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Economic and Statistics Administration
Foreign Trade Division
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U.S. Trade with Puerto Rico
and U.S. Possessions,
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U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

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Description of the Foreign Trade Statistics Program: Merchandise Trade Statistics

INTRODUCTION

This description covers all phases of the foreign trade statistics program and may contain portions not pertinent to this report.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Exports

Published information on U.S. exports of merchandise from the United States to all countries, except Canada, is compiled primarily from copies of Shipper's Export Declarations (SEDs) that must be filed with customs officials. The SED is unique among Census Bureau forms since it is not sent to respondents soliciting responses, as in the case of surveys. The U.S. Customs Service initially collects the SED at the port of export and subsequently transmits it to the Census Bureau. Each SED represents a shipment of one or more kinds of merchandise from one exporter to one foreign importer on a single carrier. Filing the SED is mandatory under Chapter 9, Title 13, United States Code. Qualified exporters, forwarders, or carriers submit SED data by automated means directly to the Census Bureau.

The United States is substituting Canadian import statistics for U.S. exports to Canada in accordance with a 1987 Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Census Bureau, U.S. Customs Service, Canadian Customs, and Statistics Canada. Similarly, under this Memorandum of Understanding, Canada is substituting U.S. import statistics for Canadian exports to the United States. This data exchange includes only U.S. exports destined for Canada and does not include shipments destined for third countries by routes passing through Canada or shipments of certain grains and oilseeds to Canada for storage prior to exportation to a third country. These shipments are reported on and compiled from SEDs.

Department of Defense Military Assistance Program Grant-Aid shipments being transported as Department of Defense cargo are reported directly to the Census Bureau by the Department of Defense.

Imports

Published information on U.S. imports of merchandise is compiled primarily from automated data submitted through the Customs Automated Broker Interface. Data are compiled also from import entry summary forms, warehouse withdrawal forms, and Foreign Trade Zone

documents, as required by law to be filed with the U.S. Customs Service. Data on imports of electricity and natural gas from Canada are obtained from Canadian sources.

COVERAGE

The official U.S. import and export statistics reflect both government and nongovernment shipments of merchandise between foreign countries and the U.S. Customs Territory (the 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico), U.S. Foreign Trade Zones, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, without regard to whether or not a commercial transaction is involved. In general, the statistics record the physical movement of merchandise between the United States and foreign countries.

The following types of transactions are excluded from the statistics used to compile the merchandise trade balance:

1. United States trade with U.S. possessions, trade between U.S. possessions, and trade between U.S. possessions and foreign countries (except Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands).
2. Merchandise shipped in transit through the United States from one foreign country to another.
3. Shipments to the U.S. Armed Forces, including post exchanges, for their own use, as well as U.S. merchandise returned by the U.S. Armed Forces for their own use.
4. Monetary gold and silver.
5. Issued monetary coins (in current circulation) of all component metals.
6. Bunker fuels and other supplies and equipment for use on departing vessels, planes, or other carriers engaged in foreign trade.
7. Shipments of furniture, equipment, and supplies to U.S. government agencies, as well as such merchandise when returned to the United States.
8. Imports for repair under warranty.
9. Some other transactions not considered to be of statistical importance, such as shipments of personal and household effects of travelers and certain temporary exports and imports.

Exports

Exports measure the total physical movement of merchandise out of the United States to foreign countries whether such merchandise is exported from within the U.S. Customs Territory or from a U.S. Customs bonded warehouse or a U.S. Foreign Trade Zone. The following are examples of some types of shipments that are included in the statistics but are of such a nature that their inclusion merits separate mention:

1. Department of Defense Military Assistance Program Grant-Aid shipments under the Foreign Assistance Act.
2. Foreign military sales.
3. Shipments of commodities for economic assistance under the Foreign Assistance Act. (Totals for exports under this program are published quarterly or as they become available.)
4. Shipments of agricultural commodities under P.L. 480 (Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954) as amended, and related laws. (Totals for exports under this program are published as the data become available from the Department of Agriculture. Additional information may be obtained from the Economic Research Service of the Department of Agriculture.)
5. Sales of U.S. vessels to purchasers in foreign countries.
6. Satellites launched by U.S. space vehicles limited to (1) foreign origin and (2) launched on behalf of international organizations.

Domestic Exports

Exports of domestic merchandise include (1) commodities that are grown, produced, or manufactured in the United States and (2) commodities of foreign origin that have been changed in the United States, including U.S. Foreign Trade Zones, from the form in which they were imported, or that have been enhanced in value by further manufacture in the United States.

Foreign Exports (Re-Exports)

Exports of foreign merchandise (re-exports) consist of commodities of foreign origin that have entered the United States for consumption or into U.S. Customs bonded warehouses or U.S. Foreign Trade Zones, and that, at the time of exportation, are in substantially the same condition as when imported.

Imports

Imports of merchandise include commodities of foreign origin as well as goods of domestic origin returned to the United States with no change in condition, or after having been processed and/or assembled in other countries. (See subsection entitled "American Goods Returned After Processing and/or Assembly.")

For statistical purposes, imports are classified by the type of transaction:

1. Merchandise entered for immediate consumption (duty-free merchandise and merchandise on which duty is paid on arrival).
2. Merchandise withdrawn for consumption from U.S. Customs bonded warehouses and U.S. Foreign Trade Zones.
3. Merchandise entered into U.S. Customs bonded warehouses and U.S. Foreign Trade Zones from foreign countries.

Bonded Warehouses

Bonded warehouses are authorized by U.S. Customs for storage or manufacturing of goods on which payment of duties is deferred until the goods are removed into the U.S. Customs Territory. These goods are not subject to duties if re-shipped to foreign points.

Foreign Trade Zones

Foreign Trade Zones are enclosed areas, operated as public utilities, under control of U.S. Customs, with facilities for handling, storing, manipulating, manufacturing, and exhibiting goods. The merchandise may be exported, destroyed, or sent into the U.S. Customs Territory from the zone, in the original package or otherwise. It is subject to customs duties if sent into U.S. Customs Territory, but not if re-shipped to foreign points.

American Goods Returned After Processing and/or Assembly

Domestically produced goods are shipped from the United States to other countries for processing and/or assembly and then returned to this country. Imports containing U.S. content that qualify for special duty-free treatment on the U.S. portion fall into the following groups:

1. Articles of metal manufactured in the United States, which were exported for further processing abroad and returned to the United States for more processing.
2. Textile articles assembled abroad and entered under a Special Access Program or Special Regime.
3. Articles assembled abroad from components produced in the United States, except textile articles entered under a Special Access Program or Special Regime.

Separate statistics are available on American goods returned after processing and/or assembly abroad.

General Imports

General imports measure the total physical arrivals of merchandise from foreign countries, whether such merchandise enters consumption channels immediately or is entered into bonded warehouses or Foreign Trade Zones under customs custody.

Imports for Consumption

Imports for consumption measure the total of merchandise that has physically cleared through customs, either entering consumption channels immediately, or entering after withdrawal for consumption from bonded warehouses under customs custody, or from Foreign Trade Zones. Many countries use the term "special imports" to designate statistics compiled on this basis.

STATISTICAL MONTH

The month of importation is the month in which the U.S. Customs Service releases the merchandise to the importer. The month of exportation is based on the date when the merchandise leaves the United States. (For vessel or air shipments, it is the date when the carrier departs or is cleared from the port of export.)

MERCHANDISE TRADE BALANCE

The merchandise trade balance represents the difference between U.S. exports based on free alongside ship (f.a.s.) values and U.S. general imports based on customs values. (See subsection entitled "Valuation.") This balance corresponds to a measurement of the international payments or credit flows resulting from the physical movement of goods between the United States and foreign countries. Monthly balances are based on seasonally adjusted data.

SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT

The Census Bureau adjusts the merchandise trade data for seasonal and working-day variations at the most detailed end-use level possible. These detailed data are then summed up to the one-digit level for release with the monthly merchandise trade totals.

The seasonal adjustment procedure, based upon a multiplicative model, estimates the monthly movements as percents above or below the general level of the series, unlike other methods that redistribute the seasonal excesses and deficits over the calendar year. As a result, the calendar year totals will differ from the unadjusted totals, with the differences generally being quite small in percentage terms.

The seasonally adjusted data also are provided to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) for use in compiling the quarterly National Income and Product Accounts (NIPAs). The BEA supplements these data in the NIPAs with quarterly adjustments for six of the end-use categories that exhibit seasonality on a quarterly basis but not on a monthly basis. Because of the extremely variable movements of the data series for aircraft, users studying data trends may wish to analyze aircraft separately from other trade.

The one-digit level end-use categories provide data for the following broad aggregates: (1) Foods, feeds, and beverages; (2) Industrial supplies and materials; (3) Capital goods, except automotives; (4) Automotive vehicles, parts, and engines; (5) Consumer goods (nonfood), except auto; and (6) Other merchandise. This seasonal adjustment procedure is designed to reflect seasonal patterns at the most detailed commodity levels. The adjustment is made at that end-use commodity level for which significant stable seasonality is identified.

The use of the end-use commodity classification system for seasonal adjustment ensures methodological consistency with the quarterly adjusted balance of trade data published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and reflects the BEA coding descriptions that combine data into broad categories based upon principal uses of the commodities.

The Summary of U.S. Export and Import Merchandise Trade (FT900) for each month includes revisions for carry-over to the prior month's aggregate unadjusted and seasonally adjusted (current and constant dollar) export, import, and trade balance figures, as well as to the end-use totals. These revisions do not appear in other foreign trade reports.

Tables of the seasonal factors are available free of charge from the Foreign Trade Division. Historical data, as well as the detailed unadjusted and adjusted data, are available on a cost basis on either hard copy or diskette.

CONSTANT DOLLAR ADJUSTMENT

Effective with January 1990 statistics, the Census Bureau is publishing, on an experimental basis, seasonally adjusted merchandise trade data on a constant dollar basis (2005=100). This is a requirement of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988. Publication of these additional data improves the ability of users to examine trends in import and export volumes. Because merchandise trade is volatile, cumulations of data over at least a 3-month period are recommended in order to identify underlying trends.

These data are adjusted for price change using monthly deflators developed in accordance with the deflators used in the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPAs) published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). These deflators are based upon price indexes and deflators produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), BEA, and other sources. All series are adjusted at the lowest possible end-use level. (See discussion of end-use commodity category under subsection entitled "Commodity Classifications.")

Contacts for further information on:

Adjustments to merchandise trade data for seasonality and price change:

Special Projects Branch
Foreign Trade Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233

NIPA and the deflators used by BEA:

National Income and Wealth Division
Bureau of Economic Analysis
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

BLS International Price Indexes:

Division of International Prices
Bureau of Labor Statistics
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, DC 20212

VALUATION

Note that, in the FT895 tables, the “-” indicates that the value is more than 1 kg and less than 1,000 kg (base is 1,000 kg and data below 1,000 kg are rounded up to 1,000 kg).

Customs Import Value

The customs import value is the value of imports as appraised by the U.S. Customs Service in accordance with the legal requirements of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended. This value is generally defined as the price actually paid or payable for merchandise when sold for exportation to the United States, excluding U.S. import duties, freight, insurance, and other charges incurred in bringing the merchandise to the United States. The term “price actually paid or payable” means the total payment (whether direct or indirect, and exclusive of any costs, charges, or expenses incurred for transportation, insurance, and related services incident to the international shipment of the merchandise from the country of exportation to the place of importation in the United States) made, or to be made, for imported merchandise by the buyer to, or for the benefit of, the seller. In the case of transactions between related parties, the relationship between buyer and seller should not influence the customs value.

In those instances where assistance was furnished to a foreign manufacturer for use in producing an article that is imported into the United States, the value of the assistance must be included in the value reported for the merchandise. Such “assists” include both tangible and intangible assistance, such as machinery, tools, dies and molds, blue prints, copyrights, research and development, and engineering and consulting services. If the value of these

“assists” is identified and separately reported, it is subtracted from the value during statistical processing. However, where it is not possible to isolate the value of “assists,” they are included. In these cases, the unit values may be increased because of the inclusion of such “assists.”

Import Charges

The import charges represent the aggregate cost of all freight, insurance, and other charges (excluding U.S. import duties) incurred in bringing the merchandise from alongside the carrier at the port of exportation in the country of exportation and placing it alongside the carrier at the first port of entry in the United States. In the case of overland shipments originating in Canada or Mexico, such costs shall include freight, insurance, and all other charges, costs, and expenses incurred in bringing the merchandise from the point of origin (where the merchandise begins its journey to the United States) in Canada or Mexico to the first port of entry.

C.I.F. Import Value

The cost, insurance, and freight (c.i.f.) value represents the landed value of the merchandise at the first port of arrival in the United States. It is computed by adding “Import Charges” to the “Customs Import Value” (see immediately preceding subsections for definitions) and therefore excludes U.S. import duties.

Dutiable Value of Imports and Calculated Duty

The dutiable value represents, in general, the customs value of foreign merchandise imported into the United States that is subject to duty. The calculated duty represents the estimated import duties collected. Estimated data are calculated based on the applicable rate(s) of duty as shown in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States Annotated for Statistical Reporting Purposes (HTSUSA).

F.A.S. Export Value (Excluding Exports to Canada)

The free alongside ship (f.a.s.) value is the value of exports at the U.S. seaport, airport, or border port of export, based on the transaction price, including inland freight, insurance, and other charges incurred in placing the merchandise alongside the carrier at the U.S. port of exportation. The value, as defined, excludes the cost of loading the merchandise aboard the exporting carrier and also excludes freight, insurance, and any charges or transportation costs beyond the port of exportation.

U.S. Exports to Canada

The use of Canada’s import data to produce U.S. export data requires some adjustments to make the two comparable. U.S. exports are valued at the U.S. seaport, airport, or border port of export in the United States and include

inland freight charges. Canadian imports are valued at the point of origin in the United States and do not include inland freight to the U.S. port of exit. To compensate, Canada adds an estimated 4.5 percent of the value to each transaction to cover inland freight (except for shipments where freight is not a consideration; e.g., large aircraft, vessels, and drilling platforms).

Average monthly exchange rates as quoted by the Federal Reserve Board are applied to adjust the Canadian import data to U.S. dollars. A formula for converting U.S. total exports to corresponding Canadian imports is provided in the initial release of the statistics (FT900), along with the monthly conversion rate.

COMMODITY CLASSIFICATIONS

The export statistics are initially collected and compiled in terms of approximately 8,000 commodity classifications in Schedule B, Statistical Classification of Domestic and Foreign Commodities Exported from the United States. Schedule B is a U.S. Census Bureau publication and is based on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (Harmonized System).

The import statistics are initially collected and compiled in terms of approximately 18,000 commodity classifications in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States Annotated for Statistical Reporting Purposes (HTSUSA), an official publication of the U.S. International Trade Commission. The HTSUSA is the U.S. import version of the Harmonized System.

The United States and Canada both compile their merchandise trade statistics in terms of the Harmonized System; however, they have different annotations beyond the basic six-digit codes.

Approximately 80 percent of the U.S. Schedule B export classifications are directly comparable to Canadian import classifications. These classifications account for 85 to 90 percent of the total value of U.S. exports to Canada. Many of the remaining 20 percent of the Schedule B classifications represent little or no trade with Canada. In these cases, the Canada import code is recoded to a single Schedule B, usually the class with the most trade or the residual classification for the root six-digit Harmonized System code.

There are some instances where the U.S. and Canadian Customs agencies do not agree on the six-digit Harmonized System code under which a particular commodity or group of commodities should be classified. In these cases, each statistical agency may classify under the six-digit code designated by its national customs agency. Efforts by the U.S. and Canadian customs agencies to align detail statistical classifications will continue over the next several years.

In some reports, the HTSUSA and Schedule B classifications are rearranged and summarized into other classification systems as follows:

1. Standard International Trade Classification (SITC-United Nations Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 34/Rev. 3).

The SITC is a statistical classification of the commodities entering external trade designed to provide the commodity aggregates needed for purposes of economic analysis and to facilitate the international comparison of trade-by-commodity data.

The Harmonized System and SITC Revision 3 are interrelated. The rearrangement of import and export data reported in terms of the Harmonized System into the SITC allows for an additional means of comparison between the United States and its trading partners in terms of commodity classification and trade statistics.

Certain foreign trade reports present HTS and Schedule B classifications summarized into approximately 3,000 five-digit SITC codes.

Within the SITC framework, "Manufactured Goods" includes all products classified in groups 5 through 9. Manufactured goods conform to the SITC sections that include chemicals and related products, n.s.p.f. (not specifically provided for); manufactured goods classified chiefly by material; machinery and transport equipment; miscellaneous manufactured articles, n.s.p.f.; and commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere.

2. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

NAICS is an industry classification system that groups establishments into industries based on the activities in which they are primarily engaged.

In July 1994, the OMB announced plans to develop a new industry classification system in cooperation with Mexico's OMEGO and Statistics Canada/ The new system, NAICS, replaces the current U.S. Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).

United States imports and exports of goods will be available using NAICS and SIC for the year 2000. For future time periods, SIC will be replaced by NAICS.

3. End-Use Commodity Category.

The HTS and Schedule B classifications are summarized into six principal "end-use" categories and further subdivided into about 140 broad commodity groupings. These categories are used in developing seasonally adjusted and constant dollar totals. The concept of end-use demand was developed for balance of payments purposes by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. (See subsection entitled "Seasonal Adjustment.")

4. Agricultural and Nonagricultural Commodities.

Agricultural commodities consist of nonmarine food

products, natural fibers, unmanufactured tobacco, and other farm products subject to federal legislation such as Section 22 of the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Some processed agricultural commodities are included if the value added by manufacturing accounts for less than 50 percent of the final value of shipments is reported in the latest Census of Manufactures. Examples of processed agricultural commodities include cereal flours, dairy products, canned meats, canned fruits and vegetables, vegetable oils, animal hides, fur pelts, wine, and beer. Textiles, leather products, distilled beverages, forestry, and fishery products are classified as nonagricultural commodities.

Assignments of individual HTS and Schedule B classifications generally are determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and differ from the guidelines in the Standard Industrial (SIC) Classification of the United States.

5. Advanced Technology Products (ATPs).

Approximately 500 of the HTS and Schedule B commodity classification codes used in reporting U.S. exports and imports are identified as “advanced technology” codes that must meet the following criteria:

- a. The code contains products whose technology is from a recognized high technology field (e.g., biotechnology).
- b. These products represent leading edge technology in that field.
- c. Such products constitute a significant part of all items covered in the selected classification code.

This product and commodity-based measure of advanced technology differs from broader SIC industry-based measures that include all commodities produced by a particular industry group, regardless of the level of technology embodied in the commodities.

COUNTRY DESIGNATIONS

Country Classification

The names and codes of the countries of the world are listed in Schedule C, Classification of Country and Territory Designations for U.S. Foreign Trade Statistics, the system used for publishing both import and export country statistics. Schedule C is arranged in geographic order according to continents. Countries and territories are listed in sequence within each continent, generally from north to south and west to east. The classifications appearing in Schedule C conform to those prescribed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and are recommended by ISO for international exchange. Schedule C is published as a statistical annex in HTS and as a part of Schedule B.

Export Country of Destination

Country of destination for exports is the country where the goods are to be consumed, further processed, or manufactured, as known to the shipper at the time of exportation. If the shipper does not know the country of ultimate destination, the shipment is credited to the last country to which the shipper knows that the merchandise will be shipped in the same form as when exported.

Import Country of Origin

Country of origin for imports is the country where the merchandise was grown, mined, or manufactured, in accordance with U.S. Customs Regulations. In instances where the country of origin cannot be determined, transactions are credited to the country of shipment.

Import Country Subcodes

Certain foreign trade reports show the following country subcodes to indicate special tariff treatment afforded some imported articles:

Code	Definition.
OGN	Country of origin; no special program claimed by importer.
SHP	Country of shipment; country of origin unknown.
GSP	Articles imported under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provisions of the HTS.
PTA	Articles imported under the provisions of the United States -Canada Automotive Products Trade Act.
ACA	Articles imported under the provisions of the Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft.
CFT	Articles imported under the provisions of the United States -Canada Free-Trade Agreement Implementation Act of 1988.
CBA	Articles imported under the provisions of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act of 1983.
IFT	Articles imported under the provisions of the Israel Free-Trade Implementation Act of 1985.
CFA	Articles imported under the Compact of Free Associations Act.
PRR	Puerto Rico product improved in a Caribbean Basin Initiative Country and returned to the United States.

Statistical Presentation

Abbreviated country designations are used in lieu of complete country names in the foreign trade program. Numerical codes are used for automated purposes. Alphabetical abbreviations are used for published reports.

The designation UNIDENT (Unidentified Countries) in the export statistics reflects shipments of certain grains and oilseeds for storage in Canada but ultimately destined

for third countries, the specific country of ultimate destination being unknown at the time of shipment. This is not a part of the United States/Canada Data Exchange. Annually, by Special Announcement, based on information supplied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, specific country of destination information on exports of such grains and oilseeds is published. This designation also includes satellites launched in the United States on behalf of international organizations.

The designation OTH CTY used in some reports represents the total for countries from or to which imports or exports of the particular commodity averaged less than \$50,000 per month on a cumulative year-to-date basis.

The major world areas for which foreign trade data are shown represent individual Schedule C countries or groupings of several countries into geographic areas or economic unions.

QUANTITY AND SHIPPING WEIGHT

Quantity

Units of quantity shown are published in terms of the units specified in the HTS and Schedule B for each classification. When two units of quantity are required for an item in the HTS or Schedule B, the first or primary unit is shown along with the value.

Also, specific to the FT895 tables, a "0" in the "Net Quantity" column means that no quantity has been reported for that particular commodity.

Shipping Weight

Shipping weight represents the gross weight in kilograms of shipments, including the weight of moisture content, wrappings, crates, boxes, and containers (other than cargo vans and similar substantial outer containers). Shipping weight information is available for shipments by vessel and air only.

Also, specific to the FT895 tables, a "0" in the "Shipping Weight" column means that no shipping weight has been reported for that particular commodity.

CUSTOMS DISTRICTS

District and Port Classification

The names and codes of the customs districts and ports are listed in Schedule D, Classification of U.S. Customs Districts and Ports for Foreign Trade Statistics. The geographical limits of each district are published in the U.S. Customs regulations. Schedule D is published as a statistical annex in HTS and as a part of Schedule B.

District of Exportation

1. Vessel or air – the customs district in which the merchandise is loaded on the vessel or aircraft that takes the merchandise out of the country.

2. Rail, truck, pipeline, or other overland transportation – the customs district through which the merchandise crosses the U.S. border into foreign territory.
3. Aircraft exported under their own power are credited to the customs district from which they are flown out of the United States.

Import District of Entry

The district in which merchandise clears customs for entry into consumption channels, bonded warehouses, or Foreign Trade Zones.

Import District of Unloading

The district where merchandise is unloaded from the importing vessel or aircraft.

Statistical Presentation

Abbreviated customs district designations are used instead of complete names in the foreign trade program. Numerical codes are used for automated purposes. Alphabetical abbreviations are used for published reports.

Special Districts

The following types of shipments are included for statistical purposes in special customs districts and are not reported by geographical location of the individual customs district of entry or exportation:

1. Vessels under their own power or afloat (imports and exports).
2. Low-value imports and exports (see subsection entitled "Low-Value Statistics").
3. Mail shipments (exports only).
4. Norfolk, VA -Charleston, SC -Mobile, AL (exports of bituminous coal). See discussion of customs districts under subsection entitled "Sources of Error."
5. Wilmington, NC -Savannah, GA (exports of cotton linter pulp). See discussion of customs districts under subsection entitled "Sources of Error."

STATE STATISTICS

Export data by state denote the state (as reported by the exporter or agent on the Shipper's Export Declaration) from which the merchandise actually starts its journey to the port of export. This may not be, necessarily, the state where the merchandise is grown, produced, or manufactured, nor necessarily the actual location of the exporter. In the case of consolidated shipments, it is the state of the commodity of greatest value or the state of consolidation. Foreign Trade Zone shipments are included in the U.S. total and states/territories total, and are distributed among individual states and territories. A separate Foreign Trade Zone total is shown for reference only.

LOW-VALUE STATISTICS

Exports

Export statistics are fully compiled on shipments to all countries, except Canada, where the value of commodities classified under each individual Schedule B number is over \$2,500. Value data for such commodities valued under \$2,501 are estimated for individual countries using factors based on the ratios of low-value shipments to individual country totals for past periods. The estimates for low-value shipments are shown under a single Schedule B number and are omitted from the statistics for the detailed commodity classifications. Shipments valued under \$2,501 to all countries, except Canada, represent slightly less than 2.5 percent of the monthly value of U.S. exports to those countries.

As a result of the data exchange between the United States and Canada, the United States has adopted the Canadian import exemption level for its export statistics on shipments to Canada. The Canadian import exemption level is based on total value per shipment rather than on value per commodity classification line item. Prior to data exchange each month, the United States furnishes Canada with a factor to convert data reported on Canadian import documents from Canadian dollars to U.S. dollars. Line items reported on documents where the total shipment value is the equivalent of \$900 (Canada) or more are included in the appropriate Schedule B classifications in chapters 1 through 97. Out of this group, those items valued \$2,500 (United States) or less are assigned to the special customs district for low-value exports with no method of transportation detail. The remaining items, i.e., those valued over \$2,500 (United States) are published with both customs district and method of transportation detail. Items reported on Canadian documents having a total shipment value equivalent to less than \$900 (Canada) are published under a single Schedule B number established for Canadian low-value shipments and certain other shipments that Canada does not identify by kind. Such shipments represent 2 percent of the monthly value of U.S. exports to Canada.

Imports

Import statistics are fully compiled on shipments valued over \$1,250 or, under certain textile programs, for any article that must be reported on a formal entry. Value data for shipments that are valued under \$1,251 and that do not have to be reported on formal entries are estimated for individual countries, using factors based on the ratios of low-value shipments to individual country totals for past periods. The estimates for low-value shipments are shown under a single HTS number. They are omitted from the statistics for the detailed commodity classifications. The total value excluded represents slightly less than 1 percent of the monthly import value.

TRANSPORTATION STATISTICS

Method of Transportation

The transportation statistics are presented in terms of three categories (vessel, air, and all methods), based on the method of transportation by which the merchandise arrived in or departed from the United States. In some instances, shipments between the United States and countries abroad enter or depart through Canada or Mexico. Such shipments are recorded under the method of transportation by which they enter or depart the United States regardless of the transportation mode between Canada or Mexico and the country of origin or destination.

There are some differences in the coverage of these statistics, primarily as follows:

1. The data for all methods of transportation include exports and general imports by vessel, air, truck, rail, air mail, parcel post, and other methods of transportation.
2. The data for vessel and air exports and general imports represent waterborne and airborne shipments only (merchandise actually leaving or arriving in the United States aboard a vessel or an aircraft).
3. Imports and exports of (a) vessels moving under their own power or afloat and (b) aircraft flown into or out of the United States are included in the all methods data but excluded from the vessel and air statistics.
4. Mail and parcel post shipments (including those transported by vessel or air) are included in the all methods data but excluded from the vessel and air statistics.
5. Low-value shipments are included in the all methods data but excluded from the vessel and air statistics.

Types of Vessel Service

Waterborne statistics are presented in terms of type of service: (1) liner; (2) irregular or tramp; and (3) tanker.

Liner service is that type of service offered by a regular line operator of vessels on berth. The itineraries and sailing schedules of vessels in liner service are predetermined and fixed.

Irregular (or tramp) service is that type of service afforded by vessels, other than tanker vessels, that are chartered or otherwise hired for the carriage of goods on special voyages. Vessels in this type of service are not on berth and their sailing schedules are not predetermined or fixed.

Tanker vessels are primarily designed for the carriage of liquid cargoes in bulk. All others are classified as dry cargo.

Intransit Shipments

Shipments of merchandise transported in bond through the United States en route from one foreign country to another without having been entered as an import are called intransit shipments. The intransit statistics include only inbound or outbound merchandise moving by vessel.

Vessel entrances and clearances by Customs district are published monthly.

U.S. TRADE WITH PUERTO RICO AND U.S. POSSESSIONS

Source of Information

Statistics on shipments from the United States to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and on shipments from Puerto Rico to the United States, are compiled from information furnished on SEDs, which must be filed with customs officials, and shipments by qualified exporters who have been authorized to submit data by automated means directly to the Census Bureau.

Statistics on shipments from the U.S. Virgin Islands and other U.S. possessions to the United States are compiled from automated data submitted through the Customs Automated Commercial System and from import documents filed with Customs officials.

Data on shipments from the United States to other U.S. possessions, as well as between the possessions, are not compiled.

Coverage

Statistics are separately published covering shipments (1) between the United States and Puerto Rico, (2) between the United States (including Puerto Rico) and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and (3) from other U.S. possessions to the United States. U.S. possessions refers to those listed in Schedule C, Classification of Country and Territory Designations for U.S. Foreign Trade Statistics.

Previous discussions and definitions relating to the export statistics should be applied to statistics on shipments from the United States to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and on shipments from Puerto Rico to the United States. Similarly, previous discussions and definitions relating to the import statistics should be applied to statistics on shipments from the U.S. Virgin Islands and other U.S. possessions to the United States.

Trade With Foreign Countries

Puerto Rico is a customs district within the U.S. Customs Territory, and its trade with foreign countries is included in the U.S. export and import statistics. The U.S. export and import statistics include merchandise trade between the U.S. Virgin Islands and foreign countries even though the Virgin Islands of the United States are not officially a part of the U.S. Customs Territory. Data on trade of other U.S. outlying possessions with foreign countries are not compiled by the United States.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sources of Error

The procedures used to compile the statistics include processing checks designed to protect the accuracy of the statistics to the fullest practicable extent. Export and

import figures are subject to the possibility of errors that may arise from incorrect reporting and/or processing of information as to commodity classification, net quantity, value, and other statistical factors, month of inclusion (see subsection entitled "Carryover,") and errors that may result from the estimation of certain shipments. (See the subsection entitled "Low-Value Statistics.")

Carryover

Carryover is the term used to identify the trade records received and/or processed too late for inclusion with records for that transaction month. There are several causes for carryover. Among them is the customs procedure that allows importers to file import documentation up to 10 workdays after the date of release of the merchandise. Processing problems, such as rejection of a shipment because the data failed to meet certain edit criteria established to protect the accuracy of the statistics, also contribute to carryover. The current carryover rate is 0.5 percent for exports and 2.5 percent for imports.

Each month, in the Summary of U.S. Export and Import Merchandise Trade (FT900) only, the total import, export, and trade balance figures, as well as the end-use totals for the prior month, are adjusted for carryover. SITC and country detail data are not revised.

Estimated Calculated Duty

Estimates of calculated duty do not necessarily reflect amounts of duty paid and should, therefore, be used with caution. The figures may be somewhat overstated as a result of the inclusion in the figures of some U.S. products returned after processing or assembly abroad, for which a portion of the value is eligible for duty-free consideration. In cases where articles are dutiable at various or special rates, a dutiable value is shown, but no duty is calculated. Estimates of calculated duty are understated to the extent that these situations exist.

Shipments Not Classified by Commodity

Single classifications are provided for the following shipments without commodity detail:

1. Exports to all countries, except Canada, valued under \$2,501.
2. Exports to Canada, reported on Canadian documents having a total shipment value less than \$900 (Canada).
3. Exports to all countries, except Canada, valued \$2,501 through \$10,000 that are reported on Shipper's Export Declarations without a valid Schedule B number. (The United States/Canada data exchange allows that portion of the value formerly shown under this classification as exports to Canada to be distributed among the appropriate commodity classifications.)

4. Exports of goods of Canadian origin being returned to Canada.
5. Exports of goods of other foreign origin being returned to Canada.
6. Import transactions valued under \$1,251 (and not requiring formal entry).

Classifications other than those listed above exclude the information shown under these provisions and are undercounted to the extent that such shipments are made.

Comparison of Commodity Data

The omission of a commodity number from certain reports does not necessarily mean that there were no exports or imports of the commodity during the month. It is possible that some shipments may not be classified by commodity (see the preceding subsection).

Data users are cautioned that comparison of U.S. exports with corresponding Canadian import data at detailed commodity levels is not recommended. Corrections and differences in classification interpretation and in editing and processing environments make these comparisons uncertain.

In addition, the comparison of data on U.S. exports after 1989 with data for prior years at levels other than for total exports and exports by country may show distortion. These distortions may result from the availability of detailed data for undocumented exports to Canada that were previously estimated only at the total level. Distortions may also result from the changeover to the Harmonized System, effective with the January 1989 statistics.

When publication of data under a particular commodity classification causes disclosure of an individual firm's transactions on a world-wide basis, it is sometimes necessary to combine several classifications into one. Even though the detail is reported, it is not published.

Country Designation

Statistics tend to be overcounted for shipments to trans-shipment countries, such as Hong Kong and the Netherlands, and undercounted for other countries. Further, since the export statistics reflect the country of destination only as known to the exporter at time of shipment, the statistics will not reflect any further distributions of the merchandise made after the shipment leaves the United States.

Quantity

Quantity data for shipments of one commodity to or from a specific country may not be published when the statistics disclose a particular company's transactions with that country. Similarly, quantity data for shipments of one commodity to or from all countries may not be published when disclosure occurs on a world-wide basis.

Customs District

Statistics for two or more customs districts may be combined and published under an arbitrary designation, or shipping weight may be excluded from an individual customs district as a solution to disclosure situations. Consequently, statistics for individual ports may be understated because of the suppression of the weight of the affected commodities.

State Data

The term "Not Specified" represents instances where exporters have reported more than one state of origin or where the designation "US" has been reported. Transactions originating in a Foreign Trade Zone for which no number or state designation is reported are also included under "Not Specified."

Other designations are "Re-exports," "Estimated Shipments," and "Unreported." Those shipments designated as "Re-exports" (foreign exports) are exports having a foreign country as the point of origin. The "Unreported" designation includes those cases where either no state of origin was reported or an undecipherable abbreviation was reported. See the subsection entitled "Low-Value Statistics" for a discussion of such shipments.

REVISIONS TO THE STATISTICS

Revisions to the import and export statistics occur in several ways. Monthly, the aggregate import, export, and trade balance figures, as well as the end-use totals for the prior month, are adjusted for carryover (data received and/or processed too late for inclusion in the proper month). These revisions will appear only in the Summary of U.S. Export and Import Merchandise Trade (FT900).

Revisions to the import and export statistics in the form of errata are issued quarterly and are available free of charge upon request. These errata provide corrections to statistics issued in prior months' foreign trade reports. The data are presented by statistical month in commodity number arrangement only. The revisions are shown in commodity classification, by country, by customs district order as net amounts to be added to or subtracted from the previously issued statistics. Shipments by all methods of transportation combined are reflected. There are no separate data for shipments by vessel or by air.

Annually, the Census Bureau publishes revised merchandise trade statistics for the prior year. These revisions include import and export data adjusted to eliminate carryover (that small portion of the monthly statistics that arrives too late for inclusion in the transaction month). Reflected also in these statistics are the application of quarterly errata and other corrections to the published monthly data.

The initial release of the statistics (FT900) and certain reports include special announcements, as warranted, to

call attention to the discovery of large or significant errors and to provide information on the appropriate data corrections and program changes.

The Census Bureau receives revisions from Canada; however, our process does not permit corrections to detail for data previously published. Therefore, the Census Bureau will make corrections for prior period transactions as changes to the cumulative-to-date total for U.S. exports to Canada.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOREIGN TRADE STATISTICS

Supplementary information and explanations of interest to users of foreign trade statistics (such as notices of changes in statistical procedures) are included as special announcements in current issues of the statistical publications. Reports providing additional detail compiled, but not published, may be obtained on a cost basis.

Copies of foreign trade statistics are available for public reference use at various International Trade Administration district offices, Census Regional offices, and at some U.S. Customs Service offices. Since the distribution of foreign trade material varies among offices, inquiries regarding the availability of particular types of data should be made to:

Data Dissemination Branch
Foreign Trade Division
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road, Room 6K319
Washington, DC 20233
(Located at Suitland, MD)

Abbreviations for Units of Quantity

Abbreviation	Description	Abbreviation	Description
A	Amperes	LTR	Liters
AC	Alternating current	LT	Long tons
BBL	Barrel	BRU	Mechanical brushes
BFT	Board feet	MTR	Meters
BU	Bushels	MTN	Metric tons
CAR	Carets	MC	Millicuries
C	Celsius	ML	Milliliters
CG	Centigrams	MM	Millimeters
CMS	Centimeters	MUN	Million units
CYK	Clean yield kilograms	NESOI	Not elsewhere specified or included
CYP	Clean yield pounds	NO	Number
CGR	Content grams	OZ	Ounces
CKG	Content kilograms	ODE	Ozone depletion equivalent
CMT	Content metric tons	PKS	Packs
CLB	Content pounds	PRS	Pairs
CST	Content short tons	PCS	Pieces
CTN	Content tons	LBS	Pounds
CC	Cubic centimeters	PFG	Proof gallons
CFT	Cubic feet	PFL	Proof liters
CBM	Cubic meter	RPM	Revolutions per minute
CYD	Cubic yards	RBA	Running bales
CUR	Curie	SET	Set
DC	Direct current	STN	Short tons
DOZ	Dozen	SSG	Single-strength gallon
DPR	Dozen pairs	SQ	Square
DPC	Dozen pieces	SCM	Square centimeters
JWL	Dutiable jewels	SFT	Square feet
FT	Feet	SQM	Square meters
FBM	Fiber meter	SYD	Square yards
GAL	Gallons	THS	Thousands
GM	Grams	MBF	Thousand board feet
GRS	Gross	MCF	Thousand cubic feet
GBX	Gross boxes	TCM	Thousand cubic meters
GCN	Gross containers	MLF	Thousand linear feet
GKG	Gross kilograms	MYD	Thousand linear yards
GRL	Gross lines	THM	Thousand meters
GTN	Gross metric ton	MSF	Thousand square feet
GRP	Gross pair	TNV	Ton raw value (metric)
GLB	Gross pounds	TOZ	Troy ounces
GKG	Gross yield kilograms	VA	Voltampere
GTN	Gross tons	VOL	Volume
GVW	Gross vehicle weight	WT	Weight
HSP	Horsepower	WG	Wine gallons
HND	Hundred	YDS	Yards
CWT	Hundred weight	X	No units of quantity required
IN	Inches		
KG	Kilograms		
KDR	Kilogram dry rubber content		
KW	Kilowatts		
LNM	Linear meter		