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June quarter retail rises

The value of seasonally adjusted total retail sales rose 1.1 percent (\$174 million) in the June 2009 quarter, Statistics New Zealand said today. This is the first increase in quarterly sales since the March 2008 quarter and follows a fall of 1.4 percent last quarter. The volume of sales was also up in the latest quarter (by 0.4 percent), the first rise since September 2007, following a fall last quarter of 2.7 percent.

Core retailing, which excludes the vehicle-related industries, also increased in both the value (up 1.1 percent or \$129 million) and volume (up just 0.2 percent) of seasonally adjusted sales. For both core and total retail, the value increased more than the volume implying that prices also rose.

The biggest contributors to the increase in sales values were supermarket and grocery stores (up 2.3 percent or \$86 million) and motor vehicle retailing (up 3.0 percent or \$47 million). The increase in motor vehicle retailing sales was the first since the September 2007 quarter. However, the value of motor vehicle retailing sales in the latest quarter remains at about the same quarterly level as in 2001, approximately \$1.6 billion.

The biggest contributors to the increase in sales volumes were appliance retailing (up 3.1 percent) and automotive fuel retailing (up 2.8 percent). The 'other retailing' industry, which includes antique and used goods, garden supplies, flowers, and jewellery retailing, had the biggest offsetting decreases in both the value and volume of sales.

The trend in total retail sales value fell 2.4 percent between the June 2008 and March 2009 quarters. Latest figures suggest that this decline may have stopped as the June 2009 quarter shows only a slight movement, up 0.1 percent. The trend in the volume of sales is continuing to fall, as it has done since the June 2007 quarter.

Regionally, the value of seasonally adjusted sales in the June 2009 quarter were down in Wellington and Canterbury and up in other regions.

In the June 2009 month, seasonally adjusted total retail sales were flat, rising just 0.1 percent (\$6 million). Core retailing fell 0.4 percent (\$15 million), but this was more than offset by rises in the four vehicle-related industries. The biggest fall in the June 2009 month was in clothing and softgoods (down 9.1 percent or \$21 million) following a 12.7 percent increase in the previous month.

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