

## US govt study: Haiti apparel industry is growing



17 December 2012

Reposted from the [Miami Herald](#)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haitian clothing makers are increasingly benefiting from a U.S. trade preference aimed at promoting the impoverished nation's economy, U.S. congressional auditors reported Friday.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office said nearly \$18 million in Haitian apparel was exported to the United States under a duty-free provision during the first nine months of 2012. This accounted for about 4 percent of the apparel Haiti exported to the U.S., it said.

The amount was significantly more than what GAO auditors found the year before during the same period, which was about \$350,000. That was less than one-tenth of 1 percent of Haiti's U.S.-bound exports.

The report said the number of special trade credits Haitian apparel firms received grew about fivefold. These credits are given to firms that use U.S.-produced fabric and other materials in exchange for duty-free trade preferences.

Haiti's garment industry once employed more than 100,000 people but it was devastated in the 1980s and 1990s when the country stumbled through a period of political upheaval and economic sanctions.

There were fears the industry would suffer again after the devastating January 2010 earthquake. The disaster interrupted apparel production but there were signs that production had been restored two months later, the report said.

The U.S. government's biggest investment in Haiti following the earthquake is a \$300 million industrial facility that organizers hope will transform the northern part of the country by creating thousands of jobs.

Some in Haiti have criticized that investment, saying the money should have been put into agriculture, housing or other areas of reconstruction.