

UNITED NATIONS



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Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
Statistics Division (UNSD)

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24 February 2020

Dear Colleague,

Re: Request for 2019 Annual and 2020 Monthly Merchandise Trade Statistics and Trade by Enterprise Characteristics (TEC)

It is my pleasure to announce that the United Nations Statistics Division has launched the data collection for 2019 annual and 2020 monthly merchandise trade statistics. Beginning this year, we are also requesting annual statistics on Trade by Enterprise Characteristics (TEC). There is a high demand for these statistics for policy analyses that explore characteristics of firms responsible for international trade in goods. We are requesting both export and import values and the number of exporting and importing enterprises, if available. As in the past, while expressing my gratitude to the large number of responding countries, I would like to ask for your collaboration in providing these data.

These data will be part of the UN Comtrade database containing detailed annual and monthly trade statistics, which are made publicly available on the website maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The data is used by governments, research institutes, academia and the public at large. Evidently, these users' needs include continued improvement of the coverage and timeliness of the data, including the availability of detailed monthly trade statistics and now also trade statistics by enterprise characteristics. Additional explanations on the required detailed merchandise trade statistics are given in Annexes 1 and 2. Also attached herewith are templates for cross-tabulating trade statistics by enterprise characteristics. For further information on UN Comtrade, please see Annex 3.

Specifically, we would like to receive international merchandise trade data at the most detailed level of the national commodity and partner country classifications, following the international recommendations of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* (IMTS 2010). Details of this data request can be found in Annexes 1 and 2. In case of revisions, we would also like to receive them in the same way. Please send the data electronically as e-mail attachments to comtrade@un.org, per FTP (please contact comtrade@un.org for details), on CD-ROM or through other data sharing platforms.

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In addition to the detailed trade data we kindly ask you to also send to us:

- (i) a table with the **official annual totals** of imports (CIF and FOB) and exports (FOB) of your country for the years 2015 to 2019, and the **monthly totals** for 2020;
- (ii) the reference to **your country's publication and website**, where such totals and metadata are normally made available; and
- (iii) a **confirmation** whether the new data fields of IMTS 2010 are included (see Annex 1 for additional descriptions), namely
 - (a) Second partner country or area
 - (b) Imports CIF and FOB
 - (c) Mode of transport
 - (d) Custom procedure code (or applicable transaction code).
- (iv) if available, datasets on **Trade by Enterprise Characteristics (TEC)**, including export and import values and the number of exporting and importing enterprises cross-tabulated by trading enterprise characteristics, for example:
 - (a) Trade by type of ownership
 - (b) Trade by type of trader
 - (c) Trade by activity sector
 - (d) Trade by activity sector and enterprise size class
 - (e) Trade by commodity and activity
 - (f) Trade by top enterprises (concentration of trade) by activity
 - (g) Trade by partner country and activity
 - (h) Trade by number of partner countries and activity
 - (i) Trade by export intensity
 - (j) Trade by partner country and size class

Your valuable and continuous cooperation in providing the requested data is greatly appreciated. If your office is not responsible for publication of these statistics, please let us know whom to contact on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ivo Havinga
Assistant Director
Statistics Division/DESA

Annex 1: Requirements for data transmission:

Supply of detailed Commodity by Partner trade data

Part I. Required data fields plus associated metadata information to accompany the data files

Field Name	Recommended Field Content
Reference Year	Gregorian calendar (January through December) – in YYYY format (e.g., 2011, 2012)
Period	Annual or monthly period identification (e.g., M01, M02,..., A00)
Trade Flow	“Imports”, “Re-imports”, “Exports” and “Re-exports”
Commodity Code	According to the Harmonized System (HS) at the most detailed commodity level available (tariff line) or at least 6-digit HS
Partner country or area	In national nomenclature; country of origin (for imports) and country of last known destination (for exports)
Value	Monetary value (in national currency or US dollars); CIF for imports and FOB for exports
Net weight	Physical quantity (in kilograms)
Supplementary Quantity	Physical quantity (in the WCO recommended standard units of quantity)
Supplementary Quantity Unit	Description of units of quantity employed for supplementary quantity data (e.g., “Number of items”)
New data fields following the adoption of IMTS 2010 (include if already available)^a	
Second partner country or area	In national nomenclature; country of consignment for imports and country of consignment (destination) for exports
Second value for imports	Monetary value (in national currency or US dollars); FOB
Mode of transport	The means of transport used when goods enter or leave the economic territory (in the encouraged nomenclature provided in IMTS 2010, para. 7.2 or national nomenclature)
Custom procedure code (or applicable transaction code)	Code of the customs procedure applied to individual transactions by customs; any applied procedure or transaction code if customs procedure codes are not available or if additional codes are used

The data should follow the recommendations of the UN Statistical Commission to the largest extent possible. The recommendations are published in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* (IMTS 2010)^b. If any of the recommendations cannot be met, please submit that information as well as any other metadata with the data files. Specifically:

- (i) **Coverage:** Except for the inclusions and exclusions as listed in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* (IMTS 2010), do you include or exclude other categories of goods? If yes, please list.
- (ii) **Trade system:** The General trade system is recommended for all flows; if you apply the Special trade system, please indicate which trade flows are excluded.
- (iii) **Commodity Classification:** Please indicate the edition of the underlying HS commodity classification used to report the data (e.g., “HS2012” or “HS2017”) or the national nomenclature. Please provide descriptions of codes, which are not based on the HS system.

^a The UNSC approved the new recommendations in 2010 (see *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 4* (E/2010/24), chap. I, sect. B, decision 41/103).

^b An electronic copy of this UN publication is freely available from the UNSD website at: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/eg-imts/IMTS%202010%20\(English\).pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/eg-imts/IMTS%202010%20(English).pdf).

- (iv) Valuation: If valuation is other than CIF (imports) and FOB (exports and imports), please specify.
- (v) Quantity Measurement: Use of the WCO standard units of quantity is recommended. If these units are not used, please describe used national units, indicate them in the Supplementary Quantity Unit field and provide conversion factors to the recommended WCO standard units of quantity.
- (vi) Partner Country: Country of origin (for imports) and country of last known destination (for exports) are recommended. In addition, countries are recommended/encouraged to provide the country of consignment for imports and for exports as second partner country. If other definitions of partner country are used, please describe. Please provide the name of the international nomenclature for country and area codes (e.g., “3-alpha-ISO”) used or provide the full list of the national nomenclature used.
- (vii) Mode of transport: Countries are recommended to clearly indicate the definition and contents of the categories used.
- (viii) Customs procedure code: Countries should provide in their metadata the nomenclature and description of the procedure codes applied by customs and the nomenclature and description of any additional procedure or transaction codes.
- (ix) Confidentiality: If confidentiality is used, please provide information about the special commodity and partner country codes used for that purpose. It is recommended that any information deemed confidential (suppressed) be reported in full detail at the next higher level of commodity aggregation that adequately protects confidentiality.
- (x) Currency unit: Description of currency unit (e.g., “National currency”, “US dollars”, or the corresponding ISO 4217 currency code).

Part II. Required metadata

All data transmissions should be accompanied with the following metadata elements and information:

- (i) Official or preliminary import and export totals for each period where data are provided;
- (ii) Sufficiently clear field names in the data file;
- (iii) For each abbreviation used, a full description of its meaning;
- (iv) Sufficient indication of quantity units and weight (in particular if not provided in kilograms of net weight), currencies, and scaling factors (thousands, millions, etc.) used.
- (v) Type of file format chosen, as well as the total number of records included in the data set.

Part III. Requested data structure and format

Our preferred file formats are either flat files (for instance tab- or comma-delimited .txt or .csv files) or database files (such as MS Access, SPSS, dBase, or Stata files). We request to send complete trade records (see Part I. above) and to avoid splitting them across several lines/ rows. Please do not send data structured in many tables or sub-tables. Also, please avoid the use of Word files or PDF files.

Countries are encouraged to contact us (at comtrade@un.org) regarding the structure, format and mode of transmission of the monthly data so that arrangements for regular transmission can be established.

Annex 2: Recent changes in country nomenclature

Please see below the following recent changes regarding partner country coding.

1) Netherlands Antilles: The federation of the Netherlands Antilles was formally dissolved on 10 October 2010. The former Dutch Caribbean dependency ceased to exist with a change of the five islands' constitutional status. Under the new political structure, Curaçao and Sint Maarten (Dutch part) have become autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, joining Aruba, which gained the status in 1986 (see <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>).

For purposes of Comtrade data processing and dissemination, both with annual and monthly frequency, the use of code 530 (Netherlands Antilles) ends with 2010 data. Starting with the 2011 data, the following codes are used instead:

- 531 - Curaçao
- 534 - Sint Maarten (Dutch part)
- 535 - Bonaire, Saint Eustatius and Saba

2) Sudan: On 9 July 2011 South Sudan became an independent State and a Member of the United Nations on 14 July 2011 (see <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>).

For purposes of Comtrade data processing and dissemination, both with annual and monthly frequency, the use of code 736 (Sudan, now 729) ends with 2011 data. Starting with the 2012 data, the following codes are used instead:

- 728 - South Sudan
- 729 - Sudan

Countries are requested to incorporate those changes in their recording of partner information in due time, preferably maintaining consistency of recording on calendar year basis.

Annex 3: UN Comtrade

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) maintains a detailed merchandise trade statistics database as mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). This database (called UN Comtrade) contains annual and monthly trade data (imports and exports) by reporting country or area, commodity and partner country, for most countries of the world. These data are regularly used by the UN member states, various UN organizations, and other international agencies for economic and policy analysis including identification of market access opportunities.

UN Comtrade is available on the UNSD Web site (<http://comtrade.un.org>). Basic access to UN Comtrade is free. Offices of data providers are given premium access free-of-charge.¹ Also, the electronic editions of the *International Trade Statistics Yearbook* and analytical trade tables are available online at UN Comtrade². In addition, UNSD launched in February 2012 the beta version of a new processing and dissemination system for monthly international merchandise trade statistics, and already numerous countries are providing their monthly data on a regular basis. Since 2014, the monthly data is now disseminated through an integrated data extraction interface — which is scheduled for an upgrade this year (2020).

The received data will be processed at the most detailed level available. The processing includes, whenever necessary and possible, the following conversions: (a) commodity codes to codes used in the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) and in the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), (b) country codes to UN 3-digit standard codes, (c) values expressed in terms of national currency to values in US dollars, (d) reported quantities to quantities in terms of net weight and standard quantity units recommended by the World Customs Organization.

The processing may include certain adjustments to achieve a better compliance with UNSC recommendations. The processed annual 6-digit HS data are aggregated to all higher levels of HS, converted to SITC and added to UN Comtrade.³ The processed data at all levels of the provided commodity/partner breakdown are made available to all UN agencies and other international organizations working in the field of international trade statistics, if so requested for specific purposes, unless a country disagrees.

¹ Please contact us for your User ID and Password (comtrade@un.org).

² See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/data/tables.asp>.

³ The monthly data will be made available, for the time being, in a simplified format in only the original classification and only including net weight.