

# Overseas Merchandise Trade: February 2015

Embargoed until 10:45am – 25 March 2015

## Key facts

For February 2015 compared with February 2014:

- Exports fell \$608 million (13 percent) to \$3.9 billion.
- Milk powder, butter, and cheese led the fall.
- Exports to China fell \$421 million (36 percent) to \$740 million.
- Imports were up \$139 million (3.7 percent) to \$3.9 billion.
- Consumption goods led the rise.
- There was a trade surplus of \$50 million (1.3 percent of exports).



Liz MacPherson, Government Statistician  
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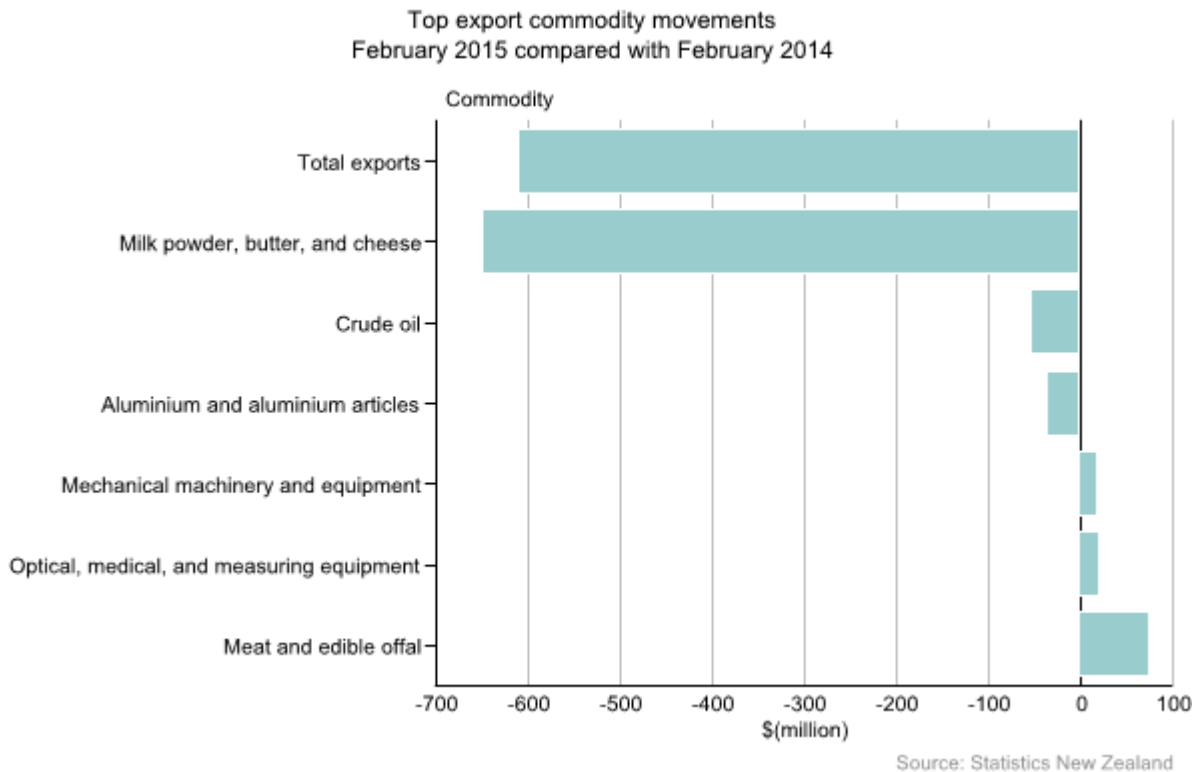
## Commentary

- Exports fall 13 percent
- Imports rise 3.7 percent
- Small trade surplus in February 2015
- Seasonally adjusted exports fall 3.2 percent
- Seasonally adjusted imports rise 5.8 percent
- Exchange rate movements

All comparisons are between February 2015 and February 2014, unless otherwise stated.

### Exports fall 13 percent

In February 2015, goods exports were valued at \$3.9 billion, down \$608 million (13 percent) from February 2014. This was the second-highest value ever of goods exported for a February month. Exports in February 2014 were the highest ever for February months, valued at \$4.5 billion.

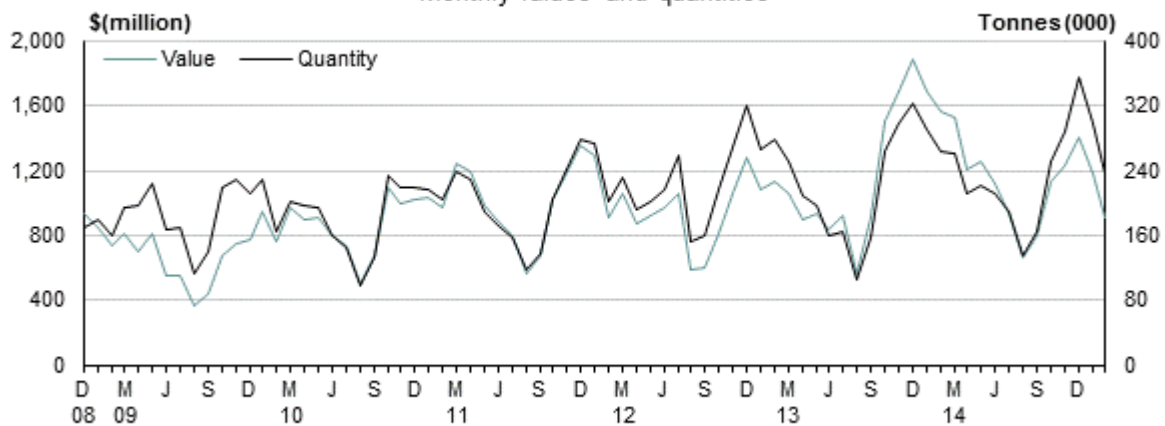


### Fall in exports due to milk powder to China

**Milk powder, butter, and cheese** (New Zealand's largest export commodity group) fell \$647 million (41 percent) to \$913 million. The fall was driven by lower prices, with the quantity exported in February 2015 down 10 percent.

## Milk powder, butter, and cheese exports

Monthly values and quantities



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The fall in milk powder, butter, and cheese exports for February 2015 was led by whole milk powder, down \$457 million (51 percent). Whole milk powder quantity exported fell 15 percent.

By destination, milk powder, butter and cheese exports to China fell \$525 million (77 percent). There were smaller falls to other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.

**Meat and edible offal** (New Zealand's second-largest export commodity group) rose \$78 million (12 percent). The rise was due to higher prices, with the quantity down 0.6 percent. Frozen beef drove the rise, up \$71 million (33 percent).

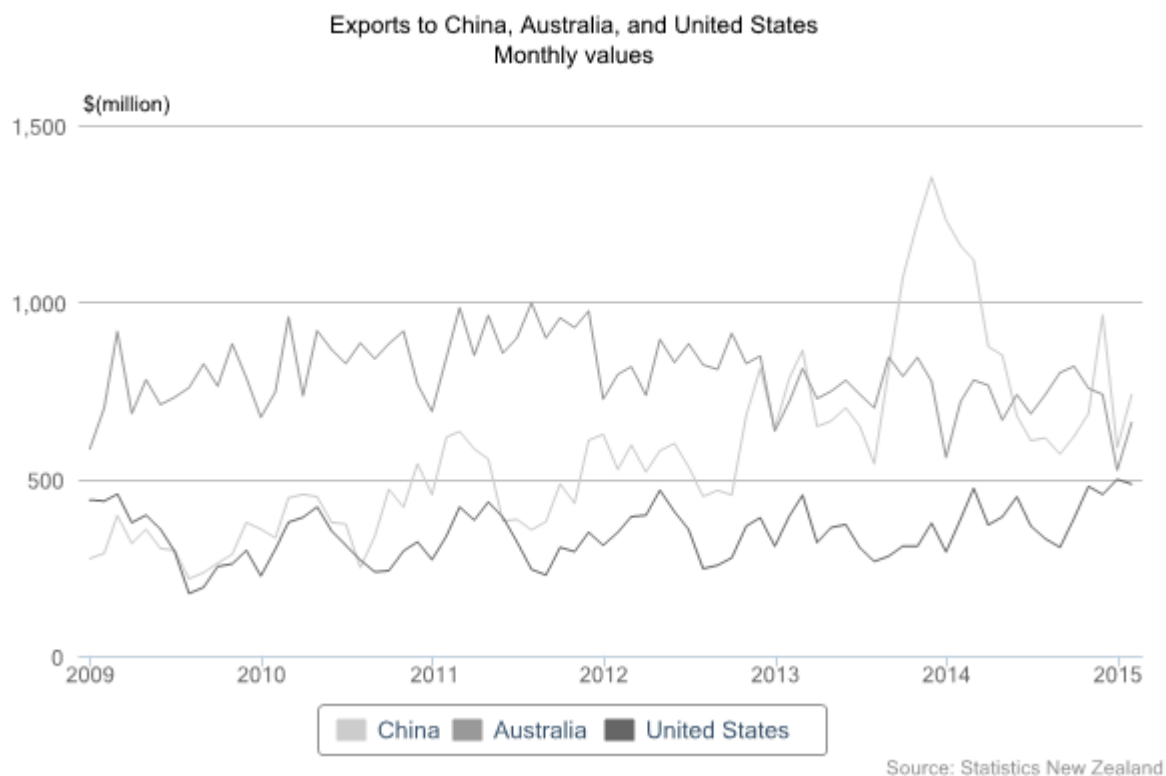
Other key changes in commodity group export values, for February 2015:

- **crude oil** fell \$51 million
- **aluminium and aluminium articles** fell \$33 million.

### Exports to China fall

The monthly movements for February 2015 for our top export destinations (ranked by total annual exports) were:

1. **China** – down \$421 million (36 percent) to \$740 million, due to whole milk powder. Wool rose \$27 million.
2. **Australia** – down \$59 million (8.1 percent), due to crude oil, down \$68 million.
3. **United States** – up \$100 million (26 percent), led by frozen beef, up \$60 million.
4. **European Union (EU)** – down \$41 million (9.4 percent), led by milk powder, butter, and cheese, down \$15 million (41 percent), and wine, down \$12 million (34 percent). Harvesting machinery parts (such as fruit graders) partly offset the fall, up \$15 million.
5. **Japan** – down \$58 million (21 percent). Unwrought aluminium fell \$36 million, while crude oil partly offset the fall, up \$17 million.



## Imports rise 3.7 percent

In February 2015, goods imports were valued at \$3.9 billion, up \$139 million (3.7 percent) from February 2014.

## Consumption goods lead the rise in imports

Of the three main broad economic categories, consumption and capital goods increased in value, while intermediate goods decreased in value compared with February 2014.



**Consumption goods** rose \$126 million (14 percent), led by semi-durable consumer goods (such as knitted clothing).

**Capital goods** rose \$61 million (8.8 percent). Machinery and plant equipment rose \$66 million (13 percent) led by mobile telephones (personal and business use).

**Intermediate goods** fell \$44 million (2.5 percent), due to crude oil, down \$197 million (42 percent). Processed industrial supplies (including aluminium oxide) partly offset the fall, up \$88 million (12 percent).

In **other categories** of goods:

- **passenger motor cars** rose \$29 million (11 percent)
- **petrol and avgas** fell \$35 million (27 percent).

#### **Four of our top five import partners show increases**

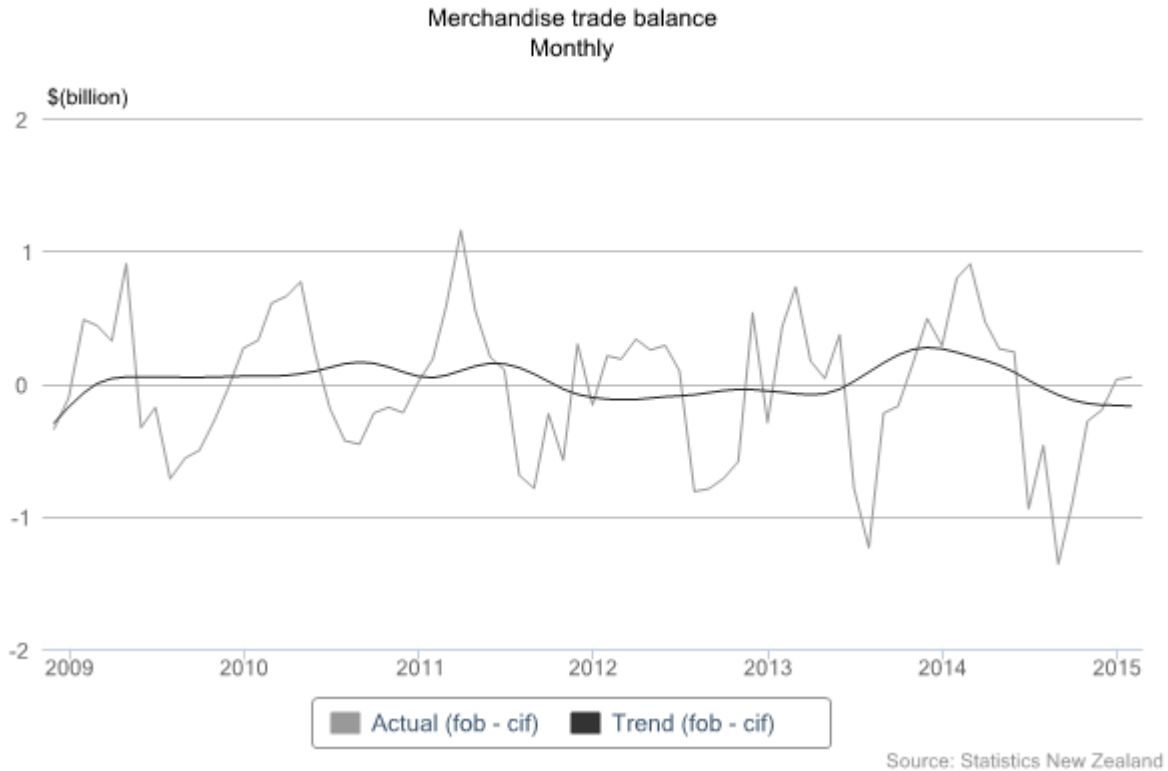
The monthly movements for February 2015 for our top import partners (ranked by total annual imports) were:

1. **EU** – up \$27 million (4.1 percent), led by petroleum bitumen from Spain (up \$13 million) and aircraft from France (up \$9.1 million). The rise was partly offset by a fall in trains from Spain (down \$13 million).
2. **China** – up \$156 million (24 percent), led by knitted clothing (such as jerseys).
3. **Australia** – up \$91 million (20 percent), led by crude oil and aluminium oxide.
4. **United States** – down \$4.6 million (1.3 percent), due to motor spirit and goods vehicles.
5. **Japan** – up \$28 million (11 percent), led by motor cars.

Import shipments of petroleum tend to fluctuate depending on where they come from, which causes large changes in quantities and values. In February 2015, petroleum influenced other significant movements. **Saudi Arabia** and **Singapore** showed increases; **Russia**, **Malaysia**, **United Arab Emirates**, **Korea**, and **Kuwait** showed decreases.

### Small trade surplus in February 2015

In February 2015, there was a small trade surplus of \$50 million (1.3 percent of exports). This compares with an average surplus of 9.8 percent of exports over the previous five February months.



For the year ended February 2015, there was an annual trade deficit of \$2.2 billion (4.4 percent of exports). This is down from the most-recent peak, which was a surplus of \$1.8 billion for the year ended August 2014.

### Seasonally adjusted exports fall 3.2 percent

The seasonally adjusted value of exported goods in February 2015 fell 3.2 percent (\$128 million) from January 2015. This follows a 2.4 percent increase in January 2015 from December 2014.

The trend for exports has fallen 7.8 percent since the recent peak in January 2014.

### Trend for monthly exports to China continues to fall

Seasonally adjusted country exports series for Australia, China, and EU were developed last quarter. These series are available on [Infoshare](#) (See 'Seasonally adjusted and trend values of exports & re-exports - by country - fob (Monthly)').

Comparisons are between February 2015 and January 2015.

The seasonally adjusted monthly movements for February 2015 for these countries (ranked by total annual exports) were:

1. **China** – up 11 percent (\$64 million) to \$631 million. However, the trend for exports to China has been falling for over a year now. It is 45 percent lower than the series peak in December 2013, and is now at similar levels to mid-2012.
2. **Australia** – up 4.0 percent (\$27 million) to \$701 million. The trend for exports to Australia has been falling in recent years. It is 24 percent lower than the series peak in July 2011.
3. **EU** – down 14 percent (\$61 million) to \$386 million.

### **Change in seasonally adjusted export values**

**Milk powder, butter, and cheese** exports fell 10 percent (\$99 million), following a 5.2 percent fall in January 2015. The seasonally adjusted quantity fell 6.0 percent.

**Fruit** exports fell 25 percent (\$50 million), following a 34 percent rise in January 2015. The seasonally adjusted quantity fell 55 percent, following a 22 percent rise.

**Ships, boats, and floating structures** exports fell 90 percent (\$35 million), following a 15 percent fall in January 2015. This group is not seasonally adjusted.

**Logs, wood, and wood articles** exports rose 23 percent (\$62 million), following a 14 percent fall in January 2015.

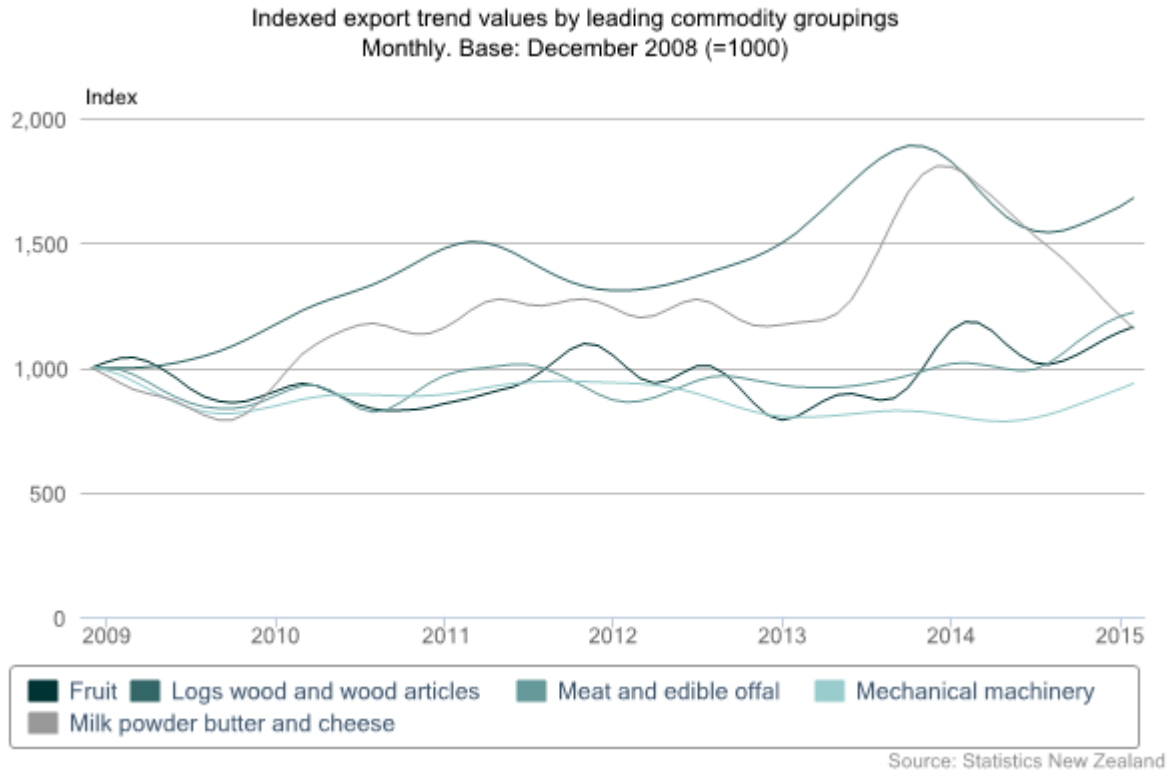
**Crude oil** exports more than doubled, up \$37 million. However, export values for January 2015 were the lowest since March 2007. Crude oil is not seasonally adjusted; exports vary and are affected by the timing of shipments.

### **Trend for milk powder, butter, and cheese continues to fall**

The trend for **milk powder, butter, and cheese** exports has been falling for 14 consecutive months. It is now 36 percent lower than the series peak in December 2013.

Recent trends for the values of other leading commodity groups show that:

- **meat and edible offal** has been increasing since June 2014 and has reached a new high.
- **logs, wood, and wood articles** has fallen 11 percent since the series peak in October 2013 but appears to be rising. More data points are required to confirm this.



## Seasonally adjusted imports rise 5.8 percent

Seasonally adjusted imports rose 5.8 percent (\$234 million), to \$4.3 billion in February 2015, compared with January 2015. This follows an 8.7 percent fall in January 2015 compared with December 2014. Excluding petroleum and products, seasonally adjusted imports rose 5.9 percent in February 2015.

The trend for import values has been rising in recent months and is now at a series high.

## China top source for monthly imports

Seasonally adjusted country imports series for EU, China, and Australia were developed last quarter. These series are available on [Infoshare](#) (See 'SCS - Seasonally adjusted and trend values of imports - by country (Monthly)').

Comparisons are between February 2015 and January 2015.

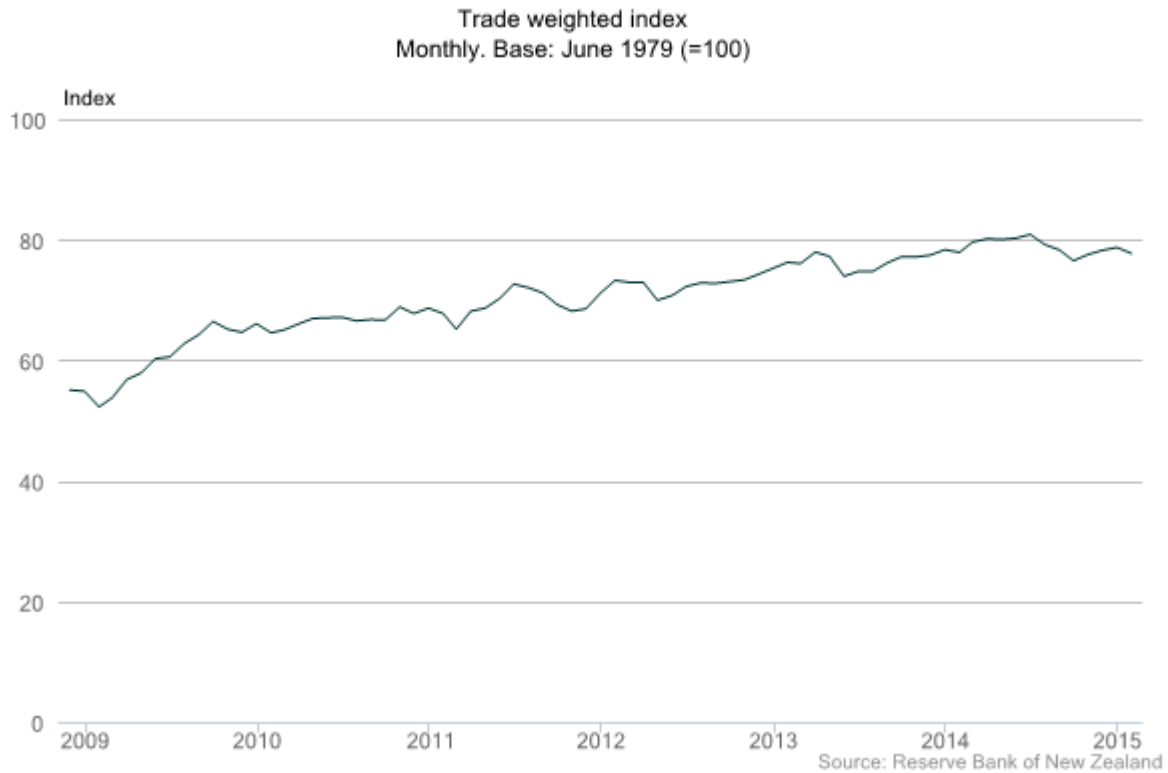
The seasonally adjusted monthly movements for February 2015 for these countries (ranked by total annual imports) were:

1. **EU** – up 5.8 percent (\$43 million) to \$796 million. The trend for imports from EU has showed little change in the past 12 months.
2. **China** – up 9.1 percent (\$69 million) to \$831 million.
3. **Australia** – up 25 percent (\$118 million) to \$584 million.



## Exchange rate movements

According to the Reserve Bank's trade weighted index, the New Zealand dollar was 1.3 percent lower in February 2015 than in January 2015, and 0.2 percent lower than in February 2014.



For more detailed data, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

## Definitions

### About the overseas merchandise trade statistics

Overseas merchandise trade statistics provide statistical information on the importing and exporting of merchandise goods between New Zealand and other countries.

Data is obtained from export and import entry documents lodged with the New Zealand Customs Service. The data is processed and passed to Statistics NZ for further editing and compilation.

### More definitions

**Billion:** is 1,000 million.

**Capital goods:** are produced assets that are used repeatedly or continuously, for longer than one year, in industrial production processes. Examples are machinery, trucks, and aircraft.

**cif:** is the cost of goods, including insurance and freight to New Zealand.

**Consumption goods:** are goods used (without further transformation in industrial production processes) by households, government, or non-profit institutions serving households.

**Exports (including re-exports):** are goods of domestic origin exported from New Zealand to another country. Exports in this release are valued fob and are shown in New Zealand dollars. Estimated values may be used for goods that are not already sold at the time of export entry lodgement.

**fob:** is free on board (the value of goods at New Zealand ports before export).

**Imports:** are goods imported into New Zealand. Imports in this release are valued at cif and are shown in New Zealand dollars. However, imports in table 1 are also shown at the vfd level, which excludes the insurance and freight component.

**Infoshare:** is Statistics NZ's free online tool that gives you access to a range of time-series data.

**Intermediate goods:** are goods used up, or transformed in, industrial production processes.

**Merchandise trade:** covers exports or imports of goods that alter the nation's stock of material resources. It includes goods leased for a year or more and excludes goods for repair.

**Provisional:** statistics for the latest three months are provisional, to allow late data and amendments to be included.

**Re-exports:** are merchandise exports that were earlier imported into New Zealand and have less than 50 percent New Zealand content by value.

**Seasonal adjustment:** removes the estimated impact of regular seasonal events, such as pre-Christmas purchasing, from time series. This makes the figures for adjacent periods more comparable.

**Trade balance:** is calculated by deducting imports (cif) from exports (fob). These two valuations are not entirely comparable, because the cif valuation includes insurance and freight to New Zealand, while the fob valuation excludes insurance and freight from New Zealand.

**Trade deficit:** occurs when the value of imports is more than the value of exports.

**Trade surplus:** occurs when the value of exports is more than the value of imports.

**Trend:** estimates reveal the underlying direction of movement in a series and are used to identify turning points.

**Two-way trade:** is the sum of goods exported from New Zealand and goods imported into New Zealand (exports + imports).

**vfd:** is value for duty (the value of imports before insurance and freight costs are added).

## **Related links**

### **Next release**

*Overseas Merchandise Trade: March 2015* will be released on 29 April 2015.

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### **Past releases**

[Overseas Merchandise Trade](#) has links to past releases.

[Overseas Merchandise Trade by country](#) is a trial one-off release using August 2014 data for our top 50 trading partner countries.

## **Related information**

[Global New Zealand](#) contains comprehensive annual trade statistics.

[Overseas Trade Indexes](#) measure the change in the level of prices and volumes of New Zealand's imports and exports.

[Balance of Payments and International Investment Position](#) measures the value of New Zealand's transactions with the rest of the world, and provides a snapshot of the country's international financial assets and liabilities.

[National Accounts](#) measure the values of a range of economic aggregates such as gross domestic product, capital formation, and government and private consumption.

[Economic Survey of Manufacturing](#) provides an economic indicator of how the manufacturing sector is performing.

[New Zealand Customs Service](#) is the government agency that ensures the security of our borders.

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#) is the Government's principal adviser and negotiator on foreign and trade policy issues.

## Data quality

### Period-specific information

This section contains data information that has changed since the last release.

- [Number of working days](#)
- [Data influencers](#)
- [Foreign currency conversions February 2015](#)

### General information

This section contains information that does not change between releases.

- [Merchandise trade – data source](#)
- [Crude oil imports – effects of timing of recording](#)
- [Exports – timing of recording and undercoverage](#)
- [Seasonally adjusted series](#)
- [Trend series](#)
- [Broad economic category groups](#)
- [New Zealand Harmonised System Classification](#)
- [Standard International Trade Classification](#)
- [Confidential items](#)
- [More information](#)

## Period-specific information

### Number of working days

There were 19 working days in both February 2015 and February 2014.

### Data influencers

We imputed the value of aircraft imported in December 2014 based on the value of twin-aisle aircraft imports. The imputed value has been revised in this release to adjust for exchange rate movements.

See September 2014 quarter [Data influencers](#) section for our treatment of September quarter aircraft imports.

### Foreign currency conversions February 2015

Import values are converted from foreign currencies when import documents are processed by New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS).

We convert values given in foreign currencies into New Zealand dollars, using weekly exchange rates, when we compile the statistics.

<b>Currency conversions – February 2015</b>				
Foreign currencies to New Zealand dollars				
Currency	Number of exports	Value in foreign currency \$(million)	Value in NZD \$(million)	Average exchange rate
USD	37,629	1,750	2,354	0.7431
AUD	44,798	254	267	0.9507
EUR	5,183	131	200	0.6573
GBP	3,053	61	125	0.4895
JPY	901	3,499	40	88.04
Other currencies	1,829	...	53	...
<b>Total in foreign currency</b>	93,393	...	3,038	...
NZD	68,132	...	885	...
<b>Total</b>	161,525	...	3,923	...

Symbol: ... not applicable

In February 2015, we converted 161,525 export line entries worth \$3.9 billion into New Zealand dollars.

See [Merchandise trade – data source](#) for more information on the use of exchange rates.

## General information

### Merchandise trade – data source

We obtain data from export and import entry documents lodged with NZCS. Once processed by NZCS, we receive this data.

We convert export values given in foreign currencies into New Zealand dollars, using weekly exchange rates when the statistics are compiled. For exports, a rise in the New Zealand dollar has a downward influence on prices and, as a consequence, quantities and values reduce.

Import values are converted from foreign currencies when import documents are processed by NZCS. NZCS set the exchange rates each fortnight. These rates are prepared 11 days before the start of the fortnight, so have a lag of 11 to 25 days compared with the daily rates published by the Reserve Bank. For imports, a rise in the New Zealand dollar has a downward influence on prices and an upward influence on quantities. The combined influence on values can be either positive or negative.

### Crude oil imports – effects of timing of recording

Imports are generally compiled by date-of-entry clearance by NZCS. NZCS entries are required from up to five days before, to 20 working days after, arrival of goods into New Zealand. The exception to this rule is for crude oil imports, which can have entries lodged later than 20 working days after entry into New Zealand.

We estimate crude oil values for the latest month using actual quantities and country-of-origin data (provided by NZCS, based on information from the refinery at Marsden Point), together with estimated prices. These estimates for crude oil are replaced once actual entries are lodged with NZCS.

While all entries are provisional for the latest three months, and have the potential to be changed by the importer/exporter within this period, changes are not common, and generally do not have a material impact on the results. However, New Zealand has only a few ships carrying crude oil arriving each month, and each ship represents a high proportion of the monthly total of imported crude oil. Any variation in the data for crude oil resulting from a later lodgement date can result in a significant revision to the value. Once we receive actual lodgements from NZCS, the value for crude oil can be regarded as robust.

## **Exports – timing of recording and undercoverage**

From 1 March 2004, NZCS has not allowed goods to be loaded for export until an export entry has been lodged and cleared. A study undertaken in 2001/02 indicated that export entries not being lodged might account for between 1 and 3 percent of exports at that time. There is a possibility that the change in NZCS processes may have reduced this undercoverage, although this has not been quantified.

## **Seasonally adjusted series**

We calculate seasonally adjusted series monthly and for calendar quarters using X-13ARIMA-SEATS, which adjusts for outlying values and uses a centred moving average. The X-13ARIMA-SEATS package is an updated version of X-12-ARIMA, developed by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Seasonal adjustment removes the estimated impact of regular seasonal events, such as pre-Christmas purchasing, from time series. This makes the figures for adjacent periods more comparable. Seasonally adjusted figures are estimates and are subject to revision each period, with the largest changes generally occurring in the latest periods.

[Seasonal adjustment in Statistics New Zealand](#) has more information.

## **Trend series**

Time series can be split into trend, seasonal, and irregular components. Seasonal adjustment removes the seasonal component, while trend estimation removes the seasonal and irregular components. Trend estimates reveal the underlying direction of movement in a series and are used to identify turning points.

We calculate the trend series using X-13ARIMA-SEATS. The length of the centred moving average is selected automatically and can be 9, 13, or 23 months, depending on the relative variability of the irregular component compared with the trend. A long moving average has the effect of smoothing the trend series but slowing the response to underlying changes in growth rates. A short moving average produces a trend series that is less smooth but quicker to identify turning points.

To improve estimation of the underlying movement, we calculate the imports trend after removing individual import items that have cif values of \$100 million or more, such as large aircraft and ships. The trade balance trend is calculated by subtracting the imports trend from the exports trend.

We recalculate trend figures each month. Using new monthly data means that previously published trend estimates are revised. These revisions mainly affect the latest months and can be large if a trade value is initially treated as an outlier but is later found to be part of the underlying trend.

## **Broad economic category groups**

Broad economic category (BEC) groups are arranged, as far as practicable, to align with the System of National Accounts' three basic classes: capital goods, intermediate goods, and consumption goods. We categorise commodities in BEC groups on the basis of their main end use. This means, for example, that all video recorders are treated as consumption goods even though some are used in business. Similarly, all helicopters are treated as transport equipment even though some are military goods (and are treated as such in the national accounts).

## **New Zealand Harmonised System Classification**

From January 2012, we compile overseas merchandise trade data using the Harmonised System classification (HS2012). Before January 2012, HS2007 applies.

See the Excel supplementary table in the 'Downloads' box for a summary of the effect of this change on the overseas merchandise trade data.

The classification change means data users need to take care when analysing time-series data, although changes from this review are not as significant as when HS2007 was introduced. The supplementary table uses the HS2012 classification to estimate January 2011 values for comparison. We made some assumptions to do this, so the results are not perfect, but the process removes most of the effect of the classification change from the data.

We will use HS2012 within overseas merchandise trade statistics until the next five-yearly review in 2017. Minor amendments may still occur on a quarterly basis.

Although the classification change potentially affects the published seasonally adjusted and trend series, our investigations so far show a negligible effect. We will communicate any effects we find when conducting our normal seasonal adjustment or trend series review processes.

HS2012 changes have been implemented in overseas trade indexes (OTI).

See [Harmonised System 2012 and trade statistics](#) for more information on how HS2012 has affected overseas merchandise trade data.

See [Harmonised System 2012](#) for information about the HS2012 classification.

## **Standard International Trade Classification**

The Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) is an output classification that uses Harmonised System (HS) codes at the six-digit level as building blocks. It was designed by the United Nations as an analytical tool for economic analysis, and includes some simple implications regarding level of processing. Published figures are at a high level of aggregation; more disaggregated information is available on [Infoshare](#).

Contact customer services at: [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz) for customised jobs using the SITC Rev 4 classification.

We compile overseas merchandise trade (OMT) statistics in close accordance with the United Nations' International Merchandise Trade Statistics Concepts and Definitions. OMT data, after adjustment, is used in the balance of payments and national accounts. The adjustments are for coverage, timing, valuation, and classification.



See [Balance of Payments – Sources and Methods 2004](#) for more explanation.

## Confidential items

Under Section 37A (d) of the Statistics Act, the Government Statistician may disclose details of external trade, movement of ships, and cargo handled at ports. However, we understand that the release of merchandise trade commodity information can, in some cases, place commercially sensitive information in the public domain. We can provide a limited form of confidential status for commodity items (at the discretion of the Government Statistician), on application by a company or business.

In practice, all confidential HS codes are aggregated into the code 9809.00.00.00 in order to protect their confidentiality and to maintain total export and import values. Any aggregations of HS codes below this level, which encompass confidential 10-digit codes, exclude the confidential value(s) for these codes.

The only aggregates that include the confidential codes are total exports, total imports, and the total exports and imports by country.

## More information

See [more information about Overseas Merchandise Trade](#)

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## Revisions

Provisional values published on 26 February 2015 were updated. Merchandise trade statistics for the latest three months are provisional so we can include late data and amendments.

Trade data can be revised for many reasons. For more information see:

[Why overseas merchandise trade data can change](#)

[Investigating how overseas merchandise trade data can change after publication](#)

### Updates to overseas merchandise trade statistics

	Published 26 Feb 2015			Published 25 Mar 2015			Change		
	\$(million) <sup>(1)</sup>								
	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)
Month:									
Nov 20 14	4,042 P	4,328 P	-285 P	4,041 F	4,324 F	-283 F	-2	-4	2
Dec 20 14	4,403 P	4,597 P	-195 P	4,405 P	4,603 P	-199 P	2	6	-4
Jan 20 15	3,698 P	3,641 P	56 P	3,677 P	3,644 P	33 P	-21	2	-23
Year ended:									
Nov 20 14	50,423 P	50,917 P	-494 P	50,422 F	50,913 F	-492 F	-2	-4	2
Dec 20 14	50,077 P	51,257 P	-1,180 P	50,078 P	51,260 P	-1,182 P	1	2	-1
Jan 20 15	49,707 P	51,116 P	-1,409 P	49,686 P	51,120 P	-1,434 P	-20	4	-25
1. Figures are calculated on unrounded data.									
<b>Symbols:</b>									
F final									
P provisional									
<b>Source:</b> Statistics New Zealand									

## Contacts

**For media enquiries contact:**

Jason Attewell

Wellington 04 931 4600

**Email:** [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

**For technical information contact:**

Samisoni Makaafi or Morag Butler

Christchurch 03 964 8700

**Email:** [info@stats.govt.nz](mailto:info@stats.govt.nz)

**For general enquiries contact our Information Centre:**

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## Tables

The following tables are available in Excel format from the 'Downloads' box. If you have problems viewing the files, see [opening files and PDFs](#).

- 1.01 Overseas merchandise trade, actual values
- 1.02 Overseas merchandise trade, trade balance – actual values
- 2 Overseas merchandise trade, seasonally adjusted and trend values – monthly
- 3 Exports by destination
- 4 Imports by country of origin
- 5 Exports of main commodities
- 6 Imports of main commodities
- 7 Imports by broad economic category (BEC) group
- 8 Exchange rates
- 9 Related series, livestock, cars, and crude oil
- 10 Exports and imports by Standard International Trade Classification (SITC)
- 11 Exports by top 10 HS categories, values – seasonally adjusted
- 12 Exports by top 10 HS categories, quantities – seasonally adjusted
- 13 Imports by selected HS categories, values – seasonally adjusted
- 14 Exports by top 10 HS categories, values – trend
- 15 Exports by top 10 HS categories, quantities – trend
- 16 Imports by selected HS categories, values – trend

### **Access more data on Infoshare**

Infoshare allows you to organise data in the way that best meets your needs. You can view the resulting tables onscreen or download them.

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