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PRODUCTS ON HIGH DEMAND

A Market and Trade Intelligence Report on Priority Export Products in the EU–Nigeria Agri-Food Corridor, 2021–2025

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Union (EU) remains one of Nigeria's most important agri-food trading partners. Between 2021 and 2025, EU agri-food exports to Nigeria ranged from €1.16 billion to €1.81 billion annually, while EU agri-food imports from Nigeria increased significantly from €1.34 billion in 2021 to €2.14 billion in 2025, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 12.4%. This sustained growth highlights the strengthening trade relationship between Nigeria and the EU in the agri-food sector.

Despite this growth, the trade relationship remains structurally asymmetric. Nigeria's exports to the EU are dominated by primary agricultural commodities such as cocoa, sesame seeds, cashew nuts, and shea products, while imports from the EU consist largely of processed and value-added food products, including cereals, dairy products, cereal preparations, and spirits. This trade pattern underscores both the opportunities and challenges for Nigeria, as the country continues to export predominantly raw commodities while capturing relatively limited value from downstream processing and manufacturing.

Agriculture contributes approximately 25.9% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs about 34% of the country's workforce, underscoring its critical role in economic growth, employment, and food security.

OVERALL TRADE STRUCTURE: EU-NIGERIA AGRI-FOOD (2021-2025)

The table below presents the aggregate EU agri-food trade flows with Nigeria over the five-year reporting period, based on the European Commission COMEXT-EUROSTAT database.

Year	EU Exports to Nigeria (€B)	EU Imports from Nigeria (€B)	Trade Balance
2021	1,605	1,340	-265
2022	1,808	1,540	-268
2023	1,664	1,670	-6
2024	1,613	1,685	-72
2025	1,157	2,135	-978

Key observations from the aggregate data:

- EU exports to Nigeria peaked in 2022 at €1.81 billion before declining steadily to €1.16 billion in 2025, a 36% drop over four years, partly driven by Nigeria's naira depreciation, import substitution policies, and forex restrictions.

- EU imports from Nigeria surged by 59% between 2021 and 2025, fueled by record cocoa prices and growing demand for Nigerian agricultural commodities.

- The trade balance shifted dramatically — from a slight EU surplus in 2021/2022 to a near-€1 billion deficit in 2025 — indicating that Nigeria's export performance to the EU has significantly strengthened.

- Nigeria ranks 36th among all extra-EU agri-food export destinations (0.5% share) but 28th as an import source (1.1% share), reflecting its growing relevance as a commodity supplier.

2 HIGH DEMAND AGRIBUSINESS PRODUCTS FOR NIGERIA-EU TRADE: **PRIORITY LIST AND EU IMPORT SNAPSHOT**

The following priority value chains represent high-demand agribusiness products with significant commercial relevance in both Nigeria and the European Union. The selection is based on market demand, production potential, trade performance, value addition opportunities, and prospects for bilateral trade and investment.

S/N	Priority Product	Key Products	Nigeria	EU
1	Cocoa	Cocoa beans, cocoa butter, cocoa paste, cocoa powder	Very High	Very High
2	Oil seeds	Sesame seeds, soybeans, groundnuts (peanuts)	Very High	Very High
3	Tree nuts	Cashew Kernels	Very High	Very High
4	Vegetable Oils & Natural Fats	Shea butter, palm kernel oil and derivatives	Very High	High
5	Roots & Tubers	Cassava flour, cassava starch, high-quality cassava products	Very High	High
6	Spices & Herbs	Ginger, dried chilli, turmeric, garlic, moringa products	Very High	Very High
7	Dried Fruits & Vegetables	Dried mango, dried pineapple, dried coconut, dried banana, hibiscus flowers, tomatoes	High	Very High
8	Dairy	Milk, cheese, butter, yoghurt, milk powder	Very High	Very High
9	Natural rubber	Natural rubber and latex	High	Very High

EU 2024 Import Market Snapshot

The table below shows EU import values for the highest-demand products (ITC Trade Map), ranked from highest to lowest EU import value.

Rank	Product	HS Code	EU Import Value (€)
1	Cocoa beans	1801	10,544,273,000
2	Cocoa butter	1804	7,671,510,000
3	Soybeans (grain)	120190	6,802,516,000
4	Natural rubber (sheets, TSNR & latex, combined)	4001	2,678,415,000
5	Cashew kernels	80132	1,365,428,000
6	Shea butter	15159090	1,187,566,000
7	Plantain (fresh)	80310	440,334,000
8	Sesame seeds	120740	383,807,000
9	Ginger	91011	360,502,000

3 PRODUCT PROFILES

3.1 Cocoa Beans and Products

Cocoa is Nigeria's most important agricultural export to the EU and the single largest driver of Nigeria's growing trade surplus in agri-food with Europe. Nigeria is the world's fourth-largest cocoa producer after Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Ecuador.

- Cocoa exports to the EU surged 606% in Q4 2024, rising from ₦171 billion to ₦1.2 trillion in a single quarter.
- Total cocoa and cocoa products were valued at US$906.94 million in Q1 2025 alone, accounting for 6.70% of Nigeria's total exports in that period.
- The Netherlands and Belgium are the primary EU destinations. Belgium alone imported approximately €145 million in Nigerian cocoa and cocoa products in 2024.
- Superior quality Nigerian cocoa beans are exported primarily to the Netherlands and Malaysia, while standard quality beans go mainly to the Netherlands and Belgium.
- Rising global cocoa prices — driven by severe supply shortfalls in Ivory Coast and Ghana — dramatically inflated the value of Nigerian cocoa exports from 2023 onward.

- Nigeria is actively aligning cocoa exports with EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) requirements, which mandate proof of deforestation-free supply chains — a critical compliance hurdle from 2025.

The EU's cocoa and chocolate industry is a massive market. Belgium, as one of Europe's top chocolate producers, brought in €4.2 billion of cocoa and cocoa products globally in 2024, of which Nigerian cocoa supplied approximately 3.5% — a share that is growing.

3.2 Sesame Seeds (Sesamum Seeds)

Sesame seeds are Nigeria's historically dominant agricultural export and a major EU-destined commodity. Nigeria ranks among the top sesame seed producers globally, with most cultivation in Jigawa, Nasarawa, Benue, and Kogi states.

- Sesame seeds were the leading agricultural export in Q1 2021, valued at approximately ₦52.26 billion, representing 41.1% of total agric exports that quarter.
- China is the largest single buyer of Nigerian sesame globally, but Europe — especially Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK — absorbs significant volumes.
- In Q4 2024, sesame seeds were among Nigeria's top five agricultural exports, valued at approximately ₦202.94 billion.

- EU buyers use sesame for food processing, bakery products, health foods, and tahini production.
- Nigeria's sesame sector benefits from high-quality, non-GMO, hulled varieties that command premium prices in European health food markets.

3.3 Cashew Nuts (In-Shell and Shelled)

Nigeria is one of Africa's largest cashew producers, with cultivation concentrated in Kogi, Oyo, Enugu, and Kwara states. Cashew has become a rising star in Nigeria's EU export portfolio.

- Cashew nuts (in-shell) were valued at ₦13.71 billion in Q1 2021 and have grown steadily through the review period.
- In Q2 2022, cashew nuts in-shell accounted for 29.11% of all agricultural products exported and ranked fourth highest among Nigeria's exports.
- Q4 2024 cashew exports were valued at approximately ₦36.71 billion, maintaining a top five position.
- Belgium, Spain, and Germany are significant EU importers of Nigerian cashew kernels.

- The major challenge for Nigeria is that most raw cashews are shipped to Asia (India and Vietnam) for processing, then re-exported as cashew kernels to Europe. Nigeria captures only the low-value raw-material stage; value-added processing capacity remains underdeveloped.

3.4 Shea Products (Crude Shea Nuts and Shea Butter)

Shea nuts and shea butter have emerged as a fast-growing EU-destined export. Nigeria is among the world's top shea-producing countries, with trees concentrated across the Guinea Savannah Zone — including Kano, Kaduna, Benue, Nasarawa, and Oyo states.

- Crude shea nuts reached ₦3 trillion in Q4 2024, placing them among the top five agricultural exports.
- Shea butter is used extensively by EU cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and food industries (as a cocoa butter substitute).

- European buyers — particularly in France, Germany, and the Netherlands — source Nigerian shea for personal-care manufacturers.
- EU demand for shea is expected to increase as regulations phase out certain synthetic emollients, opening larger markets for natural shea derivatives.

3.5 Frozen Shrimps and Prawns

Seafood represents a smaller but growing and strategically significant export. Nigeria regained EU certification for shrimp exports in 2024, achieving 100% compliance with the Turtle Excluder Device (TED) requirement — a milestone enabling market re-entry.

- Q4 2024 frozen shrimps and prawns exports were valued at approximately ₦23.52 billion.
- Key EU markets include Spain, Portugal, and France.
- The re-certification opens a significant premium seafood market for Nigerian producers previously excluded due to compliance failures.

3.6 Cocoa Butter

While raw cocoa beans dominate, Nigeria is also developing exports of processed cocoa derivatives, including cocoa butter — used in chocolate, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

- Nigeria exported approximately US$0.63 million of cocoa butter to Spain in 2024, indicating nascent but growing value-added trade.
- EU buyers in the food and cosmetics sectors represent high-value targets for cocoa butter and cocoa powder.
- Expanding domestic cocoa processing is a key policy objective, supported by the EU-Nigeria Agribusiness Platform.

3.7 Soybeans

Soybeans are a strategic dual-use crop for Nigeria, valued both for human consumption and as feedstock for the poultry and livestock industry. Cultivation is concentrated in Benue, Kaduna, Niger, and Taraba states, and the EU is a large global soybean importer, though most of Nigeria's current output is absorbed domestically rather than exported.

- Soybean exports fluctuate sharply quarter to quarter: Nairametrics reported a 73.57% drop in soybean export value in Q2 2024 compared with Q1 2024, reflecting the crop's heavy exposure to domestic feed-mill demand and inconsistent surplus volumes.
- Nigeria's soybean oil export prices averaged US$313 per tonne in 2024, a 31% increase on 2023, according to IndexBox trade data, but export volumes remain minor relative to Nigeria's own soybean oil import bill.
- The EU imported an estimated €6.8 billion of soybeans (HS 120190) globally in 2024 (ITC Trade Map), underscoring the scale of unmet demand that Nigerian producers could target if processing and export logistics improve.

- Soybean flour, a processed derivative, is also exported in smaller volumes for food and animal-feed applications.
- The main constraint is domestic absorption: Nigeria's poultry and edible-oil industries currently consume most locally grown soybeans, limiting exportable surplus without further yield improvements.

3.8 Natural Rubber

Natural rubber is a long-established Nigerian export crop, produced mainly in Edo, Delta, Ogun, and Cross River states, with the EU (notably Belgium, France, and Germany) among the historic destination markets for Nigerian latex and technically specified natural rubber (TSNR).

- Nigeria's natural rubber export trade value was estimated at approximately US$456 million in 2024 across all destinations, according to trade compilations of Nigerian export data.
- The EU-Nigeria private-sector value chain mapping (EU Delegation to Nigeria, 2024) identifies Belgium as the leading EU destination for Nigerian natural rubber, followed by France and Germany, with SOCFIN Group cited as a major processor and exporter.
- Globally, natural rubber exports reached roughly US$16 billion in 2024, with Asian producers (Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam) and Côte d'Ivoire dominating supply; Africa as a whole supplied around 19% of world exports, leaving room for Nigeria to expand its comparatively small share.

- Nigeria's rubber sector faces ageing plantations, smallholder-dominated production, and limited processing into higher-value TSNR grades, which constrains the price Nigerian rubber commands relative to competitors.
- EU demand for natural rubber remains structurally strong for tyre manufacturing and industrial goods, and EUDR deforestation-free sourcing rules (applicable to rubber alongside cocoa and other commodities) will increasingly shape which Nigerian suppliers can access the EU market from 2025 onward.

3.9 Ginger

Nigeria is one of the world's largest ginger producers, ranking third globally after India and China, with cultivation concentrated in Kaduna, Nasarawa, Benue, and Gombe states. Despite this scale of production, Nigeria captures only a small share of global ginger export value.

- Nigeria accounts for an estimated 3% of global ginger export market share, a gap largely attributed to quality inconsistency, limited drying and processing infrastructure, and low farm-gate prices, according to the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC).
- Ginger export earnings were valued at approximately US$224 million in 2024 across all destination markets.
- The EU imported roughly 6,561 metric tonnes of ginger in the most recent reporting period, worth just over €20.7 million, at an average import price of €3.16/kg (up 16.6% year-on-year); the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium were the leading EU buyers, followed by Spain and France.
- The Netherlands and the United Kingdom show the highest untapped potential for Nigerian ginger according to the ITC Export Potential Map, alongside continued growth opportunities in Germany, a current top destination.

- The EU-funded TARED project (2024–2028), implemented by GIZ with Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, is investing €18.3 million in strengthening the tomato and ginger value chains across Cross River, Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Ondo, Oyo, and Plateau states.
- The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI, Netherlands) is separately supporting 17 Nigerian ginger SMEs through its Ginger Nigeria project, focused on export coaching, certification, and direct market linkages with European buyers.

3.10 Plantain

Plantain is a significant West African staple crop, and Nigeria is among the region's largest producers alongside Cameroon and Ghana. Fresh plantain and plantain flour represent an emerging, rather than yet fully established, EU export line for Nigeria compared with the country's mature cocoa, cashew, and sesame trades.

- The EU imported approximately €440 million of fresh plantain (HS 80310) globally in 2024 (ITC Trade Map), making it one of the larger fresh-produce import categories among Nigeria's priority product list, though Nigeria's own share of that trade remains modest relative to established Latin American and other West African suppliers.
- Plantain flour, an ambient-stable processed derivative popular in gluten-free and health-food segments, is identified as a distinct high-priority opportunity in Nigeria's product list, offering better shelf life and export economics than fresh plantain, which is highly perishable and sensitive to post-harvest losses.
- Nigeria's plantain export potential is constrained by the same infrastructure gaps affecting other perishables: limited cold-chain logistics, inconsistent grading, and high post-harvest losses (estimated at 30–50% across several Nigerian value chains).

- Building processing capacity for plantain flour and chips, rather than exporting the raw fruit, mirrors the value-addition strategy recommended for cocoa, cashew, and shea, and would allow Nigerian exporters to better withstand the fruit's short shelf life while accessing EU health-food and ethnic-food retail channels.

4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

4.1 Key Opportunities for Nigeria

- **Cocoa Processing Upgrade:** Moving from raw bean exports to cocoa butter, powder, and liquor would dramatically increase export value. EU demand for sustainably sourced cocoa derivatives is growing.
- **Cashew Value Addition:** Establishing shelling and grading facilities domestically to export processed cashew kernels rather than raw nuts could double or triple per-unit export revenues.
- **Shea Butter Refinement:** Nigeria's shea value chain is underdeveloped. Refined shea butter for cosmetics commands 5–8x the price of crude shea nuts.
- **EUDR Compliance:** Full compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation by 2025 is both a challenge and a competitive advantage — compliant Nigerian cocoa and shea will command premiums over non-compliant origins.
- **Sesame Premium Markets:** Organic and food-grade sesame certifications would open premium European health-food channels.
- **Aquaculture and Shrimp:** The 2024 re-certification opens a pathway to the €500M+ EU shrimp import market.

4.2 Key Challenges

- **Narrow Export Basket:** Over 85% of Nigeria's agricultural exports to the EU are concentrated in 3–4 commodities, creating extreme exposure to global price volatility.
- **Phytosanitary Compliance:** Many Nigerian agri-products face EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers — including maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides, mycotoxin standards for cocoa and sesame, and heavy-metal limits.
- **Post-Harvest Losses:** Estimated at 30–50% in some value chains, limiting exportable volumes and reducing quality consistency.

- **Forex and Financing:** Naira instability makes EU commodity pricing unpredictable and raises the cost of imported agricultural inputs (fertilizers, machinery).
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Inadequate cold-chain logistics, port handling capacity, and rural road networks constrain supply chain efficiency.
- **EUDR Compliance Costs:** Small-scale farmers who supply the majority of Nigeria's cocoa and shea face significant challenges meeting traceability and deforestation-free requirements.

CONCLUSION

The EU-Nigeria agribusiness trade corridor is at a critical inflection point. Over the 2021–2025 period, the relationship has evolved from one of near-balanced exchange to one where Nigeria is increasingly a commodity supplier to the EU — a trend likely to deepen given the structural demand in Europe for tropical agricultural inputs. For Nigeria, the strategic imperative is clear: move up the value chain. The country must leverage its natural endowments in cocoa, shea, sesame, cashew, and seafood not just as a raw-material exporter, but as a processor and branded-product supplier. The EU-Nigeria Agribusiness Platform, EUDR compliance frameworks, and the growing institutional focus on non-oil diversification create a favourable environment for this transformation.

For EU businesses and investors, Nigeria represents a significant and growing sourcing opportunity — particularly in cocoa, shea, and cashew — with competitive advantages in land availability (36.87 million hectares of arable land), a large agricultural workforce (34% of employment), and strong growth in food production indices. Over the next five years, the trajectory of EU-Nigeria agri-food trade will be shaped by three critical variables: global commodity price cycles (especially cocoa and sesame), Nigeria's progress on EUDR compliance, and the success of domestic value-addition investments. If these align favourably, Nigeria's agri-food exports to the EU could reach €3–4 billion annually by 2030.

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