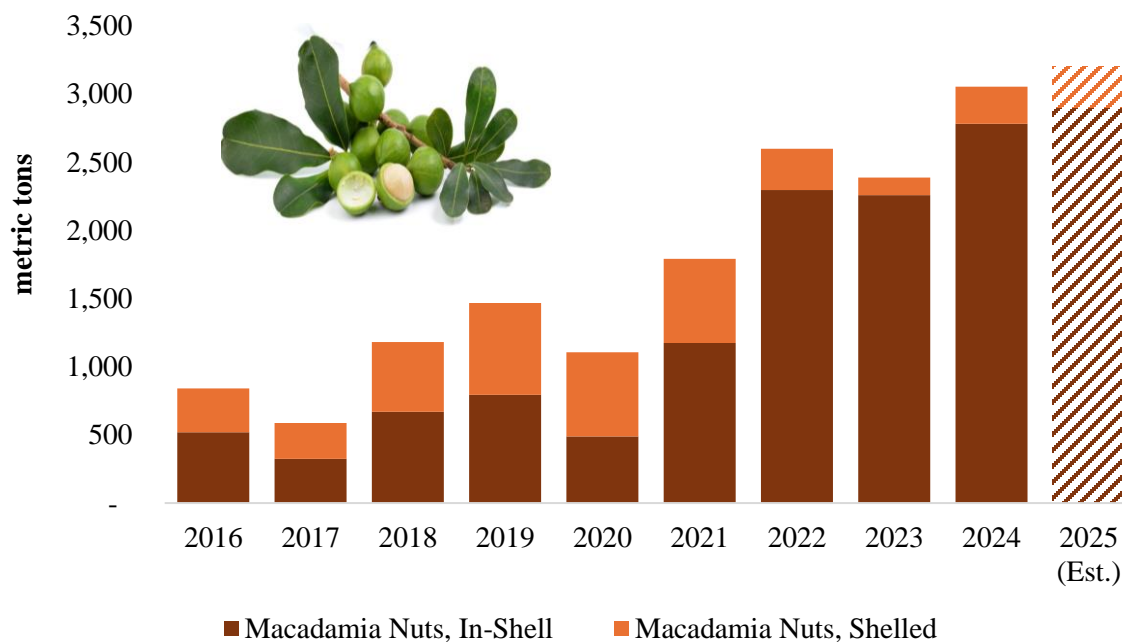
The United States currently imposes a 10 percent tariff on macadamias imported from South Africa, with a 30 percent tariff scheduled to take effect on August 1, 2025. Prior to April 5, South Africa benefitted from duty-free access to the United States under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Consequently, the industry is concerned about the increase in U.S. import duties and is exploring alternative markets. Post contacts report that some processors have an excess of style 4L nuts (see Table 3 for macadamia styles) due to lower than usual orders of this grade from the United States since a 10 percent tariff was imposed. Starting August 1, 2025, South Africa is expected to face a competitive disadvantage compared to Australia, which will continue to attract only a 10 percent duty. Post contacts report that South Africa also faces tariffs in key markets such as China (12 percent), India (30 percent), and South Korea (30 percent) which hinder the industry’s competitiveness.

## **Imports**

South Africa’s imports of macadamia nuts have steadily increased over the years, reaching nearly 3,100 metric tons (MT) in 2024. The majority of these imports – 91 percent – are in-shell macadamias. Mozambique is the leading supplier, accounting for 40 percent of South Africa’s total in-shell imports in 2024, followed by Zimbabwe at 22 percent, and Zambia at 21 percent.

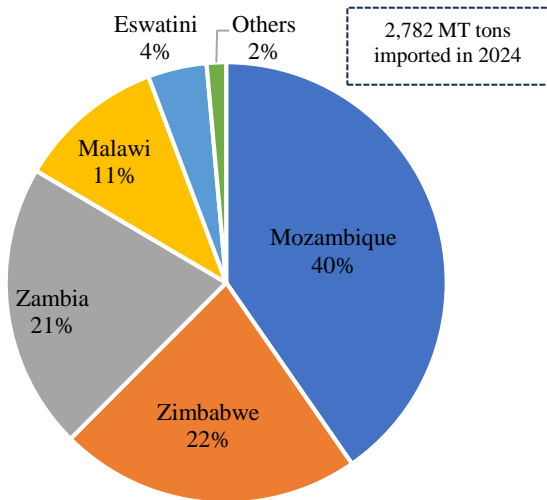
These neighboring countries, along with Malawi, are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and benefit from duty-free access to the South African market (see Table 4). This preferential trade arrangement supports the steady flow of macadamia imports into South Africa, complementing domestic production and meeting growing demand.

**Figure 13: South Africa’s Imports of Macadamia Nuts\***



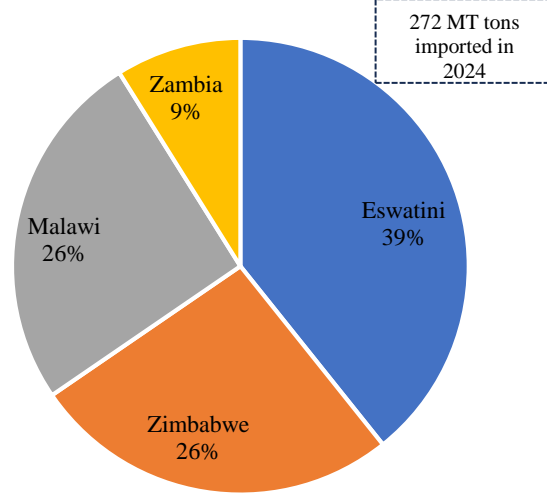
*\*In-Shell Macadamia exports have been adjusted to shelled values using the adjustment factor of 0.3.  
Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.*

**Figure 14: South African imports of In-Shell Macadamia Nuts. HS: 080261 - 2024**



Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.

**Figure 15: South African Imports of Shelled Macadamia Nuts. HS: 080262 - 2024**



Source: FAS Pretoria using Trade Data Monitor, LLC.

**Table 4: Custom Duties Applicable to Macadamia Imports into South Africa**

HS Code	Description	Rate of Duty					
		General	EU/UK	EFTA	SADC	MERCOSUR	AfCFTA
080261	Macadamia Nuts: In shell	free	free	free	free	free	free
080262	Macadamia Nuts: Shelled	free	free	free	free	free	free

Source: South African Revenue Services (SARS)

South Africa’s macadamia industry continues to grow, solidifying its position as a global leader in production and exports. Despite challenges such as fluctuating prices, rising input costs, and pest pressures, investments in precision farming, processing capacity, and quality improvements are driving competitiveness in key export markets like China and the United States. As global demand for macadamias remains strong, South Africa is well-positioned to expand its market share.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.