

The Agricultural Trade domain covers detailed food and agriculture trade data:

- Export/Import quantity
- Export/Import unit value
- Export/Import Value
- Trade matrix

The Trade module provides comprehensive, comparable and up-to-date annual trade statistics by country, region and economic country groups for about 600 individual food and agriculture commodities since 1961.

The detailed food and agriculture trade data collected, processed and disseminated by FAO according to the standard [International Merchandise Trade Statistics Methodology](#) is mainly provided by the national authorities and other international organizations. The total merchandise trade value by country is annually updated according to the national publications on Balance of Payment and trade statistics and harmonised with the consolidated figures disseminated by the [Inter-Agency Common Data Set \(CDS\)](#) on Total Merchandise Trade Statistics by countries.

Export - Import inconsistencies:

While FAO does adjust/modify some official figures where there are evident inconsistencies (such as data entry errors, or out-of-trend unit value variations) the trade flow data are unreconciled. That is, a user may find that what country A officially declares as imports from country B will not correspond to what country B officially, and reciprocally, declares as its exports to country A, for a given commodity in a given year (in terms of quantity and/or value). There are a number of reasons which partly explain this:

- Time lag: an export reported in December of a given year could reach destination in January of the following year (and would only then be reported as an import by the country of destination);
- Reporting periods: while most countries report on an annual January-December basis, some reporters have different periods (e.g. India is April-March; Pakistan is July-June);
- Misclassification of commodities between exporter and importer (e.g. the exporting country records the commodity as 'wheat', while the importing country records that same commodity as 'miscellaneous grains');
- Countries may report data on imports and exports on the basis of either General trade or Special trade. In General trade goods are recorded when entering or leaving the national territory including total imports, total exports and re-exports. In addition to that which is reported under Special trade it also includes imports into and exports from customs warehouses and free zones or ports. In Special trade goods are recorded when cleared through customs for home use or for export. Special imports include goods for domestic consumption and withdrawals from bonded warehouses or free zones for purposes of domestic consumption. Special exports comprise exports of goods wholly or partly produced or manufactured in the country, together with exports of "nationalized" goods;

- Exported quantities could be destroyed or lost en route due to accidents, weather conditions, etc.;
- Simple typing/calculation errors by reporting country (we, however, attempt to rectify these when evident);
- Data confidentiality: the exporter or importer could purposely not declare a certain transaction;
- Partner country mismatch: the place of origin/final destination could be reported differently by the two reporting countries. E.g. consider an export that leaves country (A), is unloaded at the port of country (B), and is then transported by land to country (C). The exporter (A) could correctly state the country of final destination as (C), while the importer (C) could declare that the origin of the goods was country (B);
- Customs tax avoidance by misclassifying a commodity on import or not reporting a transshipment. Exports, in some particular cases, are not declared to circumvent an embargo.

The concepts of FOB and CIF are important with regards to discrepancies in reported values of trade (assuming that the corresponding reported quantities are identical). Most countries report export values as Free-On-Board (FOB. i.e. insurance/transport costs are not included), while import values are mostly reported as Cost-Insurance-Freight (CIF. i.e. insurance/transport costs are included). Therefore, for a given agricultural commodity, assuming that the declared export and import quantities match, the reported export value should be lower than the corresponding reported import value. The adjustment factor varies according to commodity, distance, packaging, etc. (For the FAOSTAT trade index numbers a standard incremental factor of 12% is applied to all the export values - but analysis of individual/specific data show that the range could be between 10% and 35% if not higher).

Commodities:

FAO definition and classification of commodities is used.

The most common commodity classification used by the countries is the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) of the World Customs Organization (WCO), which is one to one correlated to another widely used classification, the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3 (SITC, Rev. 3), by the United Nations Statistics Division.

In 1988, many countries adopted SITC, Rev. 3 or HS. However, to maintain comparability with the series up to 1987, FAO decided to continue using the SITC, Rev. 2. Efforts have been made to adjust the new classification to the old one. The original files sent by countries are standardised, processed and validated by FAO, whereby the national commodity classification is converted to FAO commodity classification based on the annual country conversion table.

The complex nature of the basic customs and statistical needs makes it necessary to have a rather detailed commodity classification. The Harmonized System, or extended versions based on HS, such as the Combined Nomenclature used by the European Union member countries provide such details. Classification using these nomenclatures is based on the nature of the commodity. However, for analytical purposes, such a division of products is not the most appropriate. Commodity categories more suitable for economic analysis are provided by SITC, which classifies commodities according to their stage of production.

Live animals:

In some countries, considerable numbers of animals cross the border into neighbouring countries without having been registered. To obtain more representative data of international trade in live animals, estimates of unrecorded trade have been incorporated. Research on this subject will continue for further improvement of the coverage and reliability of this information.

Meat:

In certain countries, national statistics on meat, fresh, chilled or frozen (011), meat, dried, salted or smoked, whether or not in airtight containers (012) and canned meat, NES, and meat preparations, whether or not in airtight containers (014) give a breakdown of the trade in meat only at the group level of SITC, Rev. 2, equivalent to three digits. In such cases it was necessary to distribute the trade of the whole group among the various subgroups (four-digit level) of SITC, Rev. 2, by taking into account the information available from trading partners.

Milk:

Because of the adoption of the SITC, Rev. 3 or the Harmonized System in national classifications, as from 1988 the statistical coverage for SITC 022.3, 022.42/43 and 022.49 excludes, in some cases, data for yoghurt, acidified milk, buttermilk and products consisting of natural milk constituents .

Eggs in the shell:

Trade of eggs in the shell is reported by countries by number or by weight, or sometimes both. Appropriate conversion factors are used to convert numbers into weight when only numbers are reported.

Vegetable oils:

Some countries classify all or a large part of their trade in vegetable oils under such headings as "edible oils", "drying vegetable oils", "industrial oils" or "vegetable oils, NES". It has sometimes been possible to assign one of these categories to one of the Trade data series, but it has usually been necessary to omit the trade identified by such nomenclature.

Concepts used in reporting trade:

Countries may report data on imports and exports on the basis of either General trade or Special trade. The difference is that in General trade goods are recorded when entering or leaving the national territory, while in Special trade goods are recorded when cleared through customs for home use or for export.

Special imports include goods for domestic consumption and withdrawals from bonded warehouses or free zones for purposes of domestic consumption. Special exports comprise exports of goods wholly or partly produced or manufactured in the country, together with exports of "nationalized" goods.

General trade includes total imports and total exports, including re-exports. In addition to that which is reported under Special trade it includes imports into and exports from customs warehouses and free zones or ports.

Export and import data relate to General trade for all countries except those listed below, which report on the basis of Special trade:

Algeria, American Samoa, Angola, Argentina, Aruba, Austria, Belgium-Luxembourg, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Cayman Islands, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland (starting 1995), France, French Guiana, French Polynesia, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Martinique, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles, New Caledonia, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Réunion, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden (starting 1995), Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Yugoslavia SFR and Zaire.

FOB and CIF:

Most countries report export values as Free-On-Board (FOB. i.e. insurance/transport costs are not included), while import values are mostly reported as Cost-Insurance-Freight (CIF. i.e. insurance/transport costs are included).

For the following countries both imports and exports are FOB: Australia, Bermuda, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Mexico (from 1992 to 1994), Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Solomon Islands, South Africa, USSR, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe. For the calculation of the index numbers the import values for these countries were converted into CIF by a standard conversion factor of 112 percent.

Metadata

Introduction:

This data collection contains commodity trade data for imports, exports, volume and value. Compilation of this data collection has been made possible by the cooperation of governments, which have supplied most of the information. FAO is grateful to governments and to international and other organizations for their cooperation in helping to compile the basic statistics used in FAOSTAT.

Reference period:

Data refer to the calendar year except in the following cases:

- India (from 1987), Myanmar and Swaziland (imports only), from 1982, year beginning April;
- Saudi-Arabia, Islamic lunar (Hegira) year, 11 days shorter than the Gregorian year;
- Bangladesh, Gambia, Nepal, New Zealand and Pakistan, fiscal year ending 30 June.

Totals:

In all data series totals are shown for continents and the world. They include the total imports or exports of each of the respective countries, regardless of destination or origin. Thus continental totals also include goods imported from, or exported to, other countries belonging to the same continent. Consequently, these totals are by no means to be taken as the continents' net trade.

To maintain consistency with the data of previous years, continental and world totals (A) for 1992 to 1995 exclude trade among the independent republics of the USSR and among the independent republics of Yugoslavia SFR, and totals for 1993 to 1995 also exclude trade between the Czech Republic and Slovakia and between Eritrea and Ethiopia, because this previously constituted internal trade.

The estimates for the former territorial definitions used in calculating continents and world (former) totals are shown under Area former USSR, Area former Yugoslavia, Area former Czechoslovakia and Area former Ethiopia.

Efforts have been made to estimate the external trade of each individual new republic, including their trade with other countries of the former territory. These estimates, and the official data for the new republics where available, have been used to calculate continental and world totals (B). The estimates in question are subject to further improvement depending on the availability of better information from national reporting offices.

However, where it has not been possible to break down the total estimate for the former Areas into acceptable estimates for each new republic, the total estimates for the former Areas, in such cases, result in having continental and world totals (A) being larger than corresponding totals (B).

Exchange rates:

All values are expressed in 1 000 US dollars and rounded to the nearest 1 000 dollar. While many countries report their trade values directly in US dollars, others report in national currencies. These national currency values are converted into US dollar equivalents using the annual average "RH" rates supplied by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

References

UNSD. 1998. International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions. Studies in Methods Series M, No. 52, Rev.2. New York

UNSD. 2005. International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual. New York

Data sources and collection

In general, figures have been supplied by governments through magnetic tapes, national publications and FAO questionnaires. In particular, for the European Union member countries, with the exception of Spain, data obtained from EUROSTAT have been used. In addition, maximum use has been made of the magnetic tapes provided by the United Nations Statistics Division. To make the coverage of this data collection as complete as possible, official trade

data have sometimes been supplemented with data from unofficial sources. Use has also been made of trade information supplied by other national or international agencies or organizations.

Data estimation

In the absence of reliable sources or when information for the latest year is not available in time, figures for quantities and values are estimated on the basis of trade returns of trading partners. In a few instances, when information is available in terms of quantities only, corresponding values are estimated, using unit values based on data from trading partners.