



## IMPORTS DOWN 8.6%, DOMESTIC EXPORTS UP 41.7% IN DECEMBER 2018

## IMPORTS

**DECEMBER 2018:** For the month of December 2018, Belize imported goods valuing \$152.8 million. This represented an 8.6 percent or \$14.4 million decrease from the same month in 2017, when imports totalled \$167.2 million.

This overall downturn resulted from decreased imports across most commodity categories, with imports of 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' falling most significantly for the month. While the month of December 2017 saw the importation of aviation equipment and hydraulic bending machines, there were no similar high-value purchases for December 2018, causing the 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' category to decline by almost 25 percent or \$8.9 million, from \$36.4 million to \$27.5 million. Goods destined for the 'Commercial Free Zones' went down by \$3.9 million, from \$30.7 million in December 2017 to \$26.8 million in December of 2018, due to decreased purchases of various types of bags and personal care items. Imports meant for 'Export Processing Zones' (EPZ) dropped by more than 50 percent, from \$6.4 million to less than \$3 million, as the country spent less on EPZ goods such as high-pressure food processing equipment in December 2018. Lessened imports of mainly notebooks and glass bottles drove the category of 'Manufactured Goods' down by \$3.3 million, from \$20.6 million in December of 2017 to \$17.3 million in December 2018, while smaller imports of confectioners' sugar, canned chicken sausages, infant formula and cereals resulted in diminished imports of 'Food and Live Animals', from \$18.8 million to \$17.6 million.

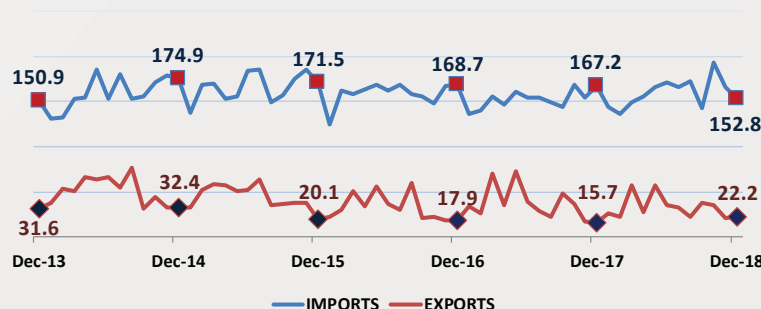
Notwithstanding the overall decrease in total imports for the last month of 2018, the categories of 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' and 'Other Manufactures' both saw notable increases for the month. 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' experienced the most considerable growth, rising sharply by nearly 30 percent, from \$21.2 million in December 2017 to \$27.4 million in December 2018, due to greater quantities being imported during the month coupled with the higher cost of diesel fuel. The category of 'Other Manufactures' rose by just above \$1 million, from \$11.1 million to \$12.1 million, with more imports of light and lighting fixtures, plastic bottles and bags for the month.

**TWELVE MONTHS OF THE YEAR 2018:** Merchandise imports for the year 2018 amounted to \$1.9 billion, representing a 4.6 percent or \$83.7 million increase from the total imports recorded for 2017.

Greater world market prices for fuel contributed substantially to the growth in imports for the year 2018. Spending on 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' surged by 28 percent or \$61.9 million, from approximately \$221 million in 2017 to \$282.9 million in 2018, despite there being very little change in the quantities of the country's main fuels being imported during the year. Notable expenditures were also observed in goods meant for the 'Commercial Free Zones', with imports rising by \$16.8 million from \$307.2 million to almost \$324 million, owing to higher purchases of cigarettes, bags and sportswear. Importation of 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' grew by \$15.4 million, from \$375.5 million in 2017 to \$390.9 million in 2018, due to larger imports of aviation and telecommunications equipment and four-cylinder vehicles. The year 2018 also saw marked increases in food and beverage imports. Higher purchases of lard (shortening), coffee and flour led to a \$3.6 million growth in the 'Food and Live Animals' category, from \$216.1 million to \$219.7 million, while a rise in imports of alcoholic beverages prompted a \$2.6 million uptick in the 'Beverages and Tobacco' category, from \$35.3 million to \$37.9 million.

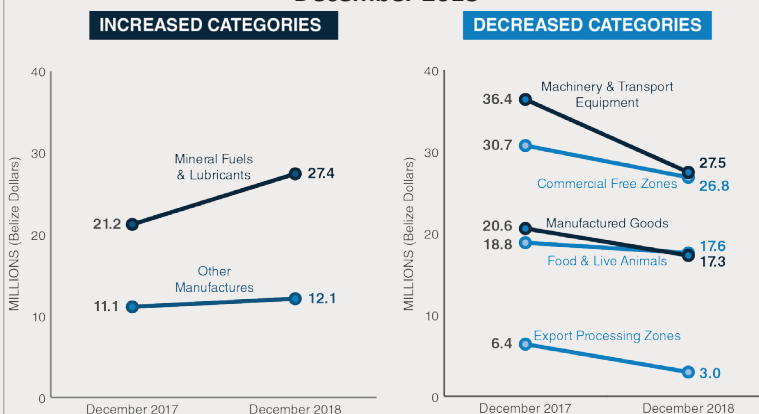
On the other hand, decreased spending was noted in the categories of 'Other Manufactures', 'Crude Materials' and 'Export Processing Zones'. Imports of goods classified as 'Other Manufactures' fell by \$10.4 million, from \$161.3 million in 2017 to \$150.9 million in 2018, as the country bought fewer laboratory plastics, prefabricated steel buildings and gaming machines over the course of the year. Similarly, with less imports of pasture grass seeds, utility poles made of pine, and asphalt, imports of 'Crude Materials' fell from \$35.5 million to \$30.1 million, while reduced imports of high-pressure food processing equipment, gaming machines and metal tanks, resulted in a drop in imports into the 'Export Processing Zones', from \$41.1 million to \$38.8 million.

Figure 1: Monthly Gross Imports and Domestic Exports;  
December 2013 - December 2018



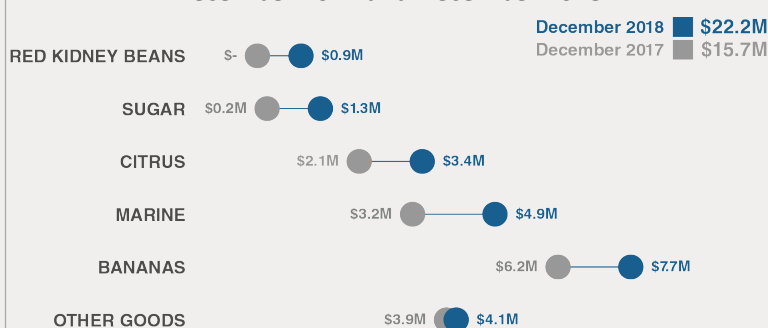
Source: Statistical Institute of Belize

Figure 2: Composition of Gross Imports by Type;  
December 2018



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize

Figure 3: Composition of Domestic Exports by Type;  
December 2017 and December 2018



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize

DOMESTIC EXPORTS

**DECEMBER 2018:** The total value of Belize’s domestic exports for the month of December 2018 was \$22.2 million, up a substantial 41.7 percent or \$6.5 million from the \$15.7 million recorded for December 2017.

For the final month of the year 2018, the country’s domestic exports saw boosted earnings from all major commodities, with the exception of crude petroleum, for which there were no recorded exports in either December 2017 or 2018. Exports of marine products grew by 52.8 percent or \$1.7 million for the month, \$3.2 million in December of 2017 to \$4.9 million in December 2018, due to improved sales of both conch and lobster tails, while revenues from bananas rose by \$1.5 million from \$6.2 million to \$7.7 million. Owing to greater sales of mainly grapefruit concentrate and orange concentrate for the month, earnings from citrus exports went up by 60.8 percent or \$1.3 million, from \$2.1 million to \$3.4 million. With heightened sales of sugar, export revenues from that commodity surged from \$0.2 million in December 2017 to \$1.3 million in December 2018. Additionally, red kidney beans, though not a major export, saw sales amounting to almost \$0.9 million in December 2018, compared to no sales for the previous December, providing a further boost the total exports for the month.

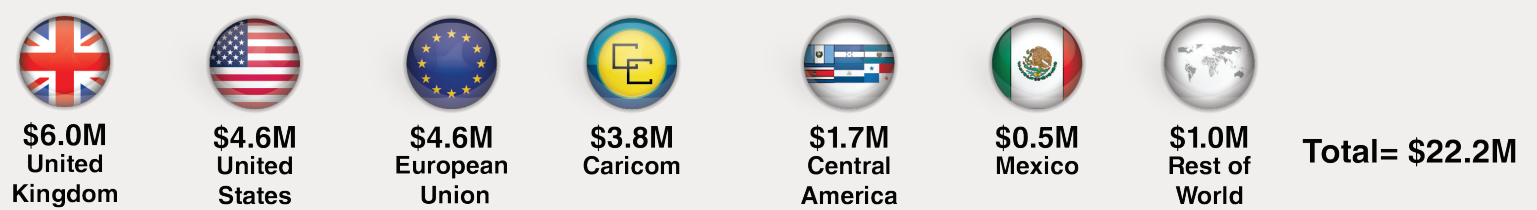
Consistent with the positive performance of domestic exports for the month, the country saw increased export earnings from the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United States of America (USA) and the Caricom region. Revenues from the United Kingdom rose from \$3.9 million in December 2017 to more than \$6 million in December 2018, on account of the boost in exports of both bananas and sugar, while greater exports of grapefruit concentrate as well as the aforementioned strong sales of bananas resulted in a rise in earnings from the European Union, from \$3.5 million to \$4.6 million. Exports to the USA grew from \$2.9 million to \$4.6 million, with increased sales of lobster tails, black-eyed peas and conch, while exports of red kidney beans and orange concentrate drove earnings from the Caricom region up from \$2.7 million to \$3.8 million for the month of December.

**TWELVE MONTHS OF THE YEAR 2018:** Merchandise exports for the year 2018 totalled \$398.7 million, down 10.5 percent or \$46.9 million from total exports of 2017, which amounted to \$445.6 million.

A significant decrease in earnings from sugar, attributable to diminished prices for that commodity on the European market, was the primary contributor to the decline in total domestic exports. Revenues from sugar plunged by 23.8 percent or more than \$35 million, from just above \$148 million in 2017 to \$112.8 million in 2018, although there was virtually no change in exported volumes of that product between the two years. In addition, citrus products and bananas both suffered export losses in 2018. Earnings from citrus exports fell by 8.4 percent, or \$6.8 million, from \$80.5 million in 2017 to \$73.7 million in 2018, due largely to decreased sales of orange oil and orange concentrate, while banana exports declined slightly by 3.3 percent or \$2.7 million, from \$81.8 million to \$79.1 million.

In spite of the downturn in total domestic exports, however, marine products and crude petroleum each emerged with increased export earnings for the year. Revenues from marine products rose by 5.8 percent, from a little over \$40 million in 2017 to \$42.4 million in 2018, as improved prices for both conch and lobster tails positively impacted this category. Crude petroleum also benefited from favourable world market prices during the year and, notwithstanding a 25.2 percent drop in exported volumes of that commodity, earnings rose by 8.4 percent or \$1.9 million, from \$22.7 million in 2017 to \$24.6 million in 2018.

Figure 4: Composition of Exports by Destination; December 2018 (Millions of BZ Dollars)



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize