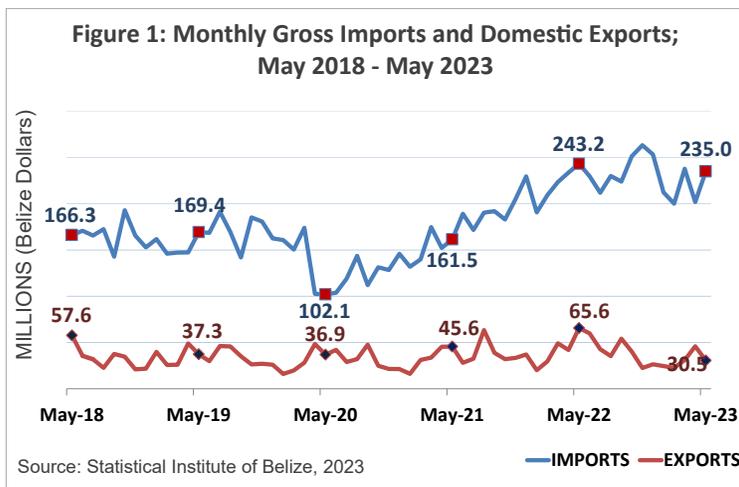




IMPORTS DOWN 3.4%, DOMESTIC EXPORTS DOWN 53.5% IN MAY 2023

IMPORTS

MAY 2023: For the month of May 2023, Belize imported goods valuing \$235 million, a decrease of 3.4 percent or \$8.2 million from the same month in 2022, when imports totalled \$243.2 million (see Figure 1). Increases were recorded for several of the commodity categories, including 'Food and Live Animals' and 'Machinery and Transport Equipment'. However, these were overshadowed by significant decreases in others, most notably 'Chemical Products', 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants', and 'Manufactured Goods' (see Figure 2).



DECREASING CATEGORIES:

Chemical Products

The 'Chemical Products' category fell by more than one-third or \$12.9 million, from \$38.2 million in May 2023 to \$25.3 million in May 2022, driven by notable reductions in imports of fertilizers, vaccines and diagnostic testing.

Mineral Fuels and Lubricants

The category of 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' went down by 20 percent or \$7.3 million, from \$36.5 million to \$29.1 million, owing to a noteworthy decrease in world market prices for diesel fuel and the fact that no kerosene fuel was imported into the country in May of this year.

Manufactured Goods

Imports of 'Manufactured Goods', which included metal structures, carton boxes and glass bottles, declined by \$4.4 million, from \$39.8 million in May 2022 to \$35.4 million in May 2023.

Designated Processing Areas

The 'Designated Processing Areas' category decreased by \$1.4 million, from \$4.4 million to \$3 million. This was due to the fact there were no imports of computers, water tanks and European Oak recorded for this category in May of this year, while a number of purchases of the aforementioned goods were made for the 'Designated Processing Areas' in May of last year.

Crude Materials

The 'Crude Materials' category went down from \$5.2 million in May 2022 to \$3.9 million in May 2023, with imports of treated pine lumber falling notably in the month.

INCREASING CATEGORIES:

Machinery and Transport Equipment

The 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' category grew by almost \$7 million, from \$44.4 million in May 2022 to \$51.3 million in May 2023, due to increased imports of parts for machinery, vehicles and circuit breakers.

Food and Live Animals

Imports of 'Food and Live Animals' rose by almost \$6 million, from \$23.5 million to \$29.5 million, owing mostly to sizeable purchases of wheat in May of this year.

Commercial Free Zones

The 'Commercial Free Zones' category went up by \$3.8 million for the month, from \$24.6 million to \$28.4, on account of larger imports of tennis shoes and handbags.

Other Manufactures

As a result of greater purchases of plastic bottles and printed materials such as books, imports of goods classified as 'Other Manufactures' rose by \$2.2 million, from \$17.5 million in May 2022 to \$19.7 million in May 2023.

FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF THE YEAR: Merchandise imports for the first five months, January to May of 2023, amounted to \$1.087 billion, representing a 1.2 percent or \$13.2 million decrease from the same period last year, when merchandise imports totaled \$1.1 billion. Notwithstanding the slight percentage drop in overall imports, a few commodity categories saw marked changes during the period.

DECREASING CATEGORIES:

Mineral Fuels and Lubricants

The 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' category declined by \$15.6 million during the five-month period, from \$178.4 million in 2022 to \$162.8 million in 2023, a decrease attributable to reduced imports of premium, bunker C and kerosene fuels, along with lower world market prices for liquified petroleum gas.

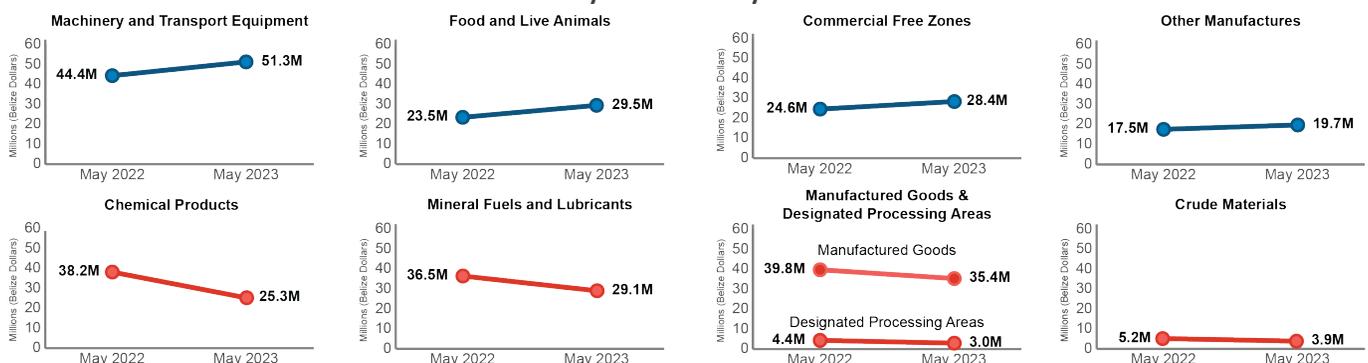
Chemical Products

Importation of 'Chemical Products' was also down by more than \$15 million, from \$126.4 million to \$111.1 million, as the country spent less on diagnostic testing kits, vaccines and fertilizers during the first five months of the year.

Commercial Free Zones

Similarly, goods destined for the 'Commercial Free Zones' decreased by over \$15 million during the period, from \$155.8 million to \$140.7 million, with cigarettes, clothing, and footwear recording the greatest declines.

Figure 2: Composition of Gross Imports by Type; May 2022 and May 2023



Manufactured Goods

The 'Manufactured Goods' category saw a marginal decrease from \$159.1 million in 2022 to \$158 million in 2023, owing to smaller imports of carton boxes and steel pipes.

INCREASING CATEGORIES:

Food and Live Animals

'Food and Live Animals' increased by \$13.7 million during the first five months of the year, from \$116 in 2022 to \$129.7 million in 2023, as a result of sizeable imports of orange concentrate, and greater purchases of wheat, margarine and other food items.

Other Manufactures

Imports within the 'Other Manufactures' category rose by \$8.7 million, from \$73.9 million in the first five months of last year to \$82.6 million in the first five months of this year, the result of heightened spending on plastic bottles, food containers and printed materials such as books.

Machinery and Transport Equipment

The 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' category rose by \$6.4 million, from \$222.3 million to \$228.7 million, due to larger imports of vehicles, which included golf carts, and bigger purchases of parts for machinery. This increase also included the high-value acquisition of an airplane donated to Belize by the United States government in March of this year.

Crude Materials

Notable increases in imports of treated pine lumber resulted in a rise of \$4.8 million in the 'Crude Materials' category, from \$13.7 million in 2022 to \$18.5 million in 2023.

DOMESTIC EXPORTS

MAY 2023: Total domestic exports for May 2023 amounted to \$30.5 million, down by 53.5 percent or \$35.1 million, when compared to exports for May 2022, which were valued at \$65.6 million (see Figure 1).

DECREASING CATEGORIES:

Decreased export earnings were recorded across all the country's major export commodities for the month. Revenues from sugar declined sharply by more than \$21 million, from \$26.1 million in May 2022 to \$4.3 million in 2023, due mainly to variations in the monthly shipping schedule for this commodity between last year and this year. Earnings from bananas dropped by more than one-third during the month, from \$9.8 million to \$6.3 million, while revenues from citrus products fell from \$6.1 million to \$3.9 million, due to decreased exports of orange concentrate. Marine exports saw a slight decrease of \$0.5 million, from \$3.4 million to \$2.9 million, on account of smaller sales of whole lobsters and reduced prices for conch. Among the country's other exports, revenues from molasses dropped steeply, from \$8 million in May 2022 to \$1.2 million in May 2023, meanwhile exports of animal feed declined from \$5.7 million to \$3.9 million (see Figure 3).

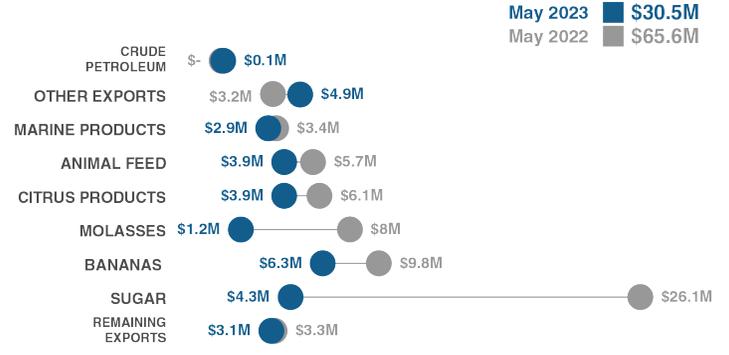
INCREASING CATEGORIES:

Notwithstanding the overall downturn in domestic exports, the 'Other Exports' category saw a noteworthy increase of \$1.7 million, from \$3.2 million to \$4.9 million, as exports of both crude soybean oil and cattle rose considerably in the month (see Figure 3).

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:

With the steep decline in sugar and banana exports recorded for the month of May, revenues from the United Kingdom dropped by more than two-thirds, from \$25.4 million to \$5.6 million. Earnings from the United States of America went down by more than one-half or \$6.8

Figure 3: Composition of Domestic Exports by Type; May 2022 and May 2023



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023

million, from \$12.7 million in May of last year to \$5.9 million in May of this year. This decrease was primarily due to the significant reduction in sales of molasses during the month. Smaller exports of sugar also resulted in reduced earnings from the European Union, which fell by more than 50 percent from \$7.2 million to \$3.5 million. The fall in sugar exports, coupled with diminished sales of orange concentrate, was responsible for a decline in earnings from the CARICOM region, from \$10.1 million in May 2022 to \$8.3 million in May 2023. As Central America continues to be the main destination for Belize's animal feed exports, the drop in sales of this commodity led to a \$1.5 million decline in revenues from this region, from \$6.3 million to \$4.8 million. Earnings from 'Other Countries' also dropped notably, from \$3.1 million in May 2022 to just over \$0.5 million in May 2023, as no whole lobsters, lobster tails and red kidney beans were exported to the countries within this category in May of this year (see Figure 4).

FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF THE YEAR: Merchandise exports for the period January to May 2023 totaled \$154.4 million, down 25.1 percent or \$51.7 million from \$206.2 million recorded for the same period last year.

DECREASING CATEGORIES:

Decreased export earnings were seen across all major commodities during the period, with sugar and bananas experiencing the most significant declines. Revenues from sugar dropped by more than \$17 million during the five-month period, from \$61.6 million in 2022 to \$44.1 million in 2023, largely caused by differences in the monthly shipping schedules between last year and this year. Banana exports saw a decline of 46 percent or \$16.2 million, from \$34.9 million to \$18.7 million, as production of this commodity continued to be adversely affected by disease, labour shortages, and high input costs. Owing mostly to decreased exports of orange concentrate, earnings from citrus products went down by 30 percent or \$6.2 million, from \$20.8 million in 2022 to \$14.6 million in 2023. Revenues from marine exports declined from \$18.5 million to \$16.7 million, reflecting reduced sales of lobster tails and decreased world market prices for conch. Earnings from crude petroleum were valued at \$0.6 million for the first five months of this year, down from \$1.5 million for the same period last year. Among the country's other exports, revenues from molasses dropped by more than 50 percent, from \$15.5 million in 2022 to \$7.1 million in 2023, while red kidney beans recorded a 30 percent decline, from \$5.8 million to \$4 million.

INCREASING CATEGORIES:

The 'Other Exports' category provided the only noteworthy increase in export earnings for the period. This was attributable to the near doubling of crude soybean oil and cattle exports compared to the first five months of last year.

Figure 4: Composition of Exports by Destination; May 2023 (Millions of BZ Dollars)



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023