

Overseas Merchandise Trade: March 2015

Embargoed until 10:45am – 29 April 2015

Key facts

March 2015 quarter:

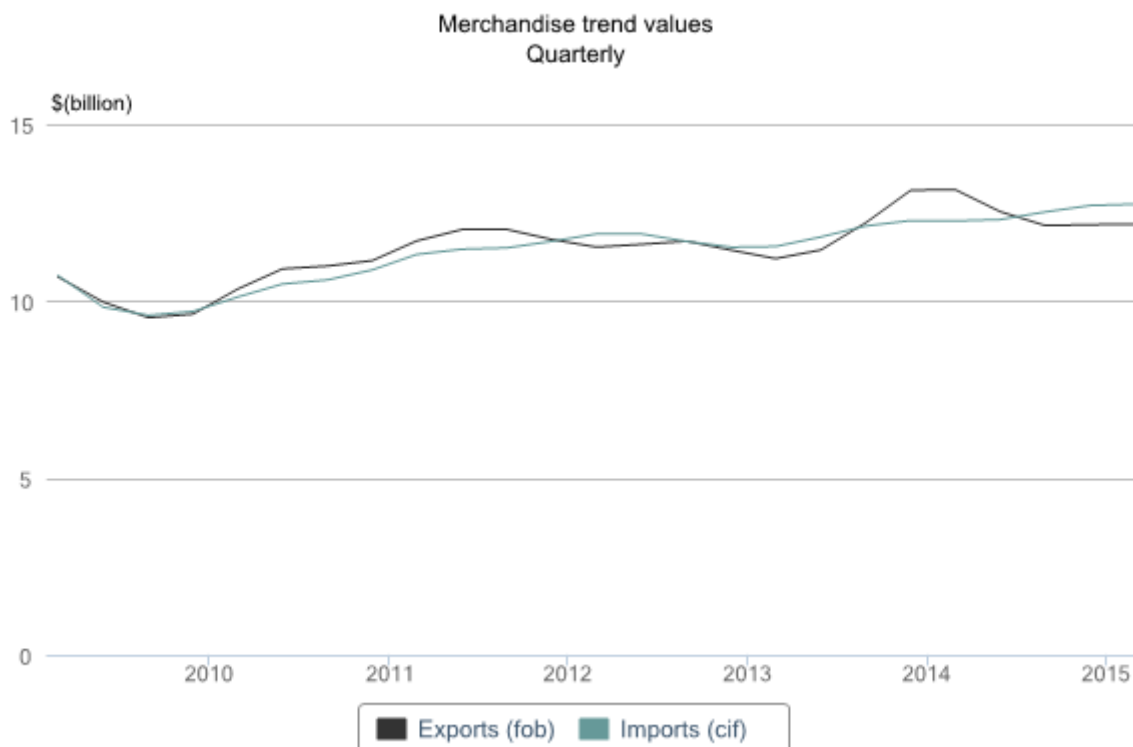
Values are seasonally adjusted and compared with the December 2014 quarter.

- Exports fell 0.6 percent (to \$12.2 billion).
- Milk powder, butter, and cheese led the fall, down 9.7 percent (\$305 million).
- Imports fell 3.3 percent (to \$13 billion).
- The trade deficit was \$490 million (4.0 percent of exports).

March 2015 month:

Values are actual and compared with the March 2014 month.

- Exports fell 2.0 percent (to \$4.9 billion), led by whole milk powder.
- Imports rose 4.1 percent (to \$4.3 billion).
- Annual exports to Australia were higher than to China.
- The trade surplus was \$631 million (13 percent of exports).
- The annual trade deficit was \$2.4 billion, the highest since July 2009.



Liz MacPherson, Government Statistician
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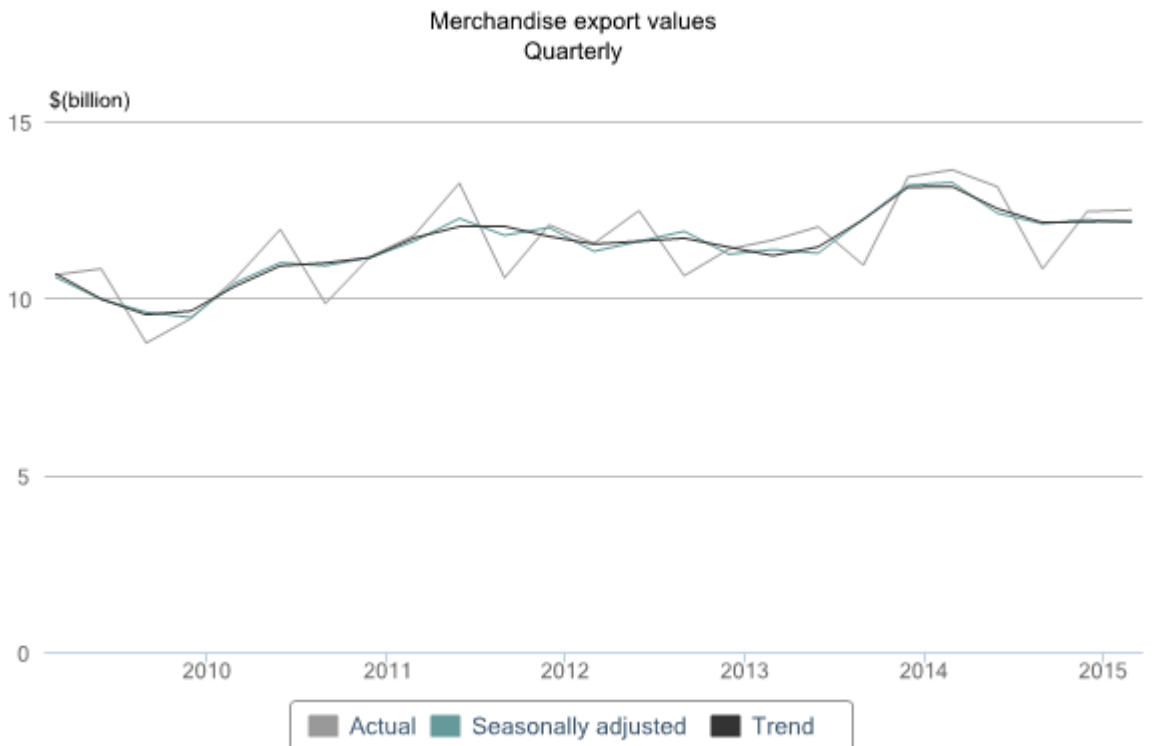
Commentary

- [Quarterly exports fall 0.6 percent](#)
- [Quarterly imports fall 3.3 percent](#)
- [Trade deficit in the March 2015 quarter](#)
- [Monthly exports fall 2.0 percent](#)
- [Monthly imports rise 4.1 percent](#)
- [Trade surplus in March 2015 of \\$631 million](#)
- [Exchange rate movements](#)

Quarterly exports fall 0.6 percent

The seasonally adjusted value of exported goods fell 0.6 percent (\$70 million) to \$12.2 billion in the March 2015 quarter. This followed a 0.9 percent increase in the December 2014 quarter, influenced by a drilling platform export.

The trend, which reflects the long-term behaviour of export values, has been decreasing in recent quarters and has fallen 7.4 percent from its record high in March 2014.



Milk powder, butter, and cheese lead the fall in seasonally adjusted exports

Milk powder, butter, and cheese (our largest export commodity group) fell 9.7 percent (\$305 million). This fall was price driven as the quantity fell 2.1 percent. Values are 31 percent below their peak in the March 2014 quarter

Meat and edible offal rose 2.2 percent (\$36 million). Quantities rose 1.4 percent in the March 2015 quarter, compared with a 4.2 percent increase in the December 2014 quarter.

Other key changes in commodity export values

The value of exports in the March 2015 quarter, compared with the December 2014 quarter, also rose for:

- **ships, boats, and floating structures** (not seasonally adjusted) – recorded the largest increase, up \$203 million, due to the export of a drilling platform
- **wine** – up 14 percent (\$47 million), with quantities up 23 percent
- **casein and caseinates** – up 15 percent (\$39 million), with quantities up 20 percent.

The value of exports fell for **crude oil** (not seasonally adjusted), down 44 percent (\$113 million), with quantities down 18 percent.

China leads fall in quarterly exports

Seasonally adjusted country exports and imports series for the European Union, China, and Australia were developed last quarter. These series are available on [Infoshare](#).

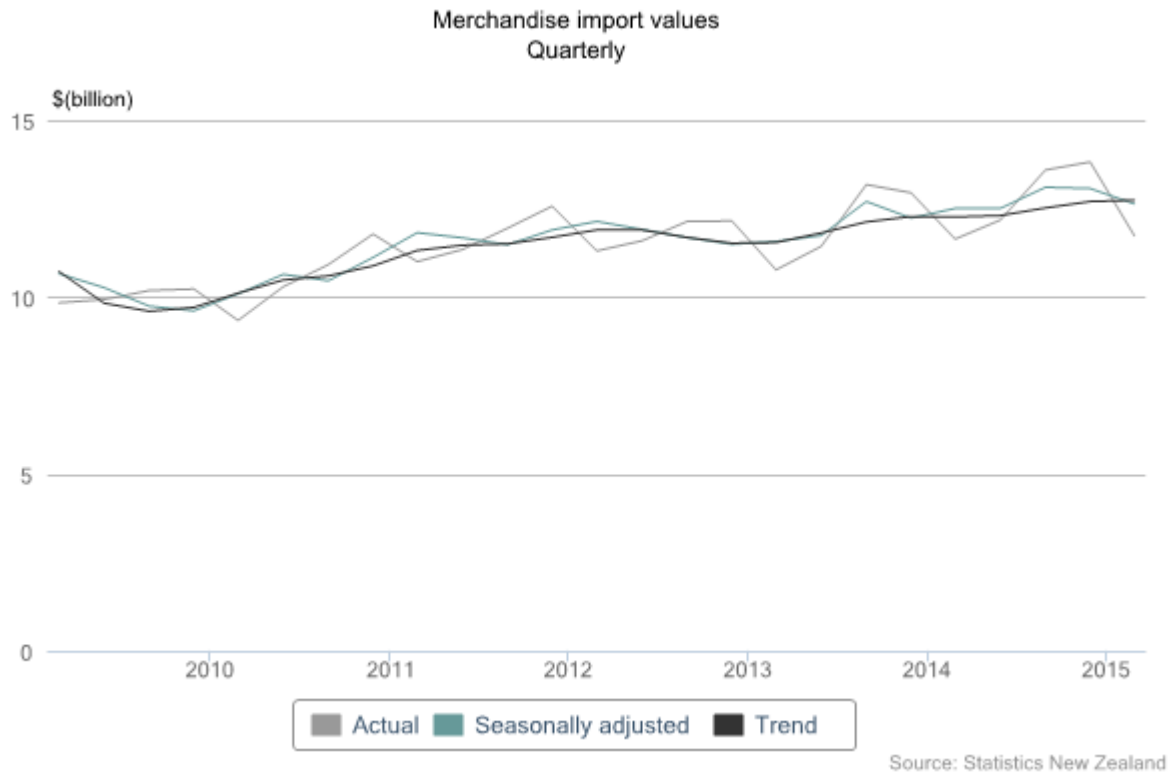
In the March 2015 quarter, compared with the December 2014 quarter, the top export destinations (ranked by total annual exports) for New Zealand were:

- **Australia** – down 2.6 percent (\$55 million) to \$2.1 billion.
- **China** – down 13 percent (\$279 million) to \$1.8 billion. The trend has fallen 40 percent since its peak in the December 2013 quarter.
- **European Union (EU)** – up 3.2 percent (\$38 million) to \$1.2 billion.

Quarterly imports fall 3.3 percent

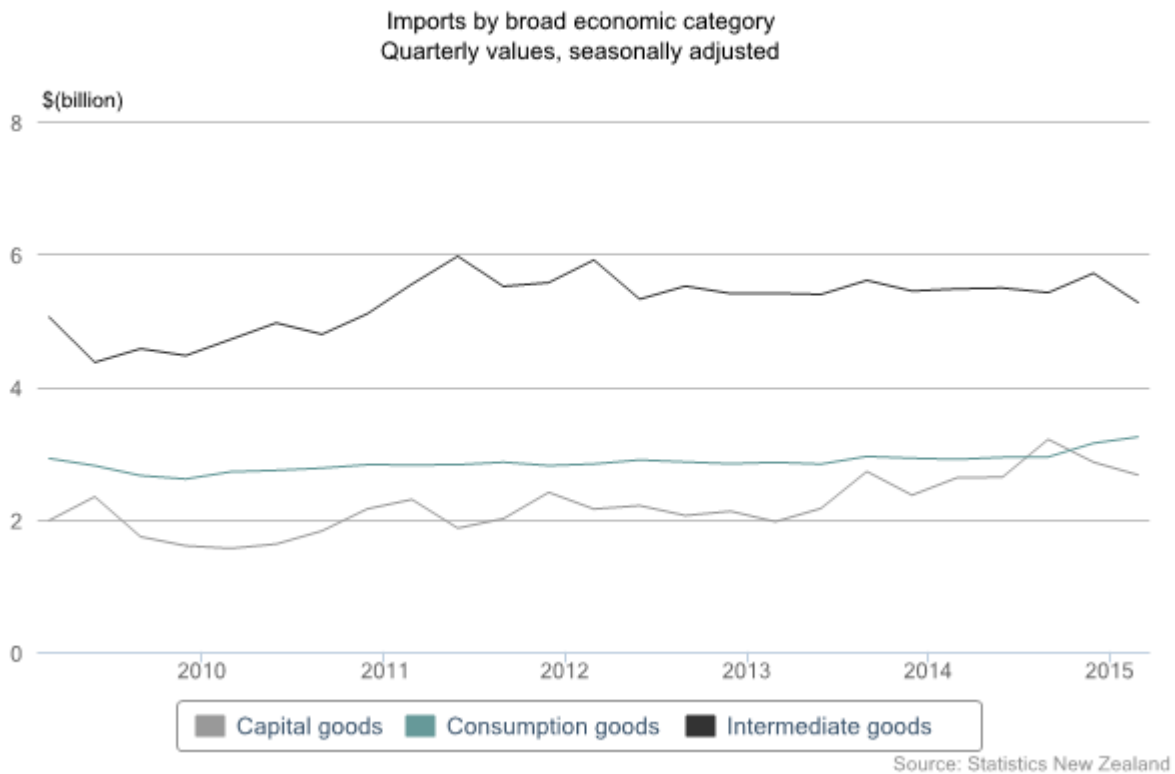
The seasonally adjusted value of imported goods fell 3.3 percent (\$436 million) to \$13 billion in the March 2015 quarter. This followed a 0.3 percent (\$35 million) fall in the December 2014 quarter.

Excluding large one-off imports, the seasonally adjusted value of imported goods fell 1.6 percent to \$13 billion in the March 2015 quarter. The trend for imports has been rising in recent months and is now at its highest level to date. The trend calculation excludes large import items.



Intermediate goods lead the fall in seasonally adjusted imports

For the three main broad economic categories, intermediate and capital goods decreased in value in the March 2015 quarter, while consumption goods increased.



Intermediate goods decreased 7.8 percent (\$444 million) in the March 2015 quarter, following an increase of 5.4 percent (\$292 million) in the December 2014 quarter. Crude oil led the fall, down \$273 million. Processed fuels and lubricants (such as automotive diesel) fell \$207 million.

Capital goods (not seasonally adjusted) fell 6.8 percent (\$195 million) in the March 2015 quarter. This follows an 11 percent fall in the December 2014 quarter. The movement for the December 2014 quarter was influenced by aircraft imports in the July, September, and December months.

Machinery and plant decreased 3.1 percent (\$62 million), led by floating and submersible drilling platforms.

Consumption goods increased 3.0 percent (\$94 million) in the March 2015 quarter. Semi-durable consumer goods (such as clothing) led the rise, up \$46 million. Durable consumer goods (such as wooden furniture) rose \$38 million.

In **other categories** of goods:

- **passenger motor cars** increased 8.9 percent (\$89 million) in the March 2015 quarter, following a 5.9 percent fall in the December 2014 quarter
- **petrol and avgas**, which is not seasonally adjusted, decreased 24 percent (\$75 million), following a 9.1 percent decrease in the December 2014 quarter.

China top source of quarterly imports

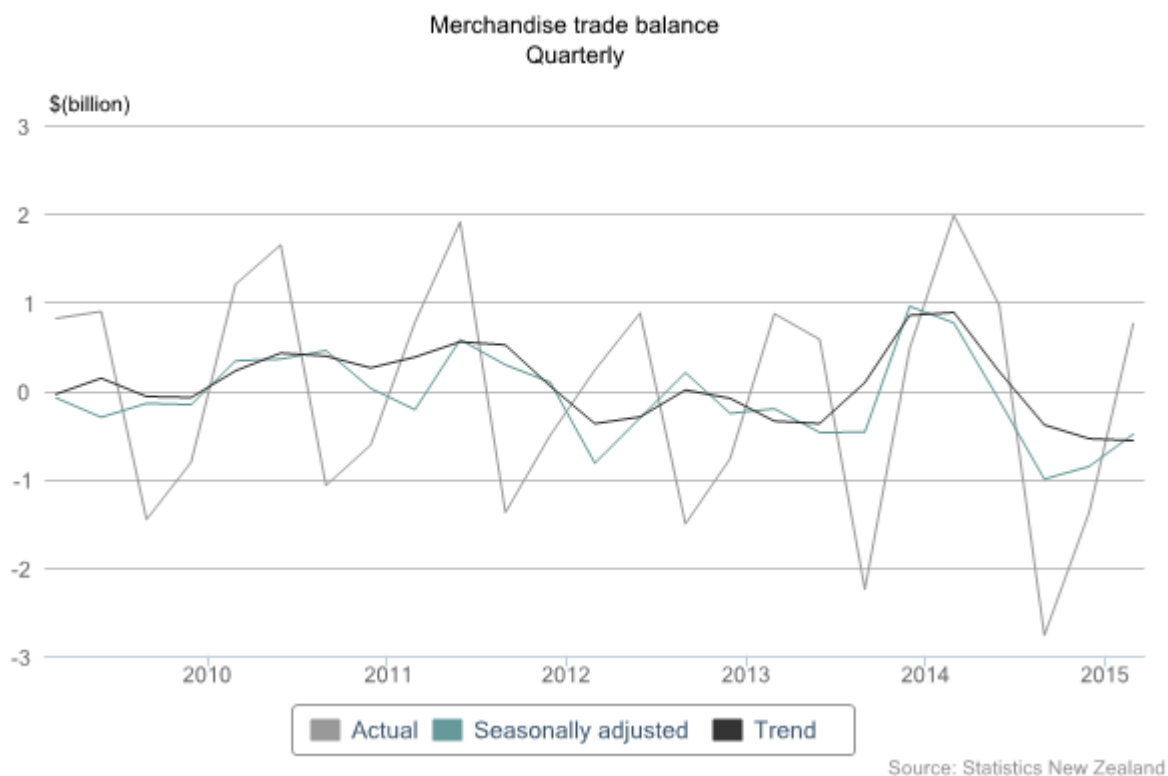
Seasonally adjusted country exports and imports series for the European Union, China, and Australia were developed last quarter. These series are available on [Infoshare](#).

In the March 2015 quarter, compared with the December 2014 quarter, the top import sources (ranked by total annual imports) for New Zealand were:

- **European Union (EU)** – up 10 percent (\$223 million) to \$2.5 billion.
- **China** – up 4.1 percent (\$97 million) to \$2.5 billion.
- **Australia** – down 3.1 percent (\$51 million) to \$1.6 billion.

Trade deficit in the March 2015 quarter

In the March 2015 quarter, there was a seasonally adjusted trade deficit of \$490 million, equivalent to 4.0 percent of exports. In the December 2014 quarter, there was a deficit of \$856 million. Excluding large one-off imports in the December quarter, the deficit in the December 2014 quarter was \$623 million .



Monthly exports fall 2.0 percent

In March 2015, goods exports were valued at \$4.9 billion, down \$103 million (2.0 percent) from March 2014. This was the second-highest value ever of goods exported for a March month. Exports in March 2014 were the highest ever for March months, valued at \$5.0 billion. In March 2015 there was an export of a drilling platform. Excluding the drilling platform, exports were valued at \$4.7 billion and still the second highest March month.

Annual exports to China dip below Australia

In the year ended March 2015, Australia overtook China as New Zealand's top goods export destination on an annual basis. Previously, exports to China had been ahead of Australia from the year ended November 2013.

Annual two-way trade with China has been decreasing since the year ended June 2014. It is now at \$17.6 billion.

The monthly movements for New Zealand's top export destinations (ranked by total annual exports) for March 2015 compared with March 2014 were:

1. **Australia** – down \$26 million (3.4 percent), due to crude oil, down \$73 million.
2. **China** – down \$324 million (29 percent), driven by a 77 percent fall in whole milk powder.
3. **United States** – up \$130 million (27 percent), led by frozen beef, up \$85 million.
4. **European Union (EU)** – down \$57 million (10 percent), over a range of commodities.
5. **Japan** – up \$41 million (19 percent). Unwrought aluminium rose \$49 million.

Fall in exports due to milk powder to China

Milk powder, butter, and cheese (New Zealand's largest export commodity group) fell \$307 million (20 percent) to \$1.2 billion. The fall was driven by lower prices, with the quantity exported in March 2015 up 18 percent.

The fall in milk powder, butter, and cheese exports for March 2015 was led by whole milk powder, down \$296 million (34 percent). The quantity of whole milk powder exported rose 11 percent.

By destination, milk powder, butter, and cheese exports to China fell \$364 million (66 percent).

There were small increases to other countries, including Algeria and Venezuela.

Meat and edible offal (New Zealand's second-largest export commodity group) rose \$101 million (14 percent). Frozen beef drove the rise, up \$122 million (50 percent). The rise in total meat exports was due to higher prices, with the quantity up 4.5 percent.

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

- **Crude oil** fell \$73 million (62 percent).
- **Logs, wood, and wood articles** fell \$53 million (14 percent).
- **Ships, boats, and floating structures** recorded the largest increase, up \$158 million, due to the export of a drilling platform.

Monthly imports rise 4.1 percent

In March 2015, imported goods were valued at \$4.3 billion, up \$169 million (4.1 percent) from March 2014.

Consumption goods lead the rise in imports

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

Consumption goods rose \$167 million (19 percent), led by semi-durable consumer goods (such as clothing).

Intermediate goods rose \$73 million (4.1 percent), due to crude oil, up \$138 million (53 percent). Processed fuels and lubricants (including automotive diesel) partly offset the rise, down \$120 million (72 percent).

Capital goods fell \$33 million (3.3 percent), due to machinery and plant equipment, down \$146 million (19 percent). This was due to a drilling platform import in March 2014. Transport equipment (including goods vehicles) partly offset the fall, up \$113 million (51 percent).

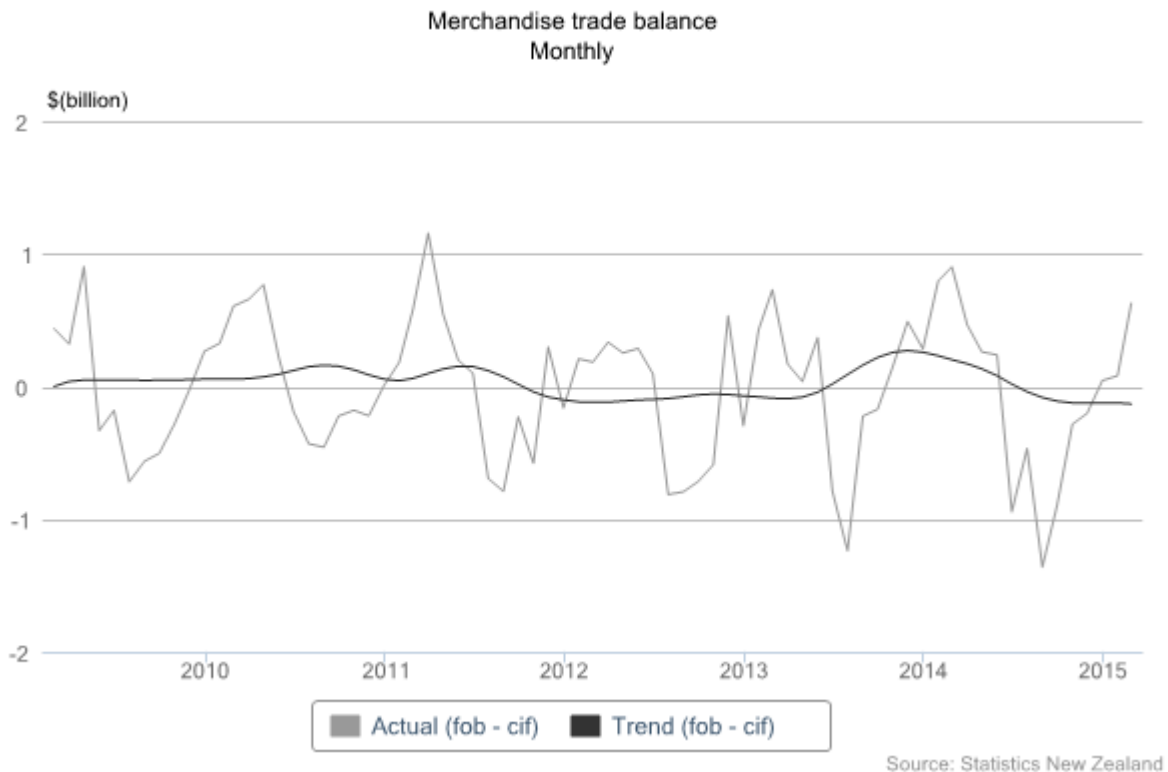
In **other categories** of goods:

- **passenger motor cars** rose \$47 million (15 percent)
- **petrol and avgas** fell \$101 million (61 percent).

Trade surplus in March 2015 of \$631 million

In March 2015, there was a trade surplus of \$631 million (13 percent of exports). The average surplus over the previous five March months was 13 percent of exports . Excluding the large export item noted above, the trade surplus would have been \$432 million.

For the year ended March 2015, there was an annual trade deficit of \$2.4 billion (4.9 percent of exports). This was the largest annual trade deficit since the year ended July 2009.



Exchange rate movements

According to the Reserve Bank's trade weighted index, the New Zealand dollar was 2.1 percent higher in March 2015 than in February 2015, and 0.3 percent lower than in March 2014.

Trade weighted index
Monthly. Base: June 1979 (=100)



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: April 2015 will be released on 26 May 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](#)
- [Foreign currency conversions March 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 22 working days in March 2015, compared with 21 in March 2014.

Foreign currency conversions March 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.

Currency conversions – March 2015				
Foreign currencies to New Zealand dollars				
Currency	Number of exports	Value in foreign currency \$(million)	Value in NZD \$(million)	Average exchange rate
USD	45,419	2,264	3,035	0.7458
AUD	52,014	272	282	0.9634
EUR	6,592	156	229	0.6824
GBP	4,157	68	138	0.4941
JPY	1,037	5,007	56	89.89
Other currencies	2,569	...	72	...
Total in foreign currency	111,788	...	3,813	...
NZD	78,099	...	1,117	...
Total	189,887	...	4,929	...

Symbol: ... not applicable

In March 2015, we converted 111,788 export line entries worth \$3.8 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 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 25 March 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 25 Mar 2015			Published 29 Apr 2015			Change		
	\$(million) ⁽¹⁾								
	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)
Month:									
Dec 2014	4,405 P	4,603 P	-199 P	4,402 F	4,602 F	-200 F	-3	-1	-2
Jan 20 15	3,677 P	3,644 P	33 P	3,676 P	3,629 P	47 P	0	-14	14
Feb 20 15	3,923 P	3,873 P	50 P	3,895 P	3,811 P	83 P	-28	-62	34
Year ended:									
Dec 2014	50,078 P	51,260 P	- 1,182 P	50,075 F	51,258 F	-1,183 F	-3	-1	-2
Jan 20 15	49,686 P	51,120 P	-1,434 P	49,683 P	51,104 P	-1,421 P	-4	-16	12
Feb 20 15	49,078 P	51,259 P	-2,181 P	49,046 P	51,181 P	- 2,135 P	-32	-78	46
1. Figures are calculated on unrounded data.									
Symbols:									
F final									
P provisional									
Source: Statistics New Zealand									

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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](#).

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- 1.02 Overseas merchandise trade, trade balance – actual values
- 2 Overseas merchandise trade, seasonally adjusted and trend values – monthly
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- 4 Imports by country of origin
- 5 Exports of main commodities
- 6 Imports of main commodities
- 7 Imports by broad economic category (BEC) group
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- 11 Exports by top 10 HS categories, values – seasonally adjusted
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- 17 Overseas merchandise trade, seasonally adjusted and trend values – quarterly
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- 20 Imports by broad economic category (BEC) group, values – seasonally adjusted – quarterly

Access more data on Infoshare

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