

Quality description: Import and export of goods according to Standard International Trade Classification SITC

1. Relevance of statistics

1.1 Content and use of statistics

The SITC statistics present monthly the import and export of commodities and groups thereof according to countries. Value statistics are indicated all levels of the classification, but it is feasible to express quantitative statistics at the more specific levels of the classification only.

The statistics on foreign trade of goods are compiled according to the SITC classification of commodities owing to its international comparability. This commodity classification maintained by the UN is applied in most countries. Commodities have been classified on the basis of detailed nomenclatures (HS, CN) into rougher categories which take notice e.g. of the degree of processing. Since no annual changes occur in the SITC classification, comparisons requiring longer time series are also possible.

For the purposes of the economic analysis, the SITC statistics give a reliable picture of the newest development of the foreign trade at a fairly accurate commodity-specific level. These statistics constitute an important instrument for the decision makers as well as planners and researchers in the public and private sectors, both at the national level and within the operations of the EU and several international organizations.

1.2 Central concepts and classifications

Information on the internal trade i.e. the trade between the EU Member States is collected through the Intrastat system from the operators who are obliged to provide information. The statistics on the external trade i.e. the trade with countries not in the EU is obtained from the customs clearance system.

The SITC statistics are compiled according to the UN classification standard of the international trade (Standard International Trade Classification SITC, Rev.4, ex 2007). The statistics complying with the SITC classification are derived from the Combined Nomenclature CN according to the definitions of the UN. At the most accurate level, the SITC classification comprises 2 970 commodity categories.

The compilation of statistics on commodities is based on the Combined Nomenclature CN of the EU. The export statistics are gathered as per the countries of destination according to the FOB ("free on board") value, and the import statistics as per the countries of origin according to the CIF ("cost, insurance, and freight") value. The Combined Nomenclature comprises some 10,000 headings. The country of origin is the country in which the goods were produced or in which the latest economically important stage of production took place. The packaging of the commodities is not regarded as production. As for export, the country of destination is the last country known at the time of export to of the commodities from Finland, either direct or via another country.

1.3 Acts and Decrees

Foreign Trade Statistics are based on the legislation of the European Community as well as the national Statistics Act (280/4) and Customs Act (1466/94). Within the EU legislation, the compilation of statistics is steered by the Basic Regulation on internal trade statistics (EC, 638/2004), Basic Regulation on external trade statistics (EC, 1172/95), and the respective implementation provisions.

The country classification is based on the Commission Regulation (EC, 1833/2006) on the country classification of the statistics on the Community external trade and the trade between the Member States. The country codes comply with those of the ISO/DIS 3166 standard of the International Organization of Standardization.

2. Method description

The information on the trade carried on by Finland with the other EU Member States is collected from the compulsory statistical declarations provided monthly by importers and exporters through the Intrastat system of the internal trade. The information on the trade between Finland and Third Countries is obtained from customs declarations, which have to be submitted on every import and export consignment. The data on both internal and external trade are put together to form the statistics on the foreign trade of Finland.

3. Correctness and accuracy of information

The monthly statistics are preliminary and contain estimates. Thus the figures are changing along with the completion and elaboration of the basic material. The monthly figures are e.g. supplemented by estimations on missing statistics declarations and those on companies with figures remaining below the threshold values. Each EU Member State defines its threshold i.e. minimum value of inclusion in statistics for the calendar year, based on the annual value of importation and exportation by companies.

As a rule, all goods exported from and imported in Finland are recorded to statistics. The prerequisite for an inclusion in statistics is that the goods physically arrive in or depart from this country. By way of exception, water- and aircraft are recorded to statistics upon a change in the status of ownership. Among other things, neither transit transports nor economic measures of insignificant commercial value are included in the statistics. Also the smallest companies are released from the obligation to declare statistics on internal trade. Neither is foreign trade in services recorded to these statistics.

4. Up-to-dateness and timeliness of published data

The accurate publication dates of the monthly statistics are announced for abt. one year at a time. The timetable of publication is maintained on the web site of the National Board of Customs. The statistics are published within nine weeks upon the respective month.

The statistics get specified with the production of the statistics on the following months. The statistics on each calendar year are confirmed by the end of April in the following year.

5. Availability and transparency / clarity of data

The central data of the monthly statistics are published on the web site of the National Board of Customs on the dates announced in advance.

Further information on SITC statistics is available from the Uljas database as well as the Statistics Service. The web site of Customs -> Foreign trade statistics comprises e.g. the principles of compiling statistics on foreign trade as well as all the surveys on Finnish foreign trade published by the National Board of Customs. Furthermore, the web site comprises rough-level statistical tables according to the SITC classification.

Further information is also available from the Statistics Service at:

- telephone: +358 9 6141 (exchange) or +358 20 690 603 (Statistics Service direct)
- e-mail: statistics[at]tulli.fi (replace [at] in the address with @)
- Internet: www.tulli.fi
- Statistical database Uljas: uljas.tulli.fi

6. Comparability of statistics

Information exists since 1988. Changes in the list of countries restrict the compilation of country-specific time series.

An electronic version of these statistics is available from the Uljas database.

Foreign trade statistics according to earlier versions of the SITC classification of commodities have been compiled for the years 1958 to 1987. These can be obtained from the Statistics Service.

7. Clarity and consistency / coherence

The SITC statistics on commodities get specified monthly along with the publication of further monthly statistics.

Statistics on the foreign trade of other countries are accessible at the reading room of the Statistics service.

Statistical information on the foreign trade of the EU Member States is available from the publications, web site, and Easy Comext database of Eurostat. This database can be consulted free of charge through Internet.

The UN Statistical Office also publishes statistics complying with the SITC classification (the Comtrade database).

The dissimilarities of the concepts and definitions applied by the EU Member States and their most important trading partners may affect the comparability of statistics.