

Embargoed until 10:45am – 29 January 2010

Overseas Merchandise Trade: December 2009

Highlights

December 2009 quarter:

Values are seasonally adjusted and compared with the September 2009 quarter unless otherwise stated.

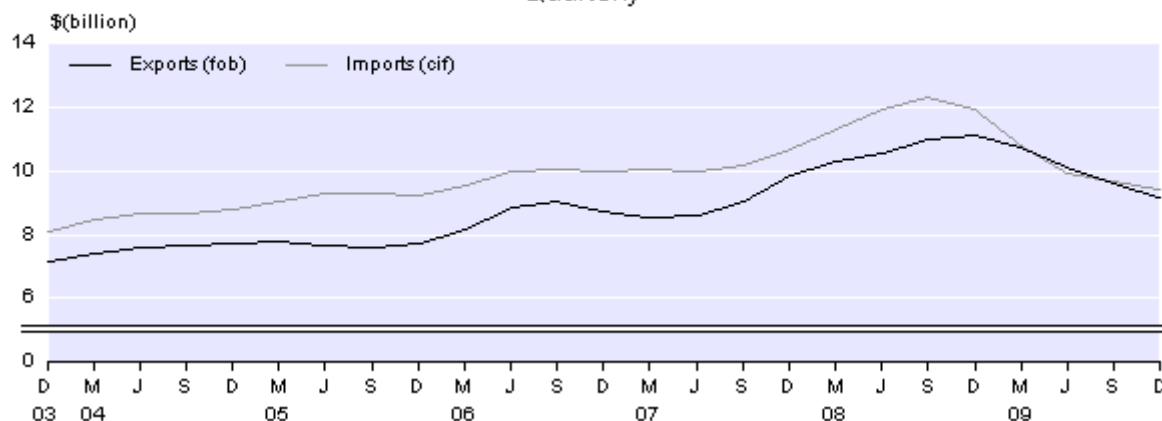
- Exports decreased 2.8 percent to \$9.2 billion, the fourth consecutive quarterly decrease.
- Milk powder, butter, and cheese, and crude oil dominated the fall in exports.
- Imports decreased 3.2 percent to \$9.4 billion, the fifth consecutive quarterly decline.
- The decline in imports was led by falls in capital goods and intermediate goods.
- The trade balance was a deficit of \$170 million (1.8 percent of exports).

December 2009 month:

Values are actual and compared with the December 2008 month unless otherwise stated.

- Exports were down 11.3 percent (\$433 million) to \$3.4 billion.
- Milk powder, butter, and cheese showed the largest decrease.
- Imports decreased 18.6 percent (\$776 million) to \$3.4 billion.
- Mechanical machinery and equipment, and vehicles, parts, and accessories led the fall in imports.
- The decline in the export and import trends appears to have eased in recent months.
- The trade balance was a surplus of \$2 million (0.1 percent of exports).

Merchandise Trend Values
Quarterly



Geoff Bascand
Government Statistician

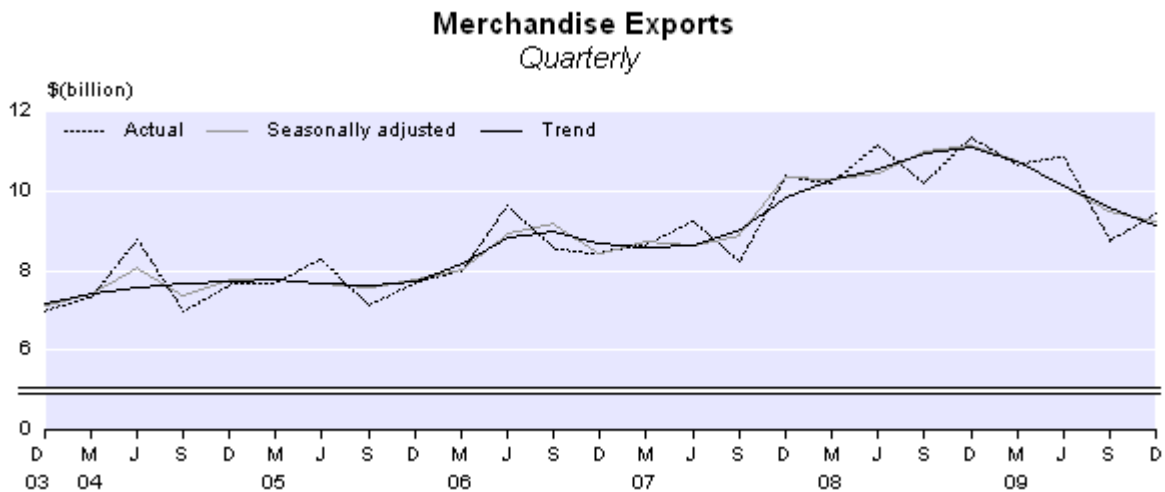
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Commentary

Seasonally adjusted exports – December 2009 quarter

The seasonally adjusted value of merchandise exports decreased 2.8 percent to \$9.2 billion in the December 2009 quarter. This is the fourth consecutive quarterly decrease for exports, and follows falls of 5.4 percent and 6.6 percent in the June and September 2009 quarters respectively.

Since reaching its highest level in the December 2008 quarter, the trend for total merchandise exports has fallen 17.7 percent, the largest fall in the trend series since the series began in 1988.



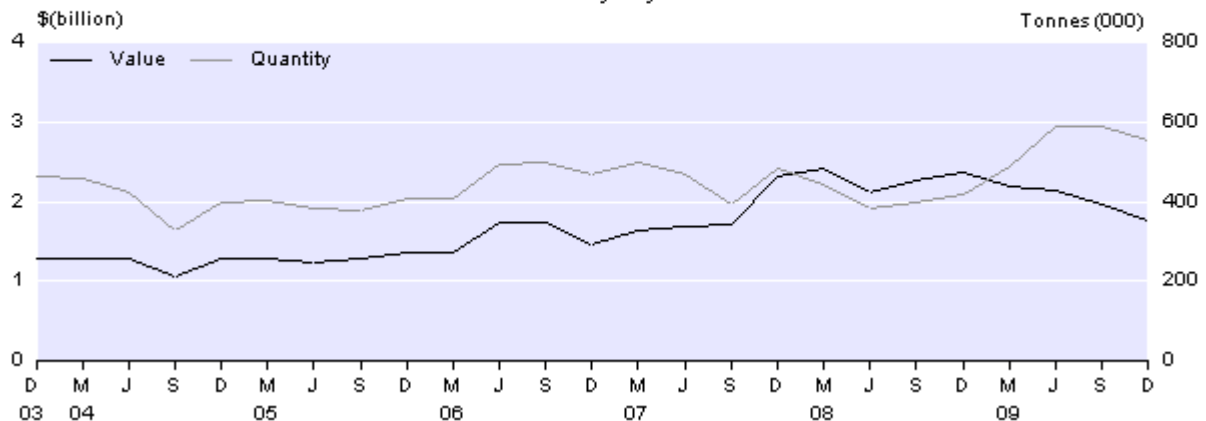
The seasonally adjusted decrease in exports for the December 2009 quarter was dominated by falls in the categories milk powder, butter, and cheese, and crude oil.

- Milk powder, butter, and cheese recorded the largest decrease, down 10.1 percent (\$198 million) and is at its lowest value since the September 2007 quarter. Quantities were 6.1 percent lower over the same period.

Milk Powder, Butter, and Cheese Exports

Quarterly values and quantities

Seasonally adjusted

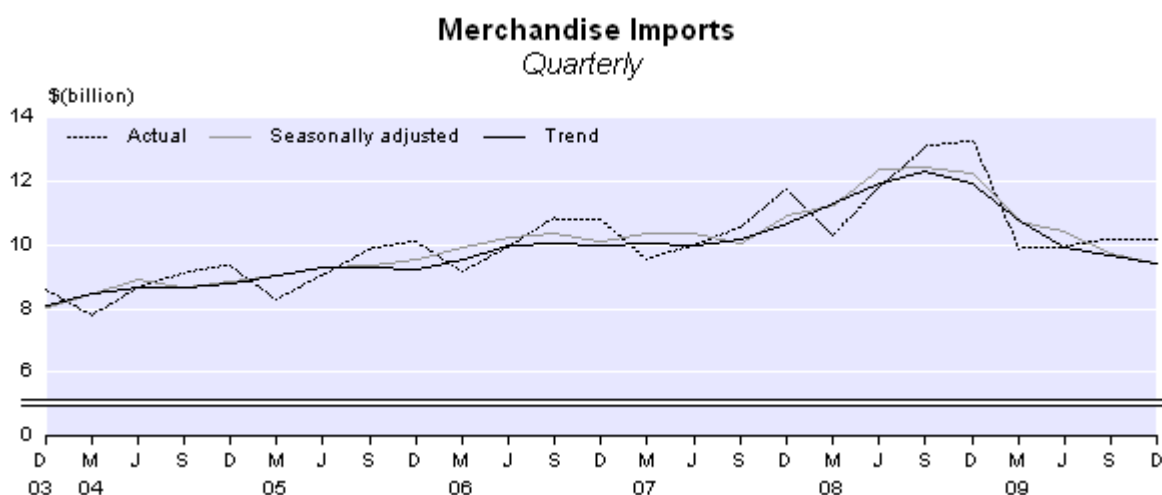


- Crude oil, which is not seasonally adjusted, was down 19.5 percent (\$114 million) with quantities 18.0 percent lower.
- Casein and caseinates, down 33.1 percent (\$65 million), was the next largest fall with quantities down 25.9 percent.
- Meat and edible offal was the largest increase, up 6.0 percent (\$66 million). Quantities rose 14.5 percent in the December 2009 quarter, following a 15.5 percent fall in the September 2009 quarter.

Seasonally adjusted imports – December 2009 quarter

The seasonally adjusted value of merchandise imports decreased 3.2 percent to \$9.4 billion in the December 2009 quarter. This is the fifth consecutive quarterly decline, and follows falls of 3.1 percent and 6.9 percent in the June and September 2009 quarters respectively.

Since reaching its highest level ever in the September 2008 quarter, the trend for total merchandise imports has fallen 23.6 percent, continuing the largest fall in the trend series since it began in 1988. Large one-off imports over \$100 million are excluded from the trend series calculation.

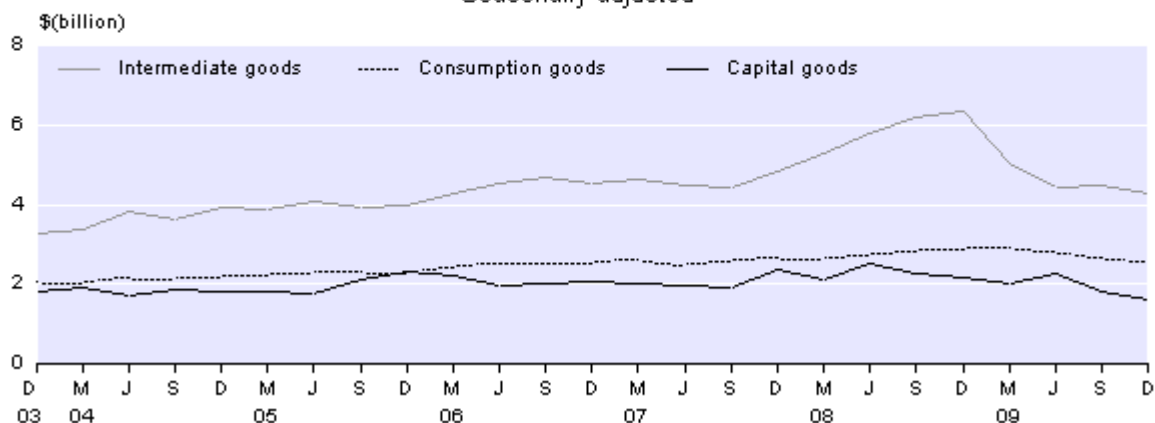


Of the broad economic groups, capital goods showed the largest decline in the December 2009 quarter, followed by intermediate goods and consumption goods. These decreases were partly offset by increases in passenger motor cars, petrol and avgas, and military and other goods.

- Capital goods imports fell 11.1 percent (\$200 million) in the December 2009 quarter, with falls in both machinery and plant, and in transport equipment. Machinery and plant was down 7.2 percent (\$103 million) following a fall of 4.9 percent in the September 2009 quarter. Transport equipment, which is not seasonally adjusted, was down 26.5 percent (\$97 million), following a fall of 52.8 percent in the September 2009 quarter.

Imports by Broad Economic Category

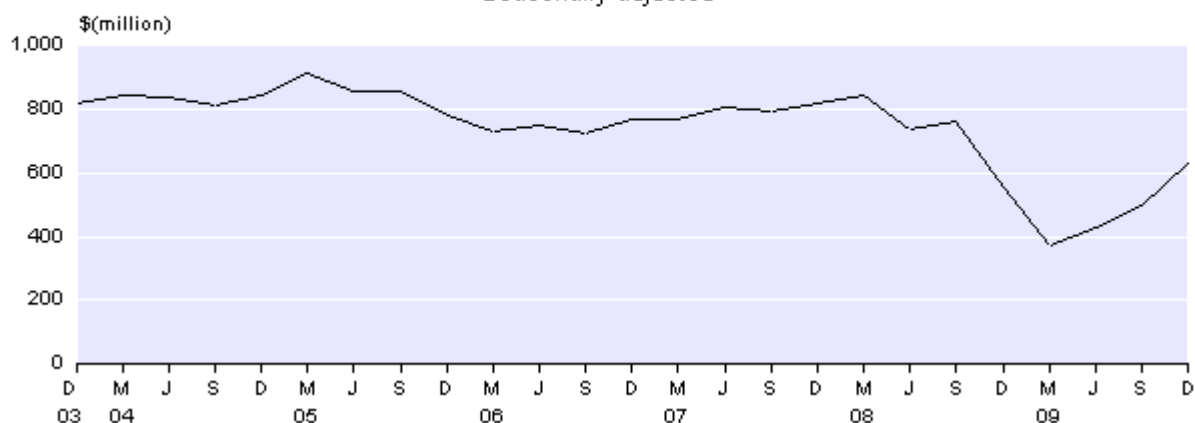
Quarterly
Seasonally adjusted



- Intermediate goods declined 3.9 percent (\$173 million) in the December 2009 quarter, following a 0.6 percent increase in the September 2009 quarter and an 11.9 percent fall in the June 2009 quarter. Declines in parts and accessories of capital goods and in processed fuels and lubricants (other than motor spirit) were the main contributors to this decline. Crude oil, which is not seasonally adjusted, rose 2.6 percent (\$22 million). Crude oil is imported in large, irregular shipments, which can give rise to large fluctuations in quantities and values.
- Consumption goods declined 3.6 percent (\$96 million) in the December 2009 quarter, following a 5.3 percent decline in the September 2009 quarter. The main contributors to this decline were: semi-durable goods (includes items such as glassware, cutlery, and apparel); non-durable consumer goods (includes items such as medicaments, printed material, and toiletries); and primary and processed food and beverages, mainly for household consumption.
- Passenger cars rose 26.8 percent (\$133 million) in the December 2009 quarter, following rises of 15.2 percent and 15.1 percent in the June and September 2009 quarters respectively. The last three quarterly increases are from a low level, with the March 2009 quarter value being the lowest since the September 1997 quarter.

Passenger Motor Car Imports

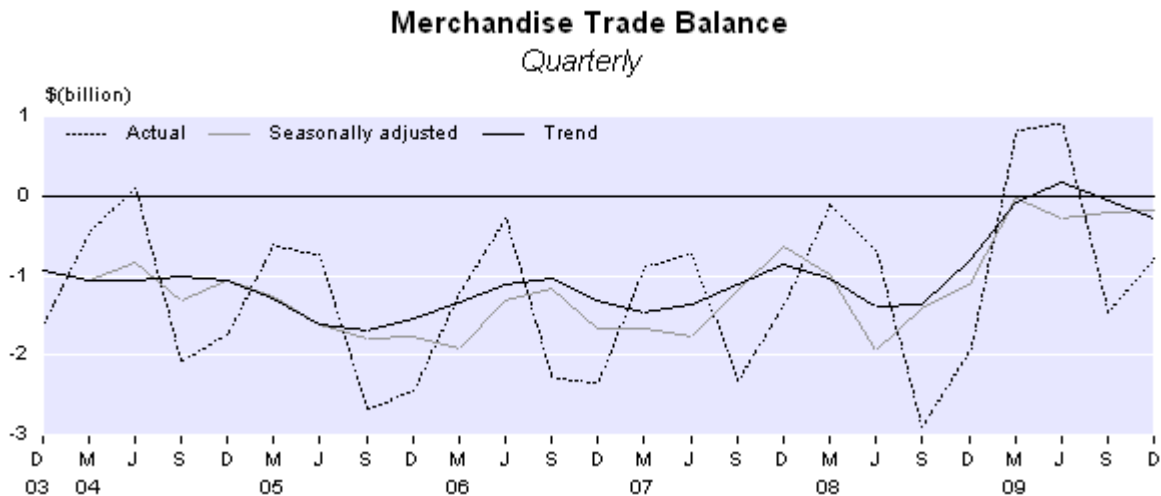
Quarterly values
Seasonally adjusted



- Petrol and avgas increased 29.3 percent (\$73 million) in the December 2009 quarter.

Seasonally adjusted trade balance – December 2009 quarter

The seasonally adjusted trade balance for the December 2009 quarter was a deficit of \$170 million (1.8 percent of exports), following deficits of 2.6 percent and 2.3 percent of exports in the June and September 2009 quarters respectively. The most recent quarterly seasonally adjusted trade surplus was in the December 2001 quarter.



December 2009 month – actual values

In the month of December 2009, merchandise exports were valued at \$3.4 billion, 11.3 percent lower than December 2008. This is the seventh consecutive monthly fall in exports compared with the same month of the previous year.

The trend for merchandise exports peaked in November 2008, and has fallen 14.9 percent since then, although the rate of decline has been easing in recent months.

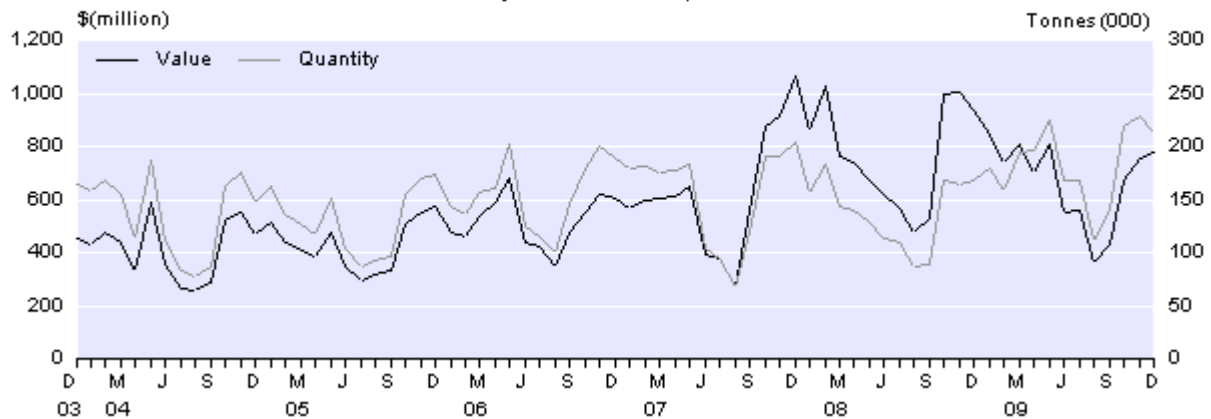
In the month of December 2009 compared with December 2008, key increases and decreases in exports by commodity and by country of destination were as follows:

By commodity:

- Milk powder, butter, and cheese showed the largest decrease, down \$158 million (16.8 percent). This fall was led by unsweetened whole milk powder, despite quantities being over 20 percent higher. Natural milk constituents were also a significant contributor to the decrease.

Milk Powder, Butter, and Cheese Exports

Monthly values and quantities



- Aircraft and parts were the next largest decrease, down \$150 million (96.2 percent), due to the export of a large aircraft in December 2008.
- Meat and edible offal were down \$116 million (22.4 percent), led by frozen lamb cuts with bone in and frozen beef cuts.
- Casein and caseinates were down \$94 million (65.7 percent), led by casein acid, with quantities being nearly half what they were in December 2008.
- Ships, boats, and floating structures, up \$114 million, were the most significant increase, due mainly to the one-off export of an oil rig.
- Crude oil exports, up \$50 million (39.7 percent), were the next largest increase, due to increased prices, with quantities almost the same as December 2008.

By country of destination:

- The United States of America was the destination with the largest decrease in December 2009, down \$197 million (39.7 percent) with casein acid, natural milk constituents, and frozen boneless beef cuts being significant contributors.
- Madagascar was the second largest decrease, down \$111 million, due to the export of a large aircraft in December 2008, with virtually no exports there from New Zealand in December 2009.
- Japan was the next largest decrease, down \$84 million (28.8 percent), with unwrought aluminium and frozen boneless beef cuts leading the falls.
- Singapore was the destination with the largest increase in exports, up \$193 million (278 percent), due to the one-off export of the oil rig mentioned above and an increase in crude oil.
- The second largest increase was to the People's Republic of China, up \$64 million (20.6 percent). Unsweetened whole milk powder and pinus radiata logs were the main contributors to this increase.

In the month of December 2009, merchandise imports were valued at \$3.4 billion, down \$776 million (18.6 percent) from December 2008. This follows declines of 28.3 percent and 21.8 percent for the months of October and November 2009 respectively compared with the same months of the previous year.

The trend for merchandise imports peaked in August 2008, and has declined 25.0 percent since then, although the rate of decline appears to have eased in recent months.

In December 2009 compared with December 2008, import values declined across most of the major commodity categories and from most of the major countries by country of origin.

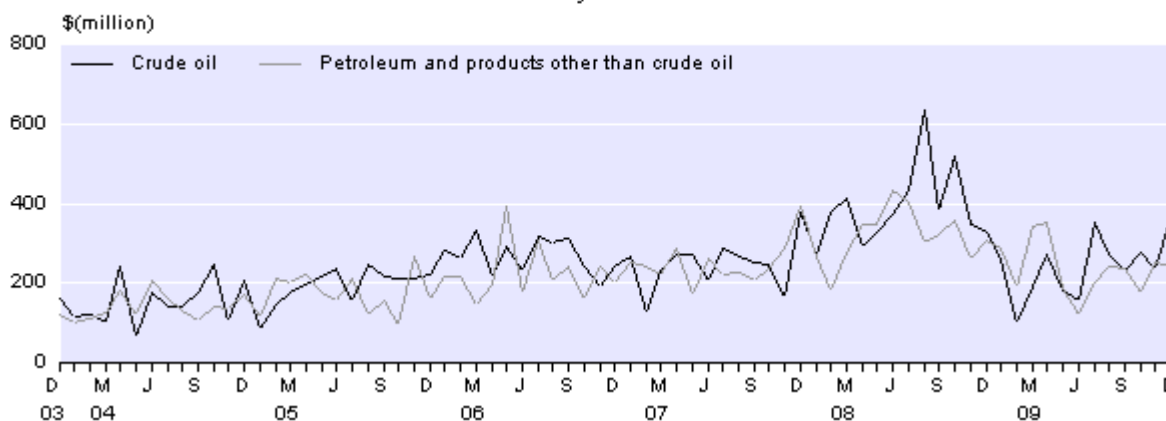
Key decreases and increases in imports by commodity and by country of origin were as follows:

By commodity:

- Mechanical machinery and equipment recorded the largest decrease, down \$174 million (31.0 percent). There were falls across a wide range of commodities, with earth moving machinery, computers, and spray equipment being notable contributors to the decrease.
- Vehicles, parts, and accessories was the second largest decrease, down \$96 million (22.4 percent), including declines in imports of tractors and goods transport vehicles.
- Salts, earths, stone, lime, and cement was the next largest decrease, down \$72 million (86.3 percent), driven by a fall in natural calcium phosphates with greatly reduced quantities and prices for this commodity.
- Petroleum and petroleum products also declined, down \$34 million (5.3 percent).

Petroleum and Products Imports

Monthly values



- By comparison, increases in imports were fewer and smaller, the largest being sugars and sugar confectionery, up \$26 million (216 percent), driven by raw cane sugar.
- Food residues, wastes, and fodder was the second largest increase, up \$14 million (43.7 percent).

By country of origin:

- The largest decrease in imports by country of origin came from China, down \$118 million (19.4 percent). The decline was spread across several commodities, including electrical machinery and equipment; textiles and textile articles; iron and steel, and articles; and salts, earths, stone, lime, and cement.
- The second largest decrease by country of origin was from the United States, down \$99 million (24.1 percent), led by falls in mechanical machinery and equipment, with other notable contributors being petroleum and petroleum products (other than crude); and vehicles, parts, and accessories.
- Imports of petroleum and products tend to be irregular, especially by country of origin. In December 2009, Russia was down \$81 million (99.6 percent), and the United Arab Emirates and Nigeria were up \$82 million (207 percent) and \$56 million respectively, driven by imports of crude oil; while Singapore was down \$79 million (31.0 percent) led by decreases in petroleum and products (other than crude).

Trade balance – December 2009 actual values

The trade balance for the December 2009 month was a surplus of \$2 million (0.1 percent of exports). As a percentage of exports, this is much less than the average of 10.4 percent for the preceding five December months.

The trade balance for the December 2009 year was a deficit of \$517 million (1.3 percent of exports) compared with an average deficit of 11.3 percent of exports over the last 10 December years, and deficits of \$5.3 billion and \$5.6 billion in the December 2007 and December 2008 years respectively.

Year ended December 2009 – actual values

The value of merchandise exports in the year ended December 2009 was \$39.7 billion, down 7.5 percent (\$3.2 billion) from the previous December year. In the year ended December 2009, key increases and decreases in exports compared with the year ended December 2008 were as follows:

By commodity:

- Milk powder, butter, and cheese recorded the largest decrease, down \$1.2 billion (12.9 percent), led by unsweetened whole milk powder.
- Crude oil, down \$1.0 billion (37.7 percent), was the second largest decrease, mainly due to lower prices.
- Aluminium and aluminium articles were the next largest decrease, down \$545 million (38.2 percent), led by unwrought aluminium (not alloyed).
- Preparations of cereals, flour, starch, or milk recorded the largest increase, up \$159 million (19.8 percent), led by dairy-based nutritional formulas.
- Fruit was \$155 million (10.7 percent) higher – the next largest increase – led by kiwifruit.
- Precious metals, jewellery, and coins were \$150 million (23.1 percent) higher.

By country of destination:

- Australia had the largest decrease of any country, down \$861 million (8.6 percent), led by crude oil.
- Japan had the next largest decrease, down \$793 million (21.9 percent), led by unwrought aluminium (not alloyed).
- The United States recorded a decrease of \$429 million (9.8 percent), led by crude oil. There was no crude oil exported to the United States in the year ended December 2009.
- China had the largest increase of any country, up \$1.1 billion (43.1 percent), led by unsweetened whole milk powder and pinus radiata logs.
- Singapore was the next largest increase, up \$237 million (27.5 percent), led by the one-off oil rig, and exports of crude oil.

The value of merchandise imports in the year ended December 2009 was \$40.1 billion, down \$3.2 billion (17.2 percent) from the previous December year. This is the largest percentage decrease for a December year since the series began in 1960.

Key increases and decreases in imports by commodity and by country of origin were as follows:

By commodity:

- Petroleum and products had the largest decrease, down \$2.8 billion (32.7 percent), led by a price driven crude oil decline.
- Vehicles, parts, and accessories had the second largest decrease, down \$1.8 billion (36.3 percent). This decrease was led by a decline in passenger motor vehicles which included falls in both petrol cars with a 1500–3000cc rating and those with a cc rating exceeding 3000. Imports of goods transport vehicles also decreased.
- Mechanical machinery and equipment was the next largest decrease, down \$1.2 billion (19.2 percent), led by a decrease in well sinking and boring machinery, mainly due to an oil platform that was imported in the previous December year (in April 2008). In addition, imports of earth moving machinery and computers were both down.
- The largest offsetting increase was aircraft and parts, up \$653 million (75.1 percent), mainly due to an increase in imports of large aircraft.
- Optical, medical, and measuring equipment was the next largest increase, up \$74 million (5.7 percent).

By country of origin:

- Australia recorded the largest annual decrease, down \$1.3 billion (15.4 percent), led by falls in petroleum and petroleum products; vehicles, parts, and accessories; iron and steel, and articles; and inorganic chemicals.
- Japan recorded the second largest decrease, down \$975 million (24.6 percent), driven by falls in vehicles, parts, and accessories; and mechanical machinery and equipment.
- Imports from Malaysia were the next largest decrease, down \$902 million (45.4 percent), led by mechanical machinery and equipment (due mainly to the importation of an oil platform in the previous year as mentioned above); petroleum and petroleum products (led by crude oil); and food residues, wastes, and fodder.
- The largest increase by country of origin was France, up \$527 million (65.6 percent), driven by aircraft and parts.
- The second largest increase by country of origin was Denmark, up \$107 million (37.3 percent), led by electrical machinery and equipment, and mechanical machinery and equipment.

Exchange rate movements

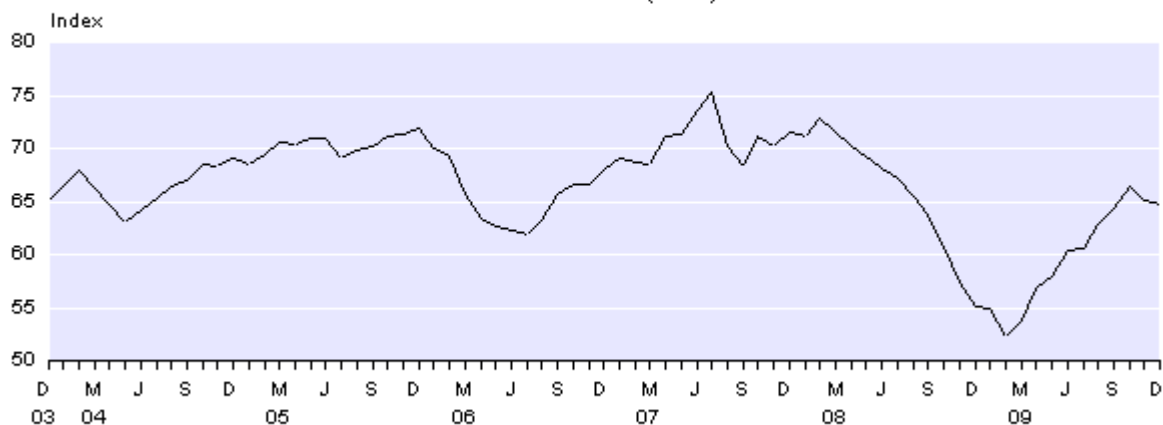
According to the Reserve Bank's Trade Weighted Index (TWI), the New Zealand dollar was 0.8 percent lower in December 2009 compared with November 2009, and 17.4 percent higher compared with December 2008.

The TWI rose 4.6 percent in the December 2009 quarter, compared with the September 2009 quarter, the third quarterly rise following four quarters of falls. The TWI was 13.4 percent higher in the December 2009 quarter than it was in the same period of the previous year.

Trade Weighted Index

Monthly

Base: June 1979 (=100)



Source: Reserve Bank of New Zealand

Updates to previous statistics

Provisional values published on 7 January 2010 have been updated. Merchandise trade statistics for the latest three months are provisional to allow for the inclusion of late data and amendments.

	Published on 07 January 2010			Published on 29 January 2010			Change			
	\$(million) ⁽¹⁾			\$(million) ⁽¹⁾			\$(million) ⁽¹⁾			
	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	Exports (fob)	Imports (cif)	Balance (fob-cif)	
Month of:										
Sep 2009	P	2,822	3,384	-562	2,822	3,384	-561	0	0	0
Oct 2009	P	2,962	3,458	-495	2,956	3,457	-502	-7	0	-7
Nov 2009	P	3,067	3,336	-269	3,067	3,343	-276	1	8	-7
Year ended:										
Sep 2009	P	41,588	43,258	-1,669	41,588	43,257	-1,669	0	0	0
Oct 2009	P	40,725	41,895	-1,171	40,718	41,895	-1,177	-7	0	-6
Nov 2009	P	40,111	40,957	-846	40,105	40,964	-860	-6	7	-13

(1) Figures are calculated on unrounded data.

Symbol:

P provisional

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Next release...

Overseas Merchandise Trade: January 2010 will be released on 26 February 2010.

Technical notes

Definitions

billion	1,000 million.
capital goods	Produced assets used repeatedly or continuously, for longer than one year, in industrial production processes. Examples are machinery, trucks, and aircraft.
cif	Cost of goods, including insurance and freight to New Zealand.
consumption goods	Goods used (without further transformation in industrial production processes) by households, government, or non-profit institutions serving households.
fob	Free on board (the value of goods at New Zealand ports before export).
Infoshare	Free-of-charge online tool that gives you access to a range of time-series data.
intermediate goods	Goods used up or transformed in industrial production processes.
merchandise trade	Exports or imports of goods that alter the nation's stock of material resources. Includes goods leased for a year or more. Excludes goods for repair.
provisional	Statistics for the latest three months are provisional, to allow for the inclusion of late data and amendments.
re-exports	Merchandise exports that were earlier imported into New Zealand and comprise less than 50 percent New Zealand content by value.
vfd	Value for duty (the value of imports before insurance and freight costs are added).

Data source

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

Valuations

Exports (including re-exports) are valued fob (free on board) and are shown in New Zealand dollars. Estimated values are used for goods that are not already sold at the time of export entry lodgement.

Imports are valued at cif (cost including insurance and freight) and are shown in New Zealand dollars.

Trade balance values are 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. However, imports in tables 1 and 2 are also shown at the vfd (value for duty) level, which excludes the insurance and freight component.

Exchange rates

Export values given in foreign currencies are converted by Statistics NZ 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, quantities, and values.

Import values are converted from foreign currencies when import documents are processed by NZCS. The exchange rates used are set by NZCS each fortnight. These rates are prepared 11 days prior to 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.

Time of recording

Exports

From the August 1997 reference month, exports are compiled by date of export. Previously, exports were generally compiled according to date of clearance by NZCS. This meant that some goods were allocated to the month following their actual month of export. Exports up to July 1997 that were not processed until August 1997 were assigned to the month of August 1997.

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.

Imports

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.

Crude oil values for the latest month are estimated 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 actual lodgements are received by Statistics NZ from NZCS, the value for crude oil can be regarded as robust.

There were 21 working days in December 2009, compared with 21 in December 2008.

Commodity classification

Commodities are classified according to the New Zealand Harmonised System Classification (NZHSC).

The NZHSC was revised from the January 2007 reference month, to incorporate changes promulgated by the World Customs Organization. Details can be found in the *Overseas Merchandise Trade: January 2007* Hot Off the Press released on 26 February 2007.

Standard International Trade Classification

The Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) is an output classification (using Harmonised System (HS) codes at the 6-digit level as building blocks), designed by the United Nations as an analytical tool for economic analysis, which includes some simple implications regarding level of processing. Published figures are at a high level of aggregation; more disaggregated information is available on [Infoshare](#). For customised jobs using the SITC Rev 4 classification, contact customer services at: info@stats.govt.nz.

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. Commodities in BEC groups are categorised 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).

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.

The trend series are calculated using X-12-ARIMA, which adjusts for outlying values and uses a centred moving average. 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, while 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, the imports trend is calculated after removal of 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.

Trend figures are recalculated each month. The use of new monthly data means that previously published trend estimates are subject to revision. 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.

Seasonally adjusted series

These are calculated for calendar quarters, using X-12-ARIMA, and published in the March, June, September, and December releases.

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 quarter, with the largest changes generally occurring in the latest quarters.

Further information is on the [Statistics NZ website](#).

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, Statistics NZ understands that the release of merchandise trade commodity information can, in some cases, place commercially sensitive information in the public domain. Statistics NZ is able to provide a limited form of confidential status for commodity items (at the discretion of the Government Statistician), upon 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.

Concepts

Overseas Merchandise Trade (OMT) statistics are compiled 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, and are explained in the Balance of Payments – Sources and Methods 2004 publication.

Additional information

Other information on overseas trade is available from:

- Statistics NZ website: www.stats.govt.nz
- Infoshare
- *Key Statistics* – the quarterly statistical publication
- *The New Zealand Official Yearbook*.

Related Hot Off the Press releases are:

- *Overseas Cargo Statistics*: ISSN 1178-2838
- *Overseas Trade Indexes – Prices*: ISSN 1178-0339
- *Overseas Trade Indexes – Volumes*: ISSN 1178-0347
- *Balance of Payments (quarterly)*: ISSN 1178-0215
- *Balance of Payments (annual)*: ISSN 1178-0223
- *Economic Survey of Manufacturing*: ISSN 1178-024X.

More information

For more information, follow the [link](#) from the Technical notes of this release on the Statistics NZ website.

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Tables

The following tables are printed with this Hot Off The Press and can also be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website in Excel format. If you do not have access to Excel, you may use the [Excel file viewer](#) to view, print and export the contents of the file.

1. Overseas merchandise trade, actual values
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