

# NATIONAL IMPORT FILES

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

Supplier diversification has become one of the major strategies for import development in the post Uruguay Round context. New suppliers have developed opportunities in a large number of non-traditional markets. This applies not only to importers from the major trading nations, but is equally important for firms in developing countries and economies in transition.

Yet information on the import portfolios of many developing countries remains erratic, and it is often difficult for policy makers in developing countries to assess which product groups' imports should be rationed and which alternative suppliers should be used.

To assist with this challenge, this paper will provide an overview of the import portfolio of developing countries and economies in transition in terms of the product composition of their imports, the growth patterns of their leading import products, the dynamics of international demand, and the dynamics of imports in groups of similar countries. This service will be of particular interest to the numerous low income countries that do not report any foreign trade data of their own.

Data is presented by country, both in graphical and table form and sheds light on the following questions:

- C What are the leading import products of the country concerned? How concentrated or diversified is the country's import portfolio in terms of products?
- C For which products does the country under review have a higher demand than similar countries? Which import products are falling behind?
- C In what market segments are the leading import products positioned in terms of unit values?
- C Which countries are the major providers for the import products under review?
- C Which countries are under-utilised as providers for the import products under review?

The present document has been prepared for trading companies, trade promotion institutions in the public and business sectors, and in particular for importers interested in diversifying their supplier markets.

Additional information and analysis is available upon request from the ITC on more narrowly-defined products, country-specific market and product diversification opportunities, and a variety of related issues. For further information, please contact

Chief, Market Analysis Section  
International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO  
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
Tel: (+ 4122) 7300234  
Fax: (+ 4122) 7300577  
E-mail: MAS@intracen.org

Note: Indicators and graphics concerning the national export performance and international demand of around 190 countries and territories are available on ITC's website: <http://www.intracen.org/>

## SOURCES OF DATA AND PRESENTATION FORMATS

### DATA

This study is based on trade data reported in 1998 by 70 countries to the database COMTRADE of the United Nations Statistical Division. These reporting countries (see list in Annex) account together for more than 90% of world trade. COMTRADE is the world's largest and most comprehensive international trade database, covering export and import data by product and by country for more than 200 countries and territories over the last three decades. Note that India's data for 1998 were reported too late to be included in this edition.

This study includes all member countries of the United Nations. Hong Kong, Macau, Switzerland and Taiwan Province (China) have been added due to their significance in world trade. In addition, separate analyses have been carried out for 9 common market and free trade zones which include developing countries (Andean Pact, ASEAN FTA, CACM, CARICOM, COMESA, ECOWAS, MERCOSUR, SAARC and SADC).

When a country's import data is not available for the last year, *mirror statistics*, i.e. amounts reported by the exporting rather than the importing country, are used. This approach has the advantage of covering numerous additional countries. At the same time, mirror statistics have some shortcomings which need to be taken into account (see note on the limitation of trade statistics).

First, mirror statistics only capture those exports of 70 reporting countries to the rest of the world. As a result, a major share of trade among African developing countries is excluded.

More generally, trade statistics have a number of well-known weak points of which readers should be aware. Non-declared and informal trade, for instance, have reached a significant volume in a number of countries, but are not included.

### PRESENTATION FORMATS

Data for each country are presented in two formats, charts and tables. While all graphs and tables have the same format, headings and product names are indicated in English or French according to the official language of the country under review as reported to the United Nations. In spite of major efforts, it was not possible to find an abbreviated Spanish version of the Harmonized System (HS). As a result, data for Spanish speaking countries are reported in English.

## HOW TO READ THE CHARTS

### **Objective**

The charts provide an overview of the more detailed information contained in the corresponding table. For each country, the chart presents the portfolio of leading import product groups and compares national import growth with the growth of imports in the Reference Group of Countries (RGC or Region) the country belongs to (see also Annex for the definition of those groups).

### **Description**

The circles show the country's 20 leading product groups. They have been selected on the basis of a ranking of the country's imports at the 4-digit level of the HS. The area of the circles corresponds to the import value of the product under review in 1998 relative to the country's imports of all products.

### **Vertical axis**

This axis indicates the annual growth of imports in the RGC for the product being plotted over the years 1994 to 1998.

### **Horizontal axis**

This axis measures the annual growth of imports in the specific country for the product being plotted over the 1994-1998 period.

### **Reference lines**

The vertical lines indicate the growth for the country's imports of all goods, while the horizontal lines indicate the growth of RGC imports of all goods. Moreover, the diagonal line (i.e. the line showing a growth in the country equal to the growth in the RGC) divides the chart into two parts. On the right are the products whose imports have grown faster in the country than in the RGC and on the left are the products whose imports have grown slower in the country than in the RGC.

### **Interpretation**

The chart should be interpreted both from the perspective of the producers (local and more over abroad) who want to sell their products to the country and from the perspective of the policy makers of the country.

For the exporters, products with high import growth in the RGC (upper part of the chart) are of particular interest for trade promotion for RGC, making it easier to gain access in other growing markets. Products on the right are also important for trade promotion in the country of interest.

For the economic agents of the country, the increase of the imports of the products should be viewed in light of the increase of private consumption and the increase of local production. This comparison is useful in assessing the competitiveness of local producers.

For the policy makers of the country, the increase of the imports of these products should be compared to the increase of locally produced goods. This will indicate whether local producers are losing market share in the country and thereby assess their competitiveness.

The chart also provides an overview of the *concentration* of leading import products, as shown by the largest circles. Very large circles signify products taking a very large share of imports.

### **Note**

Descriptions of product groups are abbreviations based on HS. They characterise the entire product group, not necessarily its most important component. See also the description of the indicators in the next section for more details.

## HOW TO READ THE TABLES

The tables present the major indicators of the country's import portfolio, consisting generally of three parts:

- C indicators about the total merchandise trade (top of the table) of the country;
- C indicators about the 35 leading import products of the country;
- C imports of services (not available for all countries): Transportation services, Travel, and Other (bottom of the table);

### Total merchandise imports

The second line lists the value of national imports according to national sources as reported by the IMF Direction of Trade Statistics or other international institutions. This figure is particularly useful when the data is derived from partner country data (or "mirror" data), indicating to what extent partner country data cover adequately the country's imports of merchandise.

Imports statistics are usually available in F.O.B. terms, while mirror statistics (based on export data) are usually reported in C.I.F. terms.

### Description of the product-specific indicators

*Rank* The product groups are ranked according to their weight in national imports in terms of value (see the indicator *Value 1998*).

*HS code and product label:* HS 4 digit code and corresponding abbreviated product description.

*Value 1998* Value of imports by product given in US\$million for 1998.

*Trend 94-98* Average annual growth rate of the imports of the country over the last four or five years (either 1993-98 or 1994-98) for the product under review. For some countries that have reported data for 1998 but not consistently over the 1994-1998 period, the *trend* is calculated on the basis of mirror statistics under the condition that the latest figures covers a significant part of the data (more than 70%).

*Trend stability* The stability of the *Trend 94-98* is based on the portion of change in imported value due to the trend: a high value indicates that there is a clear trend and that the imported values have not been too volatile.

*Regional trend* Average annual growth rate of the imports of region over the last five years (1994-98) for the product under review.

*World trend* Average annual growth rate of world imports over the last five years (1994-98) for the product under review.

*Share in world* Share (in percentage) of the country in world imports for the product under review.

*Rel. Unit value* Unit values of imports relative to the world. Determines the quality-price segment of the product imported by the country under review. Unit values give the value per weight or other quantity unit (example: US\$2.0 for one kilo of milk and cream), whereas relative unit values are calculated as the unit value of the country's imports divided by the unit value of world imports. Values above 1 indicate that the products imported by the country are in average in an upper market segment (higher price).

*Imports per capita* Import value (*Value 1998*) divided by 1998 population. In \$US.

*Rel. per capita* *Per capita* imports of the country divided by the per capita imports of the region (or RGC). It indicates the propensity to import of the country. Values above 1 indicate that the country has a high propensity to import, in comparison with the other countries of the RGC.

### *Leading exporting countries*

List the two largest exporting countries for the given product and the subject country. Abbreviations are used instead of complete names. Annex 1 gives the table of country names with abbreviations.

### *Under-used exporting countries*

List the two most under-used sources of exports of the product under review into the subject country, as compared to the region (see Annex 1 for the country codes). This helps to identify productspecific opportunities for supplier diversification from the perspective of the importing country and it indicates from where the majority of imports of the region come from.

### **Data on services**

Earnings in US\$millions from services sold internationally in 1998, when available, are presented at the end of the table for goods (3 last lines). Service categories are not represented on the graph to avoid inappropriately comparing services with more narrow goods categories. The data are taken from the IMF Balance of Payments accounts. When not available in 1998, the 1997 or the 1996 figures are reported, as indicated after the services label. Trends are computed over the last five year period (1994-98 for the data available in 1998, 93-97 for the data available in 1997, and so on).

## Example of interpretation of country-specific import profile

The following comments may assist in interpretation of the charts and tables. They refer to Peru, for which imports statistics were available.

### Relatively balanced import portfolio of goods

Peruvian imports, more than US\$8 billion for 1998, are relatively diversified in terms of goods. This can be seen from the corresponding chart where there is no small product circle (or bubble). The top 35 leading import products presented in the table account for less than 50% of the total import of merchandise.

### Leading product items

Crude oil and motor vehicles are the leading import items of Peru. Imports of crude oil have been extremely dynamic, over the 1994-98 period, growing at an average rate of 36% per year, versus 15% per year in Latin America over the same period.

Imports of trucks and other motor vehicles for the transport of goods (HS 8704) have been less dynamic in Peru than in South America as a whole. The largest portion of motor vehicles exported to Peru comes from Japan and Peru imports proportionally less Argentinian and Brazilian vehicles than the region (South America).

Peru is also a significant importing country of agricultural products, particularly cereals like wheat, maize and rice. In fact, per capita imports of cereals are higher in Peru than in the region, as shown by values above one in the corresponding "Rel. per capita" columns.

The lower part of the table shows that Peru imports a wide range of electrical and electronic machinery, most of which come from the USA.

### Evolution of imports

In the period 1994-1998, the overall imports of Peru grow at an average annual rate of 9%. Although this evolution was not very stable, it is comparable to the 11% growth of the Southern American countries. For most of Peru's leading import products, growth rates have been quite similar to the ones of the region. In the chart concerning Peru, most of the circles are distributed along the diagonal line, with few exceptions, like crude oil (already mentioned), transmission apparatus for radio-telephony, cotton (imports more dynamic in Peru), parts of motor vehicles, and electric apparatus for line telephony (imports less dynamic in Peru).

### Propensity to import per capita

Per capita imports in Peru are comparable to the other countries of Latin America, averaging US\$263 a year. This is approximately four times less than Poland (US\$1,066) and well above the average of Senegal (US\$183). Products with a high propensity for import per capita are found in sugar, cotton, and crude oil.

Imports of cotton have grown at an annual rate of 24% over the period. This increase reflects the strong development of the export industry of textile articles, especially shirts and T-shirts of cotton (see the indicators on the "National Export Performance").

Peru is also a relatively significant importer of rice, as it takes more than 2% of world imports.

### Peruvian balance of trade

Finally, Peruvian imports should be put into a global perspective and compared to Peruvian exports (see the indicators on the "National Export Performance").

Peruvian exports have progressed approximately at the same rate as Peruvian imports over the 1994-98 period. The gap between the import and export of merchandise remains significant, around US\$2.5 billion for 1998. The balance of trade in services is also negative, even if surpluses are registered for travel expenses.

**Annex 1**  
**List of Partner and Reporting Countries and Territories**

ISO code	Country name	Reporters of trade data to COMTRADE (HS, dec 99)					group	Free trade agreements membership
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998		
ABW	Aruba						W ASIA	
AFG	Afghanistan						CASIA	
AGO	Angola						O AFRI	SAD C, COMESA
ALB	Albania						EEURO	
AND	Andorra						D VMAR	
ANT	Netherlands Antilles						CARAB	
ARE	United Arab Emirates						W ASIA	
ARG	Argentina						SAMER	Mercosur
ARM	Armenia						CASIA	
ATG	Antigua and Barbuda						CARAB	Caricom
AUS	Australia						D VMAR	
AUT	Austria						D VMAR	
AZE	Azerbaijan						CASIA	
BDI	Burundi						O AFRI	COMESA
BEL	Belgium-Lux						D VMAR	
BEN	Benin						O AFRI	ECO W AS
BFA	Burkina Faso						O AFRI	ECO W AS
BGD	Bangladesh						SASIA	SAARC
BGR	Bulgaria						EEURO	
BHR	Bahrain						W ASIA	
BHS	Bahamas						CARAB	Caricom
BHM	Bosnia and Herzegovina						EEURO	
BLR	Belarus						EEURO	
BLZ	Belize						CAMER	Caricom
BMU	Bermuda						CARAB	
BOL	Bolivia						SAMER	Andean Pact
BRA	Brazil						SAMER	Mercosur
BRB	Barbados						CARAB	Caricom
BRN	Brunei Darussalam						O ASIA	Asean FTA
BTN	Bhutan						SASIA	SAARC
BWA	Botswana						O AFRI	SACU, SAD C
CAF	Central African Republic						O AFRI	
CAN	Canada						D VMAR	
CHE	Switzerland						D VMAR	
CHL	Chile						SAMER	
CHN	China						O ASIA(*)	
CIV	Côte d'Ivoire						O AFRI	ECO W AS
CMR	Cameroon						O AFRI	
COD	Congo, Democratic Republic						O AFRI	
COG	Congo						O AFRI	
COK	Cook Islands						O CEAN	
COL	Colombia						SAMER	Andean Pact
COM	Comoros						O AFRI	
CPV	Cape Verde						O AFRI	ECO W AS
CRI	Costa Rica						CAMER	CACM
CUB	Cuba						CARAB	
CYM	Cayman Islands						CARAB	
CYP	Cyprus						W ASIA	
CZE	Czech Republic						EEURO	

ISO code	Country name	Reporters of trade data to COMTRADE (HS, dec 99)					group	Free trade agreements membership
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998		
DEU	Germany						D VMAR	
DJI	Djibouti						O AFRI	
DMA	Dominica						CARAB	Caricom
DNK	Denmark						D VMAR	
DOM	Dominican Republic						CARAB	
DZA	Algeria						NAFRI	
ECU	Ecuador						SAMER	Andean Pact
EGY	Egypt						NAFRI	
ERI	Eritrea						O AFRI	COMESA
ESH	Western Sahara						O AFRI	
ESP	Spain						D VMAR	
EST	Estonia						EEURO	
ETH	Ethiopia						O AFRI	COMESA
FIN	Finland						D VMAR	
FJI	Fiji						O CEAN	
FRA	France						D VMAR	
GAB	Gabon						O AFRI	
GBR	United Kingdom						D VMAR	
GEO	Georgia						CASIA	
GHA	Ghana						O AFRI	ECOWAS
GIN	Guinea						O AFRI	ECOWAS
GMB	Gambia						O AFRI	ECOWAS
GNB	Guinea-Bissau						O AFRI	ECOWAS
GNQ	Equatorial Guinea						O AFRI	
GRC	Greece						D VMAR	
GRD	Grenada						CARAB	Caricom
GTM	Guatemala						CAMER	CACM
GUM	Guam						W ASIA	
GUY	Guyana						SAMER	Caricom
HKG	Hong Kong						O ASIA	
HND	Honduras						CAMER	CACM
HRV	Croatia						EEURO	
HTI	Haiti						CARAB	
HUN	Hungary						EEURO	
IDN	Indonesia						O ASIA	Asean FTA
IND	India						SASIA	SAARC
IRL	Ireland						D VMAR	
IRN	Iran, Islamic Republic of						W ASIA	
IRQ	Iraq						W ASIA	
ISL	Iceland						D VMAR	
ISR	Israel						W ASIA	
ITA	Italy						D VMAR	
JAM	Jamaica						CARAB	Caricom
JOR	Jordan						W ASIA	
JPN	Japan						D VMAR	
KAZ	Kazakhstan						CASIA	
KEN	Kenya						O AFRI	COMESA
KGZ	Kyrgyzstan						CASIA	
KHM	Cambodia						O ASIA	
KIR	Kiribati						O CEAN	
KNA	Saint Kitts and Nevis						CARAB	Caricom
KOR	Korea, Republic of						O ASIA	
KWT	Kuwait						W ASIA	
LAO	Lao People's Dem. Rep.						O ASIA	Asean FTA

ISO code	Country name	Reporters of trade data to COMTRADE (HS, dec 99)					group	Free trade agreements membership
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998		
LBN	Lebanon						W ASIA	
LBR	Liberia						O AFRI	ECO W AS
LBY	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya						NAFRI	
LCA	Saint Lucia						CARAB	Caricom
LKA	Sri Lanka						SASIA	SAARC
LSO	Lesotho						O AFRI	SAD C,SACU
LTU	Lithuania						EEURO	
LVA	Latvia						EEURO	
MAC	Macau						O ASIA	
MAR	Morocco						NAFRI	
MDA	Moldova, Republic of						EEURO	
MDG	Madagascar						O AFRI	COMESA
MDV	Maldives						SASIA	SAARC
MEX	Mexico						CAMER	
MLI	Mali						O AFRI	ECO W AS
MLT	Malta						W ASIA	
MMR	Myanmar						O ASIA	Asean FTA
MNG	Mongolia						CASIA	
MOZ	Mozambique						O AFRI	SAD C, COMESA
MRT	Mauritania						O AFRI	ECO W AS
MUS	Mauritius						O AFRI	COMESA
MWI	Malawi						O AFRI	SAD C, COMESA
MYS	Malaysia						O ASIA	Asean FTA
NAM	Namibia						O AFRI	SAD C,SACU
NCL	New Caledonia						O CEAN	
NER	Niger						O AFRI	ECO W AS
NGA	Nigeria						O AFRI	ECO W AS
NIC	Nicaragua						CAMER	CACM
NLD	Netherlands						D VMAR	
NOR	Norway						D VMAR	
NPL	Nepal						SASIA	SAARC
NZL	New Zealand						D VMAR	
OMN	Oman						W ASIA	
PAK	Pakistan						SASIA	SAARC
PAN	Panama						CAMER	
PER	Peru						SAMER	Andean Pact
PHL	Philippines						O ASIA	Asean FTA
PNG	Papua New Guinea						O CEAN	
POL	Poland						EEURO	
PRK	Korea, Dem. People's Rep. of						O ASIA	
PRT	Portugal						D VMAR	
PRY	Paraguay						SAMER	Mercosur
QAT	Qatar						W ASIA	
ROM	Romania						EEURO	
RUS	Russian Federation						EEURO	
RWA	Rwanda						O AFRI	COMESA
SAU	Saudi Arabia						W ASIA	
SDN	Sudan						NAFRI	COMESA
SEN	Senegal						O AFRI	ECO W AS
SGP	Singapore						O ASIA	Asean FTA
SLB	Solomon Islands						O CEAN	
SLE	Sierra Leone						O AFRI	ECO W AS
SLV	El Salvador						CAMER	CACM

ISO code	Country name	Reporters of trade data to COMTRADE (HS, dec 99)					group	Free trade agreements membership
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998		
SO M	Somalia						O AFRI	
STP	Sao Tome and Principe						O AFRI	
SUR	Suriname						SAMER	Caricom
SVK	Slovakia						EEURO	
SVN	Slovenia						EEURO	
SW E	Sweden						D VMAR	
SW Z	Swaziland						O AFRI	SAD C,SACU
SYC	Seychelles						O AFRI	
SYR	Syrian Arab Republic						W ASIA	
TCD	Chad						O AFRI	
TGO	Togo						O AFRI	ECO W AS
TH A	Thailand						O ASIA	Ase an FTA
TK	Tajikistan						CASIA	
TKM	Turkmenistan						CASIA	
TON	Tonga						O CEAN	
TTO	Trinidad and Tobago						CARAB	Caricom
TUN	Tunisia						NAFRI	
TUR	Turkey						W ASIA	
TW N	Taiwan (PoC) and Other Asia						O ASIA	
TZ A	Tanzania						O AFRI	SAD C, CO MESA
UGA	Uganda						O AFRI	CO MESA
UKR	Ukraine						EEURO	
URY	Uruguay						SAMER	Mercosur
USA	United States of America						D VMAR	
UZ B	Uzbekistan						CASIA	
VCT	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines						CARAB	Caricom
VEN	Venezuela						SAMER	Ande an Pact
VGB	Virgin Islands (British)						CARAB	Caricom
VR	Virgin Islands (U.S.)						CARAB	
VNM	Viet Nam						O ASIA	Ase an FTA
VUT	Vanuatu						O CEAN	
YEM	Yemen						W ASIA	
YUG	Yugoslavia						EEURO	
Z AF	Southern African Customs Union						O AFRI(*)	SACU,SAD C
Z MB	Zambia						O AFRI	SAD C, CO MESA
Z WE	Zimbabwe						O AFRI	SAD C, CO MESA

List of codes for special territories reporting in COM TRADE (used in the tables)

bbb	Africa CEUCA not elsewhere specified
ccc	Africa other not elsewhere specified
ddd	Latin America not elsewhere specified
eee	CACM not elsewhere specified
fff	Caribbean not elsewhere specified
jjj	ASIA WEST not elsewhere specified
qqq	Europe EU not elsewhere specified
rrr	Europe EFTA not elsewhere specified
sss	Europe EAST not elsewhere specified
www	BUNKERS
xxx	FREE ZONES
yyy	Special categories
zzz	Areas not elsewhere specified

**Legend: Reference group abbreviations**

CAMER	Central America
CARAB	Caribbean
CASIA	Central Asia
DVMAR	Developed market economies
EEURO	Central and East Europe
NAFRI	North Africa
OAFRI	Other African countries
OASIA	Other Asian countries
OCEAN	Pacific Ocean Territories
SAMER	South America
SASIA	SAARC countries (South Asia)
WASIA	West Asia (Middle-East)

(\*) The country has not been included in the group for the computations as its weight would have been too important