Export-to-China Capacity Development Report 2026

Institute of World Economics and Politics

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

中国社会科学出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

出口中国能力发展报告：英文 / 中国社会科学院世界经济与政治研究所著. -- 北京：中国社会科学出版社，2026. 10. -- ISBN 978-7-5227-8058-0

Ⅰ. F746.12

中国国家版本馆 CIP 数据核字第 2026MG4774 号

出 版 人　季为民
责任编辑　张冰洁
责任校对　卢奕彤
责任印制　王　超

出　　版　中国社会科学出版社
社　　址　北京鼓楼西大街甲 158 号
邮　　编　100720
网　　址　http://www.csspw.cn
发 行 部　010-84083685
门 市 部　010-84029450
经　　销　新华书店及其他书店

印刷装订　北京明恒达印务有限公司
版　　次　2026 年 10 月第 1 版
印　　次　2026 年 10 月第 1 次印刷

开　　本　880×1230　1/16
印　　张　31.75
字　　数　532 千字
定　　价　368.00 元

凡购买中国社会科学出版社图书，如有质量问题请与本社营销中心联系调换
电话：010-84083683
版权所有　侵权必究

Preface

The world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. The international landscape remains complex and volatile, and the global economy continues to face new uncertainties. As Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out, "The world has come to a new crossroads—solidarity, cooperation and mutual benefit or return of hegemonism and the law of the jungle; multilateralism, openness and inclusiveness or unilateralism and protectionism. What we choose will profoundly affect the future of the world."① This question of our time reflects both a clear-eyed assessment of the international landscape and deep reflection on the shared future of humanity, providing strategic direction for global development.

Against this backdrop, China has responded with concrete actions to expand imports and a firm commitment to further opening up. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), China's cumulative imports exceeded USD 13 trillion. Through its own development, China has created opportunities for the world; through international cooperation, it has addressed the development deficit; and it has advanced inclusive and beneficial economic globalization in a steady and far-reaching manner. This record demonstrates China's sense of responsibility as a major country and has won broad recognition from the international community. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has stated that China is "an important pillar of multilateralism and the

① Xi Jinping. "Leverage Asia-Pacific's Leading Role to Promote Global Development and Prosperity: Written Speech at the APEC CEO Summit." *People's Daily*, October 31, 2025.

United Nations", highlighting its crucial role in peace and security, poverty reduction and development. Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General of the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), has praised China for continuously providing stability to an uncertain world, emphasizing that China is an important part of multipolarity and multilateralism and a key force for cooperation and solidarity among nations.

Ⅰ. China's Vast Market Provides Strong Momentum for Global Economic and Trade Development

China's market is characterized byits vast scale and dynamism, offering ample room and strong impetus for its import growth. China has a population of over 1.4 billion and a middle-income group of more than 400 million. Measured by purchasing power parity according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), China is already the world's largest consumer market. China is also a major export destination for some 80 countries and regions, and has remained the world's second-largest importer for 17 consecutive years. From January to August 2026, China's goods imports rose by 26.7% year on year, with annual imports expected to exceed USD 3 trillion for the first time, and imports from over 150 trading partners registering positive growth. In the first half of 2026, China's economy grew by 4.7%, with new growth drivers and emerging sectors constantly emerging, and demand for high-quality and upgraded consumption such as smart consumption and green consumption growing rapidly. China's vast market is bringing major business opportunities to the world through its own robust development, and the role and standing of imports continue to rise.

Expanding imports is an important measure for implementing the Global Development Initiative. China has been the top engine of the world economy for 20 consecutive years. It is committed to proactively opening its vast market, using its own opening-up to promote the building of a higher-level open world economy and bridge

the development deficit. Expanding imports is also a vivid practice in implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China has consistently prioritized development, pursued openness and innovation, and promoted win-win cooperation. It has proactively opened its doors to the world, sharing the benefits of development with countries around the globe. China is providing greater market access to developing countries and least developed countries, helping them integrate into global value chains and promoting inclusive global development. Furthermore, expanding imports is an effective pathway for advancing the global governance system in a more just and rational manner. In the face of de-globalization moves by some countries—such as the generalized invocation of national security and aggressive "decoupling and supply chain disruption"—China has consistently upheld the existing international order and practiced genuine multilateralism. By expanding imports, China seeks to bridge divides rather than deepen them, foster dialogue, and contribute Chinese solutions to improving global economic governance.

Ⅱ. China Will Continue to Expand Imports Through a Three-Pronged Approach of "Policies, Events and Platforms"

In terms of policy, China has continuously lowered tariff levels. Since December 1, 2024, it has granted zero-tariff treatment to 100% of tariff lines for all least developed countries having diplomatic relations with China. Since May 1, 2026, China has fully implemented zero tariffs for all 53 African countries having diplomatic relations with China. Since then, specialty products such as Kenyan avocados, South African apples and Ethiopian coffee have accelerated their entry into the Chinese market, benefiting from tariff reductions and customs facilitation dividends. China has developed 43 national demonstration zones for import promotion and innovation to a high standard, vigorously promoted new business formats and models including cross-border

e-commerce retail imports, and encouraged positive synergies between imports and two-way investment.

As for events, China has innovatively launched the "Export to China" series. In September 2026, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated that China welcomes willing member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to actively participate in the "Big Market for All: Export to China" series and proactively seize the opportunities presented by China's vast market. Since its launch on November 4, 2025, approximately 100 events, as part of "Big Market for All: Export to China" series, have been held at home and abroad, with over 100 countries and regions actively participating. During head-of-state diplomacy and high-level exchanges, leaders of many countries have expressed strong interest in and spoken highly of the series. Through these events, a growing number of high-quality imported goods are reaching Chinese consumers, and an increasing number of foreign suppliers are integrating into China's industrial, value and innovation chains.

In terms of platform, "Big Market for All: Export to China" works in synergy with major exhibitions such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the China International Consumer Products Expo. Leveraging exhibitions as platforms to showcase global high-quality goods and services, China has established efficient channels for supply-demand matchmaking, promoted the transformation of "exhibits into commodities", and accelerated the entry of high-quality products from around the world into the Chinese market. "Big Market for All: Export to China" together with "Buy in China" and "Invest in China"—three national-level brands—reinforce one another to form an interconnected brand matrix. While "Big Market for All: Export to China" series allows more high-quality imported goods to "get in"; "Buy in China" helps imported goods "sell well"; and "Invest in China" attracts more foreign-invested enterprises to invest and operate in China. Together, they promote the integrated development of trade, consumption and investment, achieving internal-external

connectivity and mutual reinforcement.

Ⅲ. *Export-to-China Development Report* Is an Important Public Good Provided by China for All Parties to Share in Its Vast Market

Beginning in 2026, China plans to release the *Export-to-China Capacity Development Report* annually during the CIIE, which, together with the World Openness Report, will serve as one of the two flagship reports of the Hongqiao International Economic Forum. Each annual report will select a number of trading partners and examine their export structures and the compatibility of their products with the Chinese market, from various dimensions including economic infrastructure, industrial systems and trade policies. It will also offer recommendations for these trading partners on how to build their capacity to export to China and conduct relevant training accordingly to unlock their export potential.

UNCTAD has been deeply involved in the preparation of the *Export-to-China Capacity Development Report*, conducting in-depth analysis and offering many valuable, constructive recommendations on helping relevant countries enhance their capacity to export to China.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping has emphasized, "China's initiative to expand imports is not a choice of expediency. It is a future-oriented step taken to embrace the world and promote common development." ① Looking ahead, China will press ahead with even greater resolve to expand imports, and its door to the outside world will only open wider. China will continue to leverage the advantages of its vast market to provide a powerful, stable, and reliable engine of global economic growth. In an increasingly uncertain world, China will remain a "safe haven" and an "anchor of stability", offering a source of certainty. China will continue to uphold the principle of sharing

① Xi Jinping. "Working Together to Build an Open World Economy of Innovation and Inclusion: Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the First China International Import Expo." *People's Daily*, November 6, 2018.

benefits with the world, take a more proactive approach to expanding imports, help build an open world economy and a community with a shared future for humanity, and ensure that the fruits of development are shared more widely and equitably among people in all countries. Together with the rest of the world, China will write a new chapter in global prosperity and development.

Contents

Part Ⅰ: Sharing China's Vast Market Opportunities with the Rest of the World

Chapter Ⅰ Overall Global Import and Export and the Exports to China ····· 3

Ⅰ. Overall Global Import and Export ····· 3

Ⅱ. Export Destinations and China's Position in the Global Market ····· 15

Ⅲ. Conclusion ····· 22

Chapter Ⅱ Product Structure of Global Exports to China ····· 24

Ⅰ. Classification by Product Attributes ····· 24

Ⅱ. Classification by End Use ····· 33

Ⅲ. Conclusion ····· 39

Chapter Ⅲ Regional and Country-Level Export Performance to China ····· 42

Ⅰ. Regional Distribution of Exports to China ····· 42

Ⅱ. Sustained Export Growth to China by Belt and Road Partner Countries ····· 50

Ⅲ. Export Performances at the Economy Level ····· 58

Ⅳ. Conclusion ····· 64

Chapter Ⅳ Trade Modes of Global Exports to China ····· 65

Ⅰ. Overall Changes in Trade Modes ····· 65

Ⅱ. Implications of Changes in Trade Modes ····· 69

Ⅲ. New-Type Trade Formats: Cross-Border E-Commerce Imports ····· 74

Ⅳ. Conclusion ····· 78

Chapter Ⅴ The Entity Structure of China's Imports ····· 80

Ⅰ. Structural Evolution of Importing Entities ····· 80

Ⅱ. Import Characteristics of Foreign-Invested Enterprises ····· 86

Ⅲ. Import Characteristics of Domestic Private Enterprises ····· 93

Ⅳ. Import Characteristics of Domestic State-Owned Enterprises ····· 97

Ⅴ. Dual-Track Characteristics of China's Import Structure ····· 102

Ⅵ. Conclusion ····· 106

Chapter Ⅵ China's Import Demand ····· 108

Ⅰ. China's Import Scale and Structure ····· 108

Ⅱ. Products with High Import Growth Rates in China ····· 115

Ⅲ. Conclusion ····· 123

Chapter Ⅶ China's Import Policies ····· 124

Ⅰ. Comprehensive Policy Innovation ····· 124

Ⅱ. Continued Improvement of Import Regulatory and Product Standards Systems ····· 131

Ⅲ. Tariff Reductions and Continued Expansion of Opening-Up ····· 137

Ⅳ. Import Requirements Related to Green and Sustainable Development ····· 140

Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 145

Chapter Ⅷ Trade Agreements and Related Trade Facilitation Arrangements ····· 147

Ⅰ. Analysis of the Effects of Free Trade Agreements in Force ····· 147

Ⅱ. Trade Facilitation Measures under the Belt and Road Initiative ····· 154

Ⅲ. Digital Trade and E-Commerce Agreements ····· 159

Ⅳ. Mutual Recognition of Standards ····· 162

Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 163

Chapter Ⅸ Jointly Enhancing Export Capacity to China ····· 165

Ⅰ. Improving Infrastructure ····· 166

Ⅱ. Optimizing Industrial Structure ····· 171

Ⅲ. Advancing Trade Openness ····· 176

Ⅳ. Conclusion ····· 182

Chapter Ⅹ Interim Progress of the "Big Market for All: Export to China" Series of Events ····· 183

Ⅰ. Enhancing Trade Channels and Improving Supply-Demand Matching Capacity ····· 183

Ⅱ. Extending Consumer Reach and Enhancing the Marketing Capabilities of Specialty Products in China ····· 187

Ⅲ. Deepening Institutional Coordination and Enhancing the Capacity for Sustained Engagement in the Chinese Market ····· 190

Ⅳ. Strengthening the Hub Role of the CIIE and Establishing a Year-Round Coordination Mechanism ····· 193

Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 197

Part Ⅱ: Jointly Enhancing Capacity to Export to China

Chapter XI Colombia ····· 203

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 203

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 210

Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 213

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 217

Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 224

Chapter XII Kazakhstan ····· 227

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 227

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 235

Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 238

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 242

Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 249

Chapter XIII Kenya ····· 251

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 251

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 259

Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 262

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 266

Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 273

Chapter XIV Pakistan ····· 276

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 276

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 283

Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 286
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 290
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 297

Chapter XV Serbia ····· 299
Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 299
Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 307
Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 310
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 313
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 319

Chapter XVI South Africa ····· 321
Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 321
Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 328
Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 332
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 336
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 343

Chapter XVII Spain ····· 346
Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 346
Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 354
Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 357
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 361
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 367

Chapter XVIII Tanzania ····· 369
Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 369

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 377
Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 380
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 384
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 391

Chapter XIX Thailand ····· 394
Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 394
Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 402
Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 405
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 409
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 416

Chapter XX United Kingdom ····· 418
Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential ····· 418
Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure ····· 426
Ⅲ. Industrial System ····· 429
Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles ····· 433
Ⅴ. Conclusion ····· 440

Appendix ····· 442
References ····· 468
Acknowledgements ····· 474
About the Author ····· 476

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Global Merchandise Export Value and Growth Rate, 2001–2025 …… 4

Figure 1.2 Global GDP and Exports as a Share of GDP, 2001–2025 …… 5

Figure 1.3 Global Exports and Imports, 2000–2025 …… 7

Figure 1.4 Global Export Structure by Product, 2000–2025 …… 11

Figure 1.5 Merchandise Export Value and Growth Rates by Major Global Region, 2005–2025 …… 13

Figure 1.6 Shares of Merchandise Exports by Major Global Region, 2005–2025 …… 14

Figure 1.7 Share of Global Exports Absorbed by Individual Economies as Export Destinations, 2001–2024 …… 16

Figure 2.1 Shares of Global Exports to China by Three Product Categories …… 25

Figure 2.2 Value and Growth Rate of Agricultural Exports to China …… 26

Figure 2.3 Value and Growth Rate of Energy and Resource Exports to China …… 28

Figure 2.4 Structure of Energy and Resource Exports to China, 2014 and 2024 …… 30

Figure 2.5 Value and Growth Rate of Industrial Exports to China …… 31

Figure 2.6 Share of Global Exports to China by Product End Use …… 34

Figure 2.7 Value and Growth Rate of Capital Goods Exports to China …… 34

Figure 2.8 Value and Growth Rate of Intermediate Goods Exports to China …… 36

Figure 2.9 Value and Growth Rate of Final Consumer Goods Exports to China ····· 38
Figure 3.1 Merchandise Exports to China: Six Regions, 2001-2024 ····· 43
Figure 3.2 Share of Goods Exports to China, 2001-2024 ····· 44
Figure 3.3 Changes in the Concentration of Global Export Sources to China, 2001-2024 ····· 51
Figure 3.4 Changes in Export Volume and Share to China's Mainland: Advanced Economies, Emerging Market and Developing Economies, 2001-2024 ····· 52
Figure 3.5 Value of Exports to China: Economies by Income Group, 2001-2024 ····· 54
Figure 3.6 Value of Exports to China: Belt and Road Partner Countries, 2001-2024 ····· 55
Figure 3.7 Value of Exports to China: ASEAN, 2001-2024 ····· 57
Figure 3.8 Distribution of Economies by Value and Growth Rate of Exports to China's Mainland ····· 58
Figure 4.1 Decomposition of Global Exports to China by Trade Mode, 2001-2025 ····· 66
Figure 4.2 Changes in Shares of General Trade, Processing Trade and Other Trade, 2001-2025 ····· 70
Figure 4.3 Changes in Cross-Border E-Commerce Import Volume, 2016-2025 ····· 75
Figure 5.1 Changes in Import Volumes of Foreign-Invested and Domestic Trading Entities in China, 2001-2024 ····· 86
Figure 5.2 Inverted-U Pattern in the Share of Imports and Growth in Absolute Import Value of FDI in China, 2001-2024 ····· 89

Figure 5.3 Trends of the Dual-Track Import Value of Electromechanical Equipment and Bulk Commodities, 2001-2024 ····· 104
Figure 6.1 Import Value and Ranking of Bulk Commodities (Energy) among the Top 10 HS 2-Digit Products Imported by China, 2021-2025 ····· 109
Figure 6.2 Import Value of Core Industrial Goods among the Top 10 HS 2-Digit Products Imported by China, 2021-2025 ····· 112
Figure 6.3 Ranking of Core Industrial Goods Imports in China's Top 10 HS2-Digit Products, 2021-2025 ····· 113
Figure 6.4 Top 15 HS 6-digit Products by Cumulative Imports in China, 2021-2025 ····· 114
Figure 6.5 Top 20 HS 6-Digit Products in China by Compound Import Growth Rate, 2021-2025 ····· 116
Figure 6.6 HS 6-Digit Products with High Import Growth Rates in China: Basic Materials, 2021-2025 ····· 117
Figure 6.7 HS 6-Digit Products with High Import Growth Rates in China: Products Associated with Industrial Upgrading, 2021-2025 ····· 119
Figure 6.8 HS 6-Digit Products with High Import Growth Rates in China: Agricultural and Food Products, 2021-2025 ····· 120
Figure 6.9 China's Imports from the Global South, 2021-2025 ····· 122
Figure 11.1 Colombia Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025 ····· 204
Figure 11.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Colombia Exports and China Imports (index), 2001-2025 ····· 204
Figure 11.3 Total Working Age Population, Colombia, 2001-2024 ····· 214
Figure 11.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Colombia (Percentage) ····· 215
Figure 11.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Colombia, 2001-2024 ····· 215

Figure 11.6 Colombia's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024 ····· 218
Figure 11.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Colombia ····· 220
Figure 11.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Colombia ····· 221
Figure 11.9 Colombia's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 221
Figure 11.10 Colombia's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025 ····· 222
Figure 12.1 Kazakhstan Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025 ····· 228
Figure 12.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Kazakhstan Exports and China Imports, 2001-2025 ····· 229
Figure 12.3 Total Working Age Population, Kazakhstan, 2001-2024 ····· 238
Figure 12.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Kazakhstan (Percentage) ····· 239
Figure 12.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Kazakhstan, 2001-2024 ····· 240
Figure 12.6 Kazakhstan's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024 ····· 242
Figure 12.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kazakhstan ····· 245
Figure 12.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kazakhstan ····· 245
Figure 12.9 Kazakhstan's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 246
Figure 12.10 Kazakhstan's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2016-2025 ····· 246
Figure 13.1 Kenya Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025 ····· 252

Figure 13.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Kenya Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025 ····· 253
Figure 13.3 Total Working Age Population, Kenya, 2001–2024 ····· 262
Figure 13.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Kenya (Percentage) ····· 263
Figure 13.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Kenya, 2006–2024 ····· 264
Figure 13.6 Kenya's Openness Indicator, 1990–2024 ····· 267
Figure 13.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kenya ····· 269
Figure 13.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kenya ····· 270
Figure 13.9 Kenya's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 270
Figure 13.10 Kenya's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001–2025 ····· 271
Figure 14.1 Pakistan Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025 ····· 277
Figure 14.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Pakistan Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025 ····· 278
Figure 14.3 Total Working Age Population, Pakistan, 2001–2024 ····· 287
Figure 14.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Pakistan (Percentage) ····· 287
Figure 14.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Pakistan, 2001–2024 ····· 288
Figure 14.6 Pakistan's Openness Indicator, 1990–2024 ····· 290
Figure 14.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Pakistan ····· 293

Figure 14.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Pakistan ····· 293
Figure 14.9 Pakistan's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 294
Figure 14.10 Pakistan's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025 ····· 295
Figure 15.1 Serbia Total Exports and Exports to China, 2006-2025 ····· 300
Figure 15.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Serbia's Exports and China's Imports, 2006-2025 ····· 301
Figure 15.3 Total Working Age Population, Serbia, 2001-2024 ····· 310
Figure 15.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Serbia (Percentage) ····· 312
Figure 15.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Serbia, 2001-2024 ····· 313
Figure 15.6 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Serbia ····· 316
Figure 15.7 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Serbia ····· 316
Figure 15.8 Serbia's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 317
Figure 16.1 South Africa Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025 ····· 322
Figure 16.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between South Africa Exports and China Imports, 2001-2025 ····· 323
Figure 16.3 Total Working Age Population, South Africa, 2001-2024 ····· 332
Figure 16.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, South Africa (Percentage) ····· 334

Figure 16.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, South Africa, 2001–2024 ····· 335
Figure 16.6 South Africa's Openness Indicator, 1990–2024 ····· 336
Figure 16.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, South Africa ····· 339
Figure 16.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, South Africa ····· 339
Figure 16.9 South Africa's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 340
Figure 16.10 South Africa's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001–2025 ····· 340
Figure 17.1 Spain Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025 ····· 347
Figure 17.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Spain Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025 ····· 348
Figure 17.3 Total Working Age Population, Spain, 2001–2024 ····· 357
Figure 17.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Spain (Percentage) ····· 358
Figure 17.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Spain, 2001–2024 ····· 359
Figure 17.6 Spain's Openness Indicator, 1990–2024 ····· 361
Figure 17.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Spain ····· 364
Figure 17.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Spain ····· 364
Figure 17.9 Spain's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 365

Figure 17.10 Spain's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 1995-2025 ····· 366
Figure 18.1 Tanzania Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025 ····· 370
Figure 18.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Tanzania and China, 2001-2025 ····· 371
Figure 18.3 Total Working Age Population, Tanzania, 2000-2024 ····· 381
Figure 18.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Tanzania (Percentage) ····· 383
Figure 18.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Tanzania, 2001-2024 ····· 383
Figure 18.6 Tanzania's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024 ····· 385
Figure 18.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Tanzania ····· 388
Figure 18.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Tanzania ····· 388
Figure 18.9 Tanzania's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 389
Figure 18.10 Tanzania's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025 ····· 389
Figure 19.1 Thailand Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025 ····· 395
Figure 19.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Thailand Exports and China Imports, 2001-2025 ····· 396
Figure 19.3 Total Working Age Population, Thailand, 2001-2024 ····· 406
Figure 19.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Thailand (Percentage) ····· 407
Figure 19.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Thailand, 2001-2024 ····· 407

Figure 19.6 Thailand's Openness Indicator, 1990–2024 ····· 410
Figure 19.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Thailand ····· 412
Figure 19.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Thailand ····· 412
Figure 19.9 Thailand's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 413
Figure 19.10 Thailand's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001–2025 ····· 414
Figure 20.1 United Kingdom Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025 ····· 419
Figure 20.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between United Kingdom Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025 ····· 420
Figure 20.3 Total Working Age Population, United Kingdom, 2001–2024 ····· 430
Figure 20.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, United Kingdom (Percentage) ····· 430
Figure 20.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, United Kingdom, 2001–2024 ····· 431
Figure 20.6 United Kingdom's Openness Indicator, 1990–2024 ····· 434
Figure 20.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, United Kingdom ····· 436
Figure 20.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, United Kingdom ····· 436
Figure 20.9 United Kingdom's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample) ····· 437
Figure 20.10 United Kingdom's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001–2025 ····· 438

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Share of Global Exports Absorbed by Major Developing Economies (Percentage) ····· 16

Table 1.2 Share of Products Absorbed by China from Major Economies in China's Total Imports from the World (Percentage) ····· 18

Table 1.3 Share of Products Exported to China's mainland in the Total Exports of Major Economies (Percentage) ····· 20

Table 3.1 Competitive Export Products of Global Regions to China ····· 45

Table 3.2 Top-30 Economies by Exports to China's Mainland ····· 62

Table 4.1 Structure of Global Exports to China by Trade Mode, 2001-2025 ····· 67

Table 4.2 Phases in the Evolution of Trade Modes for Global Exports to China ····· 68

Table 4.3 Major Import Commodities by Different Trade Modes, 2025 ····· 71

Table 4.4 Major Category Distribution of Cross-Border E-Commerce Imports ····· 76

Table 5.1 Total Imports and Structural Shares of Foreign-Invested and Domestic Trading Entities in China, 2001-2024 ····· 85

Table 5.2 Evolution of the Absolute Value and Share of Imports to China Driven by Foreign-Invested Enterprises (FDI), 2001-2024 ····· 88

Table 5.3 Changes in the Import Scale and Share of Key Sectors in Trade Associated with Foreign-Invested Enterprises, 2001-2024 ····· 91
Table 5.4 Procurement Trends by Selected Segments of Domestic Private Enterprises, 2001-2024 ····· 96
Table 5.5 Import Trends in Key Product Segments among Domestic State-Owned Enterprises, 2001-2024 ····· 100
Table 5.6 Evolution of Dual-Track Import Value of Key Products, 2001-2024 ····· 103
Table 11.1 Colombia Export Diversification Trends ····· 205
Table 11.2 Colombia Export Structure, 2024 ····· 206
Table 11.3 Colombia Exports to China, 2025 ····· 207
Table 11.4 Colombia Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 208
Table 11.5 Colombia Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 209
Table 11.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Colombia ····· 211
Table 11.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Colombia, 2023 ····· 212
Table 11.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Colombia ····· 212
Table 11.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Colombia ····· 213
Table 11.10 Industrial System Indicators, Colombia, 2014-2024 ····· 216
Table 11.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Colombia ····· 219
Table 11.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Colombia, 2025 ····· 220
Table 12.1 Kazakhstan Export Diversification Trends ····· 229
Table 12.2 Kazakhstan Export Structure, 2024 ····· 230
Table 12.3 Kazakhstan Exports to China, 2025 ····· 231
Table 12.4 Kazakhstan Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 233
Table 12.5 Kazakhstan Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 234

Table 12.6 Stability of Energy Supply in Kazakhstan, 2024 ····· 236
Table 12.7 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Kazakhstan ····· 237
Table 12.8 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Kazakhstan ····· 237
Table 12.9 Industrial System Indicators, Kazakhstan, 2014-2024 ····· 241
Table 12.10 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Kazakhstan ····· 243
Table 12.11 MFN Applied Tariffs, Kazakhstan, 2025 ····· 244
Table 13.1 Kenya Export Diversification Trends ····· 253
Table 13.2 Kenya Export Structure, 2024 ····· 254
Table 13.3 Kenya Exports to China, 2025 ····· 255
Table 13.4 Kenya Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 257
Table 13.5 Kenya Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 258
Table 13.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Kenya ····· 259
Table 13.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Kenya, 2025 ····· 260
Table 13.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Kenya ····· 261
Table 13.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Kenya ····· 261
Table 13.10 Industrial System Indicators, Kenya, 2014-2024 ····· 265
Table 13.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Kenya ····· 268
Table 13.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Kenya, 2025 ····· 269
Table 14.1 Pakistan Export Diversification Trends ····· 278
Table 14.2 Pakistan Export Structure, by Broad Sectors and the Stage of Processing ····· 279
Table 14.3 Pakistan Exports to China, 2025 ····· 280
Table 14.4 Pakistan Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 281
Table 14.5 Pakistan Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 282
Table 14.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Pakistan ····· 284

Table 14.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Pakistan, 2022 ····· 285
Table 14.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Pakistan ····· 285
Table 14.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Pakistan ····· 286
Table 14.10 Industrial System Indicators, Pakistan, 2014-2024 ····· 289
Table 14.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Pakistan ····· 291
Table 14.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Pakistan, 2025 ····· 292
Table 15.1 Serbia Export Diversification Trends ····· 301
Table 15.2 Serbia Export Structure, 2024 ····· 302
Table 15.3 Serbia Exports to China, 2025 ····· 303
Table 15.4 Serbia Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margins ····· 305
Table 15.5 Serbia Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 305
Table 15.6 Stability of Energy Supply in Serbia, 2024 ····· 308
Table 15.7 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Serbia ····· 309
Table 15.8 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Serbia ····· 309
Table 15.9 Industrial System Indicators, Serbia, 2014-2024 ····· 311
Table 15.10 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Serbia ····· 315
Table 15.11 MFN Applied Tariffs, Serbia, 2025 ····· 315
Table 16.1 South Africa Export Diversification Trends ····· 323
Table 16.2 South Africa Export Structure, by Broad Sectors and the Stage of Processing ····· 324
Table 16.3 South Africa Exports to China, 2025 ····· 325
Table 16.4 South Africa Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 326
Table 16.5 South Africa Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 327
Table 16.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in South Africa ····· 329
Table 16.7 Stability of Energy Supply in South Africa, 2020 ····· 330

Table 16.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in South Africa …… 331
Table 16.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in South Africa …… 331
Table 16.10 Industrial System Indicators, South Africa, 2014-2024 …… 333
Table 16.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in South Africa …… 338
Table 16.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, South Africa, 2025 …… 338
Table 17.1 Spain Export Diversification Trends …… 348
Table 17.2 Spain Export Structure, by Broad Sectors and the Stage of Processing …… 349
Table 17.3 Spain Exports to China, 2025 …… 350
Table 17.4 Spain Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin …… 352
Table 17.5 Spain Revealed Comparative Advantage …… 353
Table 17.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Spain …… 355
Table 17.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Spain, 2024 …… 355
Table 17.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Spain …… 356
Table 17.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Spain and the European Union …… 356
Table 17.10 Industrial System Indicators, Spain, 2014-2024 …… 360
Table 17.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Spain …… 363
Table 17.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Spain and European Union, 2025 …… 363
Table 18.1 Tanzania Export Diversification Trends …… 371
Table 18.2 Tanzania Export Structure, 2024 …… 372
Table 18.3 Tanzania Export to China, 2025 …… 373
Table 18.4 Tanzania Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin …… 375
Table 18.5 Tanzania Revealed Comparative Advantage …… 376
Table 18.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Tanzania …… 378

Table 18.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Tanzania, 2023 ····· 378
Table 18.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Tanzania ····· 379
Table 18.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Tanzania ····· 380
Table 18.10 Industrial System Indicators, Tanzania, 2014-2024 ····· 381
Table 18.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Tanzania ····· 386
Table 18.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Tanzania, 2025 ····· 387
Table 19.1 Thailand Export Diversification Trends ····· 396
Table 19.2 Thailand Export Structure, 2024 ····· 397
Table 19.3 Thailand Exports to China, 2025 ····· 398
Table 19.4 Thailand Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 400
Table 19.5 Thailand Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 401
Table 19.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Thailand ····· 403
Table 19.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Thailand, 2025 ····· 403
Table 19.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Thailand ····· 404
Table 19.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Thailand ····· 404
Table 19.10 Industrial System Indicators, Thailand, 2014-2024 ····· 408
Table 19.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Thailand ····· 411
Table 19.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Thailand, 2025 ····· 411
Table 20.1 United Kingdom Export Diversification Trends ····· 420
Table 20.2 United Kingdom Export Structure, 2024 ····· 421
Table 20.3 United Kingdom Exports to China, 2025 ····· 422
Table 20.4 United Kingdom Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin ····· 424
Table 20.5 United Kingdom Revealed Comparative Advantage ····· 425
Table 20.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in the United Kingdom ····· 427
Table 20.7 Stability of Energy Supply in the United Kingdom, 2024 ····· 428

Table 20.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in the United Kingdom 428
Table 20.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in the United Kingdom 429
Table 20.10 Industrial System Indicators, United Kingdom, 2014-2024 432
Table 20.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in the United Kingdom 434
Table 20.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, United Kingdom, 2025 435

List of Boxes

Box 2- 1 China Continues to Expand Imports of High-Quality Products ····· 40

Box 4- 1 Industrial-Chain Implications Behind Trade Modes ····· 77

Box 5-1 Statistical Scope of Importing Entities and the Distinction with "Foreign Enterprises' Exports to China" ····· 81

Box 7- 1 CCC ····· 136

Box 8-1 RCEP Accelerates Regional Supply Chain Integration: The Case of Integrated Circuits ····· 150

Box 9- 1 China-Serbia Free Trade Agreement: Leveraging Expanded Two-Way Opening-Up to Enhance Sustainable Export Capacity ····· 178

Box 10- 1 Belarus Overseas Special Session—How Bringing Buyer Missions Forward to the Supply Source Improves Supply-Demand Matching ····· 186

Part I

Sharing China's Vast Market Opportunities with the Rest of the World

The first half of this part examines the current state of global exports to China from five perspectives: the overall picture, product structure, export performance by region and country, modes of trade, and types of importing entities. The second half outlines China's policy measures to expand exports to China from other countries. It covers products with large import volumes and rapid import growth, import policies, trade agreements and trade facilitation arrangements, practical approaches to enhancing countries' capacity to export to China, and the progress achieved to date through the "Big Market for All: Export to China" series of events.

Research shows that the global landscape of exports to China is undergoing a profound transformation. China's share of global exports absorbed rose from 3.2% in 2000 to 9.2% in 2025. The product structure of exports to China has shifted from absolute dominance by industrial goods to a diversified mix of industrial goods, energy and resource products, and agricultural products, with intermediate goods accounting for 80% of total trade. The share of exports to China from Belt and Road partner countries grew to 59.4%. General trade has become the main channel, while the share of processing trade has fallen to 15.7%, and new formats such as cross-border e-commerce are flourishing. The profile of importing entities has evolved from "foreign-invested dominance" through "the rise of private enterprises" to "diversified equilibrium," with private enterprises becoming the largest group of importers. A notable feature of China's imports is the simultaneous expansion of imports of high-end goods and primary commodities, providing an inclusive market for economies at different stages of development.

Chapter Ⅰ

Overall Global Import and Export and the Exports to China

Over the past two decades, the global market landscape has undergone continuous adjustment. Developed economies have remained important end markets, although their contribution to incremental global demand has declined. Emerging economies have gradually increased their contribution to demand, with their role shifting from a predominant focus on production toward a greater balance between production and consumption. China's transformation has been particularly pronounced. China is now both a major global production center and a major global demand center, with its capacity to absorb international goods continuing to expand. As household incomes rise and consumption patterns upgrade, there remains considerable scope for China's demand for high-quality, high-technology goods and services to grow. Its vast market therefore provides a solid foundation for the continued absorption of international supply.

Ⅰ. Overall Global Import and Export

From 2001 to 2025, total global exports grew from USD 6.1 trillion to USD 26.3 trillion (See Figure 1.1), expanding by approximately 3.3 times, with an average

annual growth rate of about 6.3%, higher than the average annual growth rate of global GDP (5.3%).

(I) Six Stages of Global Export Development from 2001 to 2025

The global export cycle has moved in tandem with fluctuations in the world economy. During periods of economic expansion, investment demand rises, enterprises replenish inventories, and cross-border production activities increase accordingly, with trade growth generally outpacing economic growth. During economic downturns, enterprises reduce orders and household consumption weakens, often resulting in a more pronounced contraction in trade. Looking back over the period from 2001 to 2025, global exports broadly went through six distinct stages.

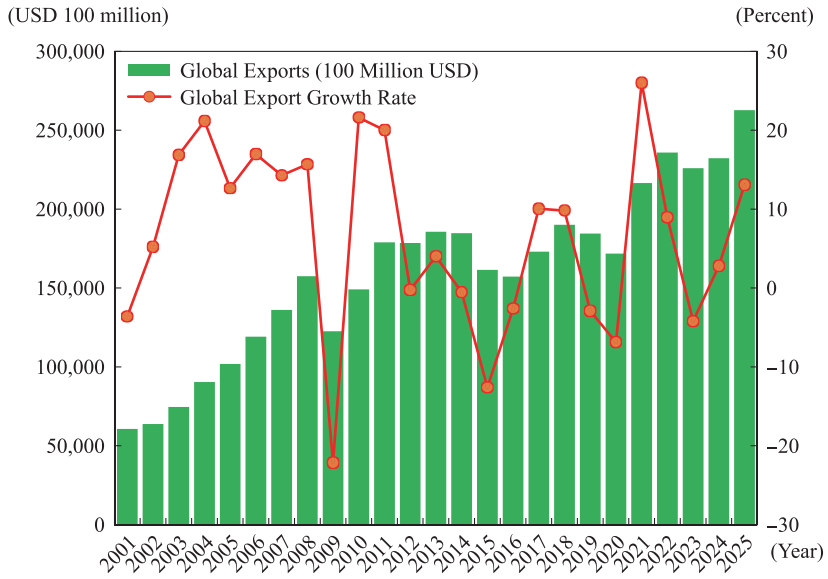


Figure 1.1 Global Merchandise Export Value and Growth Rate, 2001-2025

Source: For 2001-2024, compiled from UN Comtrade data; 2025 data are from the World Trade Organization (WTO). Data source: World Trade Organization (WTO), https://stats.wto.org/

The first stage, the period of rapid expansion (2001-2008). Affected by the bursting of the dot-com bubble and the September 11 attacks in 2001, global exports

briefly declined by 3.6%, before they maintained strong growth in all subsequent years. As shown in Figure 1.1, from 2003 to 2008, export growth remained at a high level of 12%-21% for six consecutive years. The value of global exports rose from approximately USD 7.55 trillion to USD 15.88 trillion, an increase of approximately 1.1 times. The share of exports in global GDP also jumped from 19.0% to a historical peak of 24.5%. As shown in Figure 1.2, during this period, China's accession to the WTO, the rapid expansion of global value chains, and deeper trade liberalization also contributed to what was a golden era of economic globalization.

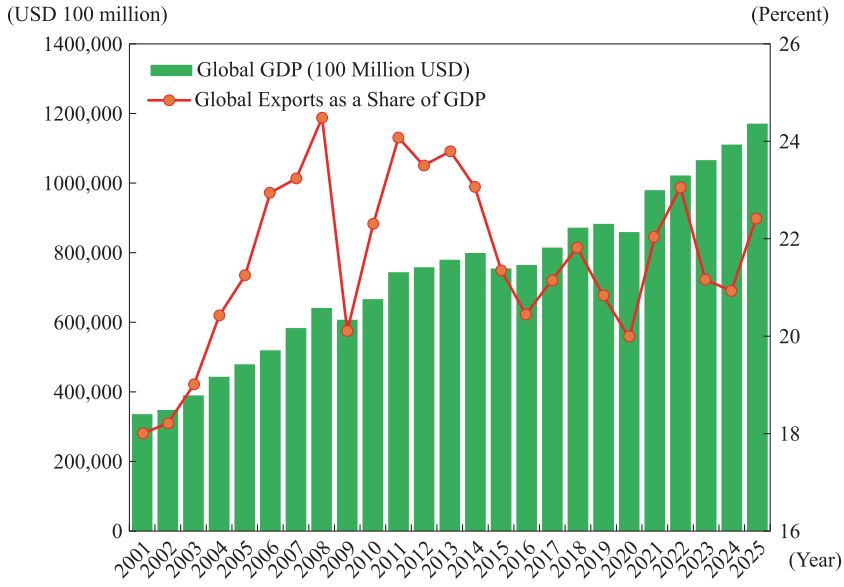


Figure 1.2 Global GDP and Exports as a Share of GDP, 2001-2025

Source: GDP data are from the World Bank and the IMF; export data are aggregated from country-level UN Comtrade data.

The second stage, the period of sharp contraction during the crisis (2009). Amidst the impact of the global financial crisis, global exports plunged by 22.1%. The value of global exports contracted to USD 12.3 trillion, while exports as a share of global GDP fell to 20.1%, down 4.4 percentage points from 2008.

The third stage, the period of rapid rebound (2010-2011). Global exports

maintained growth of more than 20% for two consecutive years. By 2011, the value of exports had recovered to USD 17.9 trillion, exceeding the pre-crisis peak, while exports as a share of global GDP rose again to 24.1%.

The fourth stage, the period of sluggishness and decline (2012-2016). Global export growth slowed significantly, with negative growth recorded in some years. Exports registered slight declines in 2012 and 2014, while in 2015 they fell sharply by 12.6%, driven by the plunge in commodity prices, a stronger US dollar, and slower growth in emerging markets. Exports dropped by a further 2.6% in 2016. The value of exports fell to USD 15.7 trillion in 2016, while their share of global GDP declined from 24.1% to 20.5%. During this period, trade growth remained consistently below economic growth.

The fifth stage, the period of cyclical adjustment (2017-2020). Global export growth recovered to approximately 10% in 2017 and 2018. In 2019, global exports dropped by 2.9% amid US tariff increases, followed by a further 6.9% decline in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing exports as a share of global GDP down to a period low of 20.0%.

The sixth stage, the period of post-pandemic recovery and growth (2021-2025). In 2021, global exports grew by 26.0%, driven jointly by global monetary and fiscal easing, inventory replenishment along supply chains, and rising energy prices. Growth continued at 8.9% in 2022. In 2023, exports shrank by 4.2% amid falling prices and weakening demand, before growing moderately by 2.8% in 2024 and rebounding strongly by 13.1% in 2025. The value of exports reached a record high of USD 26.3 trillion, while exports as a share of global GDP recovered to 22.4%.

(Ⅱ) Major Factors Influencing Global Import Trends

From a global aggregate perspective, imports and exports exhibit a strong mirror relationship: a country's imports generally correspond to another country's exports.

The differences between the two primarily arise from valuation methods, statistical coverage, and reporting lags. Exports are generally recorded on a free-on-board (FOB) basis, while imports are generally recorded on a cost, insurance and freight (CIF) basis. As a result, global imports are typically slightly higher than global exports. Accordingly, the stage characteristics of global imports are broadly consistent with those of global exports (see Figure 1.3).



Figure 1.3 Global Exports and Imports, 2000-2025

Source: World Trade Organization (WTO).

According to WTO data, global merchandise exports totaled USD 26.3 trillion in 2025, up 7.2% year on year, while global merchandise imports totaled USD 26.6 trillion, up 7.1%. The scale and growth rates of imports and exports were broadly aligned, indicating that global merchandise trade supply and demand remained broadly synchronized. Looking back at the six stages of global trade since 2001, import growth was supported not only by demand generated by global economic expansion, but also by long-term factors such as industrialization, the global division of production, and improvements in terms of trade. These factors were mainly reflected in the following

four aspects:

First, global economic growth has continuously expanded demand for imports. As economies grow, household incomes rise, strengthening domestic consumption capacity and increasing demand for foreign goods. At the same time, as companies expand their production scale, they require more inputs from international markets. In particular, since the beginning of the 21st century, the rapid development of emerging economies in Asia and elsewhere has gradually diversified global import demand away from traditional markets such as Europe and the United States toward a broader range of economies, resulting in a wider distribution of sources of demand. This continued expansion of market capacity has provided the foundation for long-term global trade growth.

Second, the industrialization process has continued to generate demand for productive imports. As emerging economies enter periods of accelerated industrialization, domestic supply often struggles to fully meet rapidly expanding production needs, requiring imports to supplement energy, raw materials, and equipment. As large economies including China have become deeply integrated into global markets, demand for international resources and technological inputs has increased significantly. Imports have become an important component supporting industrial production and industrial upgrading. The expansion of productive imports has enhanced the sustainability of global trade growth.

Third, the development of global value chains has increased the frequency of cross-border flows of intermediate goods. As the international division of labor has deepened, production processes have gradually shifted from being carried out within a single country to involving multiple economies. Before reaching their final form, products often pass through multiple stages of production, with some components crossing borders multiple times. Imported goods are therefore increasingly used as inputs into subsequent stages of production rather than entering final consumption directly. The cross-border allocation of production activities has expanded trade in

intermediate goods and caused the scale of global imports to increase as value chains have extended.

Fourth, trade liberalization has reduced the cost of imports and expanded sources of supply. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the WTO framework has continued to promote market opening, while regional trade arrangements have also proliferated, resulting in an overall reduction in the institutional costs faced by imported goods. At the same time, international transport conditions have continued to improve, port efficiency has increased, and cross-border transactions have become more convenient. Companies can choose suppliers from a broader range of sources, while goods previously constrained by distance or transaction costs can more readily enter international markets. Lower trade costs have not only expanded the scale of imports but also enhanced economies' ability to leverage global resources in the allocation of production and consumption.

(Ⅲ) China's Changing Role in Global Trade

Since the beginning of the 21st century, China's role in the global trading system has undergone a significant transformation. In the early years following its accession to the WTO, China primarily integrated into global supply chains through the expansion of manufacturing, sharing in the growth of global markets through exports while relying on imports to meet the inputs required for industrialization and export production. Following the global financial crisis, the world economy entered a period of slower growth, and the contribution of external demand weakened, while China's economy continued to expand and the importance of its domestic market increased. Accordingly, China's role in global trade gradually evolved from receiving the relocation of international production and expanding merchandise exports to absorbing global goods, with the function of its import market becoming increasingly prominent.

This transformation stemmed from the rapid shift in China's stage of domestic economic development. In the early years of the 21st century, China was undergoing rapid industrialization. Infrastructure development generated substantial demand for resources, while the expansion of manufacturing increased imports of production equipment. As the economy grew in scale, import demand began to shift from quantitative expansion toward structural upgrading. Energy and mineral products remained important imports, while advanced equipment gradually assumed a more prominent position, and key components became important inputs supporting industrial upgrading. As household incomes grew, the domestic market's capacity to absorb agricultural products and high-quality consumer goods also continued to expand. China's imports thus evolved from supporting the expansion of production toward supporting technological progress and meeting upgrading consumer demand.

(Ⅳ) Product Structure of Global Trade

In terms of product structure, the most prominent feature of global trade over the past two decades is that manufactured goods have consistently dominated trade, with the center of trade continuing to shift toward technology- and capital-intensive industries. As shown in Figure 1.4, electrical machinery and equipment (HS 85) and machinery and mechanical appliances (HS 84) have long ranked among the top two product categories in global trade. On the export side, they accounted for 15.5% and 12.2% of global exports, respectively, in 2024. If vehicles and parts thereof (HS 87), which accounted for 8.3%, are also included in a broader definition of the equipment manufacturing sector, equipment manufacturing products represented more than one-third of total global exports.

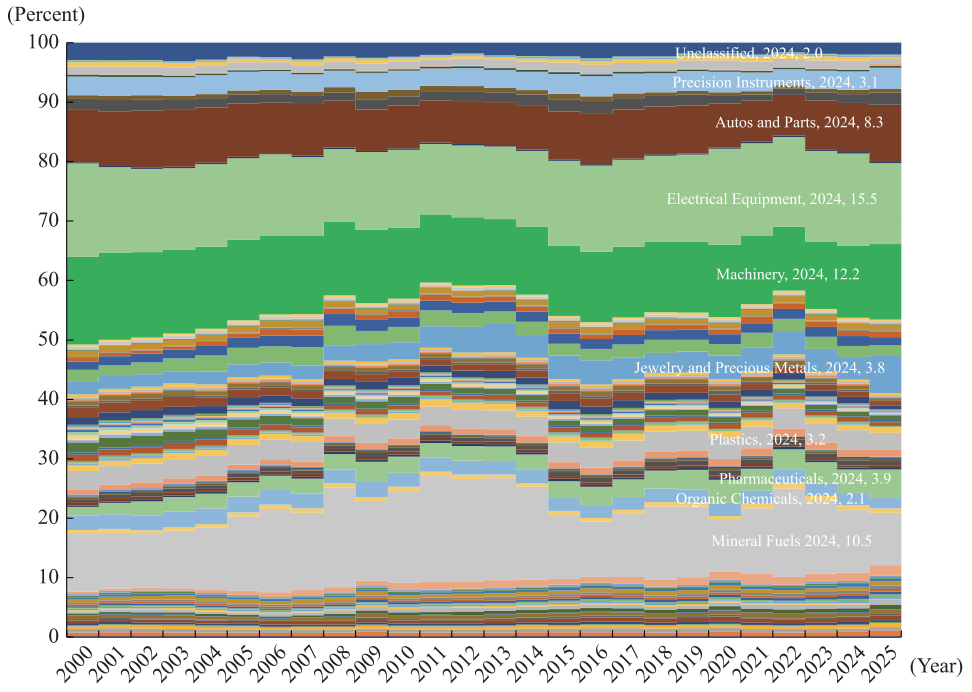


Figure 1.4 Global Export Structure by Product, 2000–2025

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Today, the growth of international trade increasingly depends on cooperation among different economies across stages of production, with products ranking high in global trade concentrated largely in areas such as equipment manufacturing, chemical materials, and metal processing. Global trade increasingly reflects the deepening division of labor along industrial chains, while the importance of trade in intermediate goods continues to rise. In terms of export shares, in addition to electrical and mechanical products, industrial raw materials such as mineral fuels (HS 27, 10.5%), plastics and articles thereof (HS 39, 3.2%), organic chemicals (HS 29, 2.1%), pharmaceutical products (HS 30, 3.9%), iron and steel (HS 72, 1.9%), articles of aluminum (HS 76, 1.0%), and articles of copper (HS 74, 0.9%) maintained relatively high shares in global exports in 2024. In addition, global trade is characterized by both a rising share of technology-intensive products and cyclical

fluctuations in resource-based products. Among these, high-technology products such as electrical machinery and equipment (HS 85), precision instruments (HS 90), and pharmaceutical products (HS 30) have shown clear growth momentum. Mineral fuels and mineral oils (HS 27) have maintained a relatively high share over the long term, but have also exhibited pronounced cyclical fluctuations driven by international energy prices, accounting for 10.5% of global exports in 2024.

Changes in the product structure of trade provide important context for analyzing the scale of global goods absorbed by the Chinese market. The supply of goods in international trade is increasingly serving production activities. As China's manufacturing sector continues to expand and its industrial chains extend, stable demand has emerged for imported equipment and key components, while China's economic expansion has also generated stable demand for global energy. The Chinese market absorbs not only large volumes of final consumer goods, but also substantial quantities of capital goods and intermediate goods.

(V) Regional Characteristics of Global Trade

Since 2001, the global trade landscape has exhibited three distinct regional characteristics:

First, the center of trade has continued to shift toward Asia, with Asia's position as an exporting region steadily strengthening; Second, manufacturing-based economies have experienced more stable growth, while resource-based economies have shown greater volatility; and, third, the synchronization of global trade cycles has increased, although regions differ significantly in their resilience to shocks and capacity for recovery.

In terms of growth drivers, overall trade growth has been driven by both manufacturing exports and resource-dependent exports. Although export growth in Asia, Europe, and North America has been affected by external shocks such as the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall fluctuations have been

relatively moderate, and the long-term trend has remained relatively stable. Resource-based regions such as the Middle East, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Africa has been considerably more volatile, performing strongly when international energy and commodity prices rise but declining rapidly when prices fall. As shown in Figure 1.5, exports from the Middle East grew by 39.7% in 2011 and again reached 37.1% in 2022, both closely associated with rising international energy prices. By contrast, export growth fell to -29.5% in 2015 and -24.3% in 2020. The pronounced fluctuations in Middle Eastern exports indicate that export growth in resource-based regions is more susceptible to price cycles.

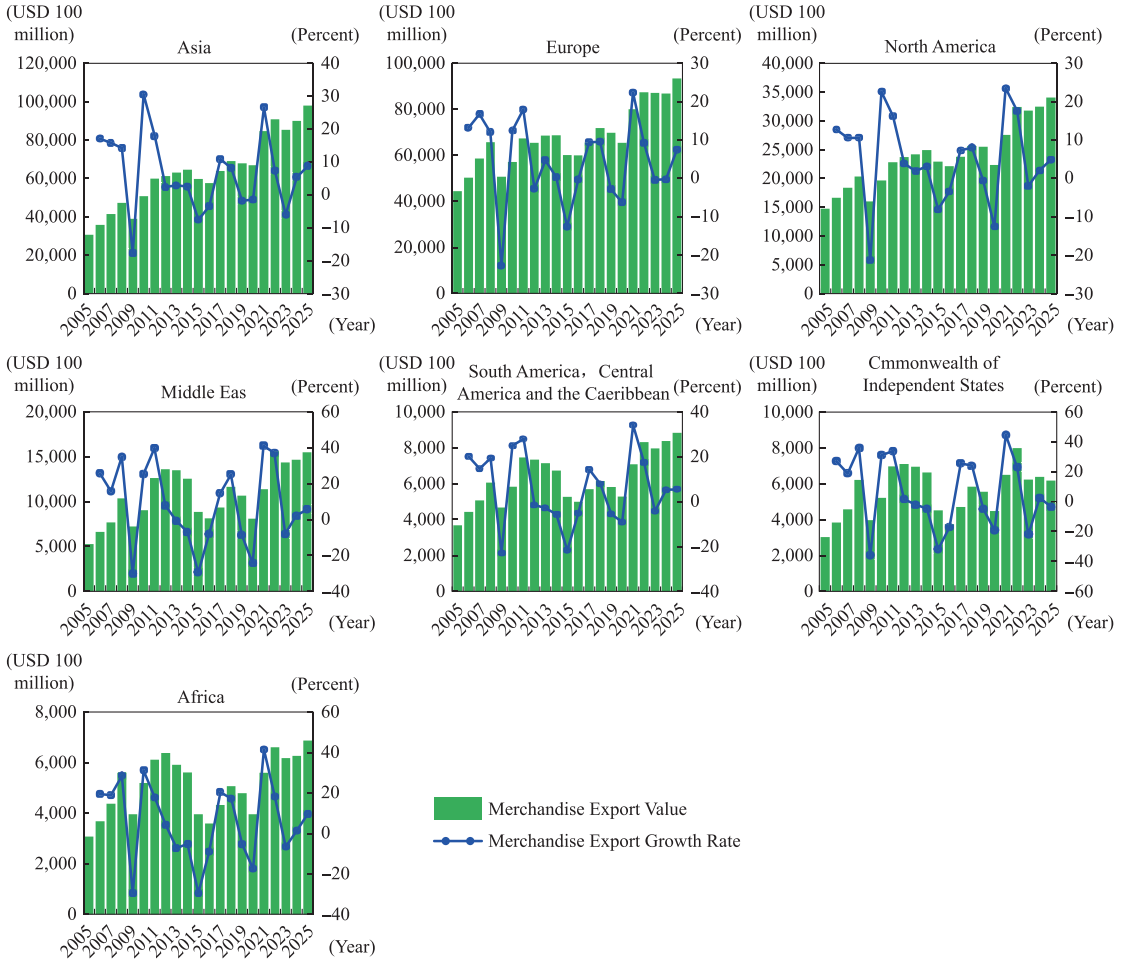


Figure 1.5 Merchandise Export Value and Growth Rates by Major Global Region, 2005-2025

Source: WTO, https://stats.wto.org/.

In terms of the evolution of the regional trade landscape, the center of global trade has continued to shift toward Asia over the past two decades. As shown in Figure 1.6, Asia's share of global exports rose from 29.2% in 2005 to 37.3% in 2025, up 8.1 percentage points, gradually surpassing Europe to become the primary driver of global export growth. By contrast, although Europe remains one of the world's most important trade centers, its share of global exports declined from 42.3% to 35.5%. North America's share of global exports has remained relatively stable at around 13%, with its overall position in global trade largely unchanged.

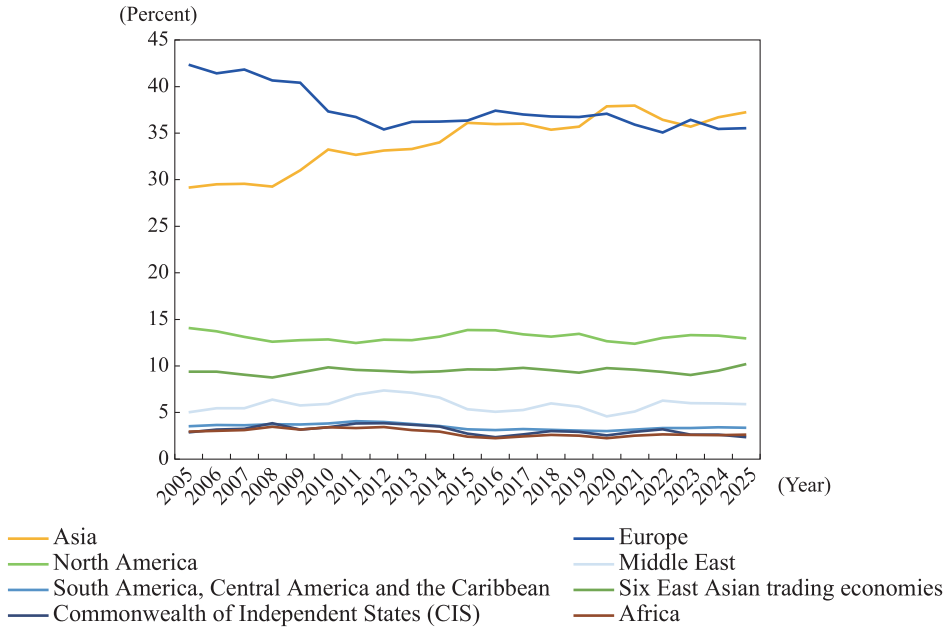


Figure 1.6 Shares of Merchandise Exports by Major Global Region, 2005-2025

Source: WTO. https://stats.wto.org, SITC Revision 3.

In terms of the impact of crises, the synchronization of export cycles across regions has increased significantly. During the global financial crisis in 2009, exports in all regions fell by more than 10%. Under the impact of the pandemic in 2020, exports across regions again contracted broadly. However, regional recovery capacity has differed. Asia was the first to resume growth after both crises, demonstrating strong

supply chain recovery capacity, with exports growing by 30.5% and 26.6% in 2010 and 2021, respectively. Although some resource-based regions experienced larger rebounds, these were largely recovery-driven increases supported by higher prices and were relatively less sustainable.

Ⅱ. Export Destinations and China's Position in the Global Market

(Ⅰ) Emerging Economies Have Become Important Destinations for Global Exports

At present, the final destinations of global exports are gradually shifting from a pattern dominated by Europe and the United States toward one jointly supported by developed and emerging economies, resulting in a more diversified market structure.

Traditional developed economies remain the world's most important export destinations, but their capacity to absorb global exports has continued to decline. As shown in Figure 1.7, although the markets of Europe, the United States, and Japan remain important pillars of the global trading system, their contribution to global demand growth is significantly weaker than at the beginning of the 21st century. The United States has consistently been the world's largest export destination, but its share of global export destinations dropped from 18.2% in 2000 to 13.3% in 2024. The share of Germany in global exports absorbed fell from 7.5% to 5.6%, the United Kingdom from 5.3% to 3.0%, France from 5.0% to 3.0%, and Japan from 4.8% to 2.4%. With the rise of emerging markets, global exports are becoming less dependent on the markets of a small number of developed economies.

Emerging economy markets have expanded overall, with the center of global demand gradually shifting toward Asia. As shown in Table 1.1, the share of global

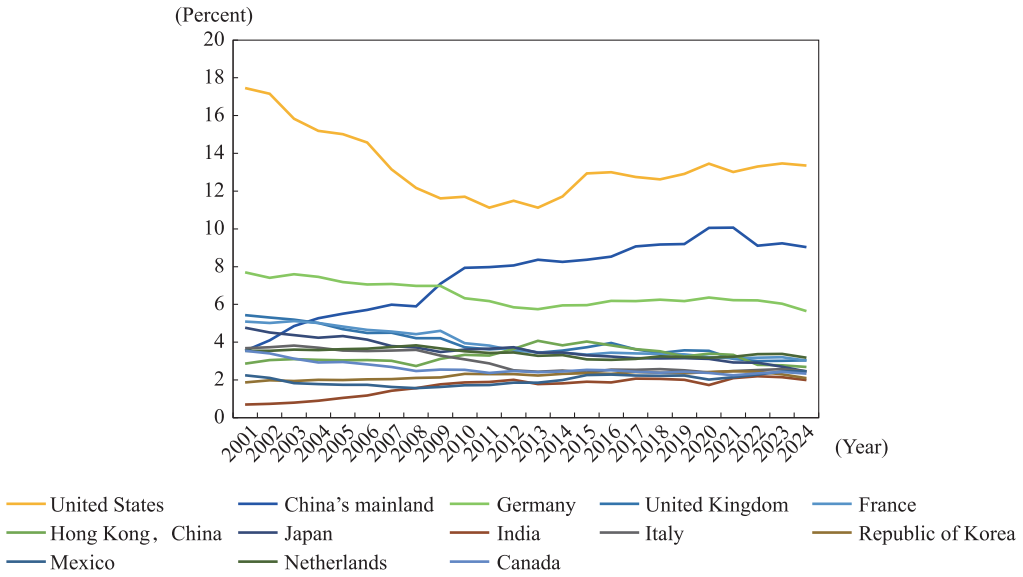


Figure 1.7 Share of Global Exports Absorbed by Individual Economies as Export Destinations, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

exports absorbed by the 15 major developing economies as export destinations grew from 13.6% in 2000 to 24.2% in 2020, nearly doubling over two decades. Due to incomplete reporting of trade data by some economies, the share stood at 17.8% in 2025, and the ratio may be revised upward once the data are complete. Over the long term, developing economies have evolved from peripheral markets in the global trading system into important sources of demand, and global trade increasingly depends on demand growth in emerging markets.

Table 1.1 Share of Global Exports Absorbed by Major Developing Economies (Percentage)

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
China	3.2	5.5	7.9	8.4	10.0	9.2
Mexico	2.3	1.7	1.7	2.3	2.0	2.1
India	0.7	1.0	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.2

Continued

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Viet Nam	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.2	1.7	0.8
Türkiye	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.8
Brazil	0.9	0.7	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.7
Thailand	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.6
Malaysia	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	0.5
Saudi Arabia	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.4
Indonesia	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.4
Philippines	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.3
Russia	0.7	1.2	1.5	1.1	1.3	0.2
Chile	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2
Argentina	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2
Egypt	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2
Total	13.6	15.9	21.1	22.9	24.2	17.8

Source: Calculated based on UN Comtrade data.

China has become a major global center of demand. China's share of global export destinations rose from 3.2% in 2000 to 10.0% in 2020, at its peak approaching half of the combined share of the 15 major developing economies. In 2025, even though some economies had not yet reported their trade data to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), China's share as an export destination remained as high as 9.2%, significantly higher than that of other developing economies. Over the past two decades, the rising position of developing economy markets has been driven to a large extent by the expansion of the Chinese market. China's role has also gradually shifted from the world's factory toward the world's market, with its capacity to absorb global goods, raw materials, and intermediate goods continuing to expand, making it an important source of demand driving global trade growth.

Asia is the fastest-growing region in terms of demand expansion. In addition to China, the demand capacity of Asian economies such as India, Viet Nam, Thailand,

Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines has also gradually increased. In particular, Viet Nam's share of global exports absorbed as an export destination jumped from 0.2% in 2000 to 1.7% in 2020, while India grew from 0.7% to 1.7%. By comparison, although economies in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa have also expanded, their overall increases have been relatively limited.

(Ⅱ) Exports of Various Economies to China

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of economies have regarded China as an important export market (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Share of Products Absorbed by China from Major Economies in China's Total Imports from the World (Percentage)

Economy	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
European Union	11.5	11.3	12.6	13.7	13.1	11.3
ASEAN	7.9	9.3	9.6	10.8	12.7	15.0
Hong Kong, China	34.2	23.2	17.8	21.3	17.6	23.3
United States	7.9	7.3	7.8	8.6	7.2	5.5
Republic of Korea	9.0	11.0	9.9	10.2	7.7	6.8
Russia	2.6	2.3	1.7	2.1	2.8	6.5
Japan	14.9	14.3	12.6	8.1	8.2	6.3
Australia	1.7	2.2	4.5	4.5	5.4	5.3
Germany	4.2	4.7	6.0	5.9	6.4	4.8
Brazil	0.5	1.2	2.6	2.6	3.9	5.2
Singapore	2.6	3.5	3.1	3.8	3.0	3.2
Indonesia	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.8	3.5
Viet Nam	0.8	0.6	0.7	1.2	2.8	3.7
United Kingdom	1.1	0.9	1.0	2.0	1.1	1.9
Switzerland	0.4	0.5	0.6	1.5	1.0	1.9
Malaysia	1.5	1.7	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.3
Chile	0.4	0.9	1.5	1.2	1.7	2.1

Continued

Economy	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Thailand	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.0
France	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.4
Peru	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.0
Netherlands	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.1

Source: d based on reporting data from economies exporting to China's mainland in UN Comtrade.

Note: The table presents both the European Union and ASEAN as aggregates. The numerator is the value of products exported by an economy to China's mainland, and the denominator is the value of products exported globally to China's mainland.

At the beginning of this century, a relatively small number of economies, including Hong Kong of China, Japan, and the United States, accounted for relatively large shares of global exports to China's mainland. As the import market in mainland China has continued to expand and the quality of market demand has improved, an increasing number of economies have come to regard China's mainland as an important export destination. The opportunities arising from the growth of demand in the Chinese market have gradually extended to a broader range of economies.

China is also an important global demand center for resource trade. From 2000 to 2025, Australia's share of global exports to China increased from 1.7% to 5.3%, Brazil's from 0.5% to 5.2%, and Russia's from 2.6% to 6.5%. The shares of resource-exporting economies such as Chile and Indonesia also generally increased. Compared with the beginning of the 21st century, an increasing number of economies exporting energy, minerals, and agricultural products have come to regard China as their most important market.

The importance of the Chinese market in Asian trade has also been gradually rising. In the structure of Asian economies' exports to China, Hong Kong, China has long accounted for about 20%. ASEAN's share increased from 7.9% to 15.0%, with Viet Nam's share rising from 0.8% to 3.7%; economies such as Malaysia and

Thailand have also maintained relatively high shares. Meanwhile, although the shares of Japan and the Republic of Korea have declined, they remain among China's major sources of imports.

(Ⅲ) China's Position as a Global Market Is Gradually Strengthening

China has evolved from an important market within the global export system into a global demand center with systemic influence.

Table 1.3 Share of Products Exported to China's mainland in the Total Exports of Major Economies (Percentage)

Economy	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
European Union	1.0	1.6	3.0	3.6	4.4	3.0
ASEAN	3.7	7.8	10.4	12.1	15.4	23.5
Hong Kong, China	34.5	44.6	52.5	56.3	55.2	59.4
United States	2.1	4.6	7.2	7.7	8.7	4.9
Republic of Korea	10.7	21.8	25.1	26.0	25.9	18.4
Russia	5.1	5.4	5.0	8.2	14.6	34.7
Japan	6.3	13.5	19.4	17.5	22.0	17.0
Australia	5.4	11.6	25.3	32.5	37.5	30.3
Germany	1.6	2.7	5.6	6.0	8.0	5.2
Brazil	2.0	5.8	15.3	18.8	32.4	28.7
Singapore	3.9	8.6	10.3	14.4	13.7	9.2
Indonesia	4.5	7.8	9.9	10.0	19.5	23.8
Viet Nam	10.6	10.0	10.7	10.2	17.4	14.8
United Kingdom	0.8	1.3	2.7	5.9	4.7	6.6
Switzerland	0.9	1.9	3.7	7.0	5.5	6.5
Malaysia	3.1	6.6	12.6	13.0	16.2	11.8
Chile	5.0	11.6	24.3	26.1	38.7	36.8
Thailand	4.1	8.3	11.0	11.1	12.9	11.6

Continued

Economy	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
France	1.0	1.7	2.8	4.0	4.2	4.0
Peru	7.0	10.9	14.4	20.0	28.3	37.9
Netherlands	0.5	0.9	1.5	2.0	2.9	2.9

Source: Calculated based on reporting data from economies exporting to China in UN Comtrade.

Note: The numerator is the value of products exported by an economy to China, and the denominator is the value of products exported by the economy to the world.

As shown in Table 1.3, from 2000 to 2025, the share of global exports destined for China's mainland increased from 3.2% to 9.2%, indicating a significant strengthening of China's capacity to absorb global exports. Among major economies, the share of exports destined for China rose from 3.7% to 23.5% for ASEAN, from 10.7% to 18.4% for the Republic of Korea, from 5.4% to 30.3% for Australia, and from 2.0% to 28.7% for Brazil. ASEAN, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam have maintained relatively high shares of exports destined for China over an extended period. China is not only an important production link in Asian supply chains but also an important market for products within the region. At the same time, resource-based economies have significantly increased their exports to the Chinese market. In 2025, exports to China accounted for 30.3% of Australia's total exports, 28.7% of Brazil's, and 36.8% of Chile's. China is one of the most important demand centers in global resource trade. The importance of the Chinese market to developed economies has also increased. The share of the European Union's exports destined for China grew from 1.0% in 2000 to 3.3% in 2024, that of the United States from 2.1% to 7.0%, and that of Germany from 1.6% to 5.8%. Although these shares remain lower than those of economies such as Australia, Brazil, and the Republic of Korea, they have increased significantly compared with the beginning of the 21st century. The Chinese market has likewise become more important

to developed economies, although their export markets are more diversified, resulting in lower shares of exports destined for China than those of resource-based economies and some Asian economies.

Ⅲ. Conclusion

Over the past two decades, global exports have continued to grow amid fluctuations. Although the global financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, fluctuations in commodity prices, and geopolitical shocks have repeatedly caused short-term declines, the long-term expansionary trend has remained unchanged. In terms of regional structure, the center of exports has continued to shift toward Asia, making Asia the world's most important source of exports. Europe and North America remain important, but their relative shares have declined. In terms of product structure, manufactured goods such as electrical and mechanical products, electronics, and transport equipment have long dominated global exports, while the technology-intensive nature of global exports has become increasingly pronounced. Resource-based products, meanwhile, remain one of the major sources of cyclical fluctuations in exports.

During this process, emerging economies, particularly those in Asia, have simultaneously increased their weight on both the export and import sides. In terms of export capacity, emerging economies have steadily increased their share of global exports. In terms of import demand, the destination structure of global exports has shifted from traditional developed markets toward emerging markets, with China standing out in particular. China's share of global exports absorbed has continued to grow, and the share of exports destined for China in the total exports of Asian manufacturing economies, resource-exporting countries, and some developed economies has risen significantly.

Accordingly, China's role in the global export system is expanding from that of

an important production center to that of an important demand center, making it a key hub connecting manufactured products, resource-based products, and global supply chains. For global exports, China is not only one of the fastest-growing major markets but also an important force supporting stable growth in global demand.

Chapter Ⅱ

Product Structure of Global Exports to China

Since China's accession to the WTO in 2001, its economy has continued to expand, its industrial structure has undergone continuous upgrading, and household consumption demand has continued to evolve. The product structure of global exports to China has changed accordingly.

Ⅰ. Classification by Product Attributes

Based on the HS product classification, global exports to China are divided into three major categories: agricultural products, energy and resource products, and industrial products.[①] In terms of product attributes, global exports to China are dominated by industrial products, followed by energy and resource products and agricultural products. The share of industrial products declined from 87.26% in 2001 to 65.5% in 2024. This change was jointly associated with factors including the strengthening of China's domestic manufacturing supply capacity, adjustments in the structure of import demand, changes in international prices of certain products, and

① Products are classified according to HS chapters: Chapter 1-24 are classified as agricultural products; Chapter 25-27, 44 and 47 as energy and resource products; and all remaining chapters asindustrial products.

external trade policies. The share of energy and resource products grew from 8.13% to 26.17%, reflecting sustained demand for energy, minerals, and other products arising from manufacturing development and urbanization, while also being affected by fluctuations in commodity prices. The share of agricultural products rose from 4.61% to 8.33%, associated with changes in household food consumption patterns and growing demand for feed and processing.

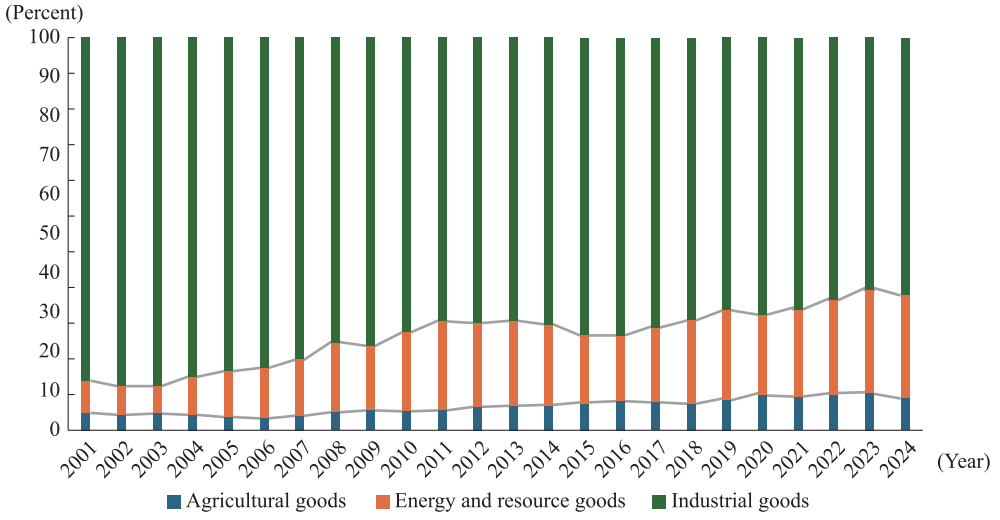


Figure 2.1 Shares of Global Exports to China by Three Product Categories

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Note: Missing values are supplemented using the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information, hereinafter the same.

(I) Evolution of Agricultural Exports to China

From 2001 to 2024, the value of global agricultural exports to China surged from USD 9.789 billion to USD 184.815 billion (see Figure 2.2), representing an average annual growth rate of 13.63%. Over the 24-year period, the value increased approximately 18.88-fold, with its share of global exports to China up 3.72 percentage points.

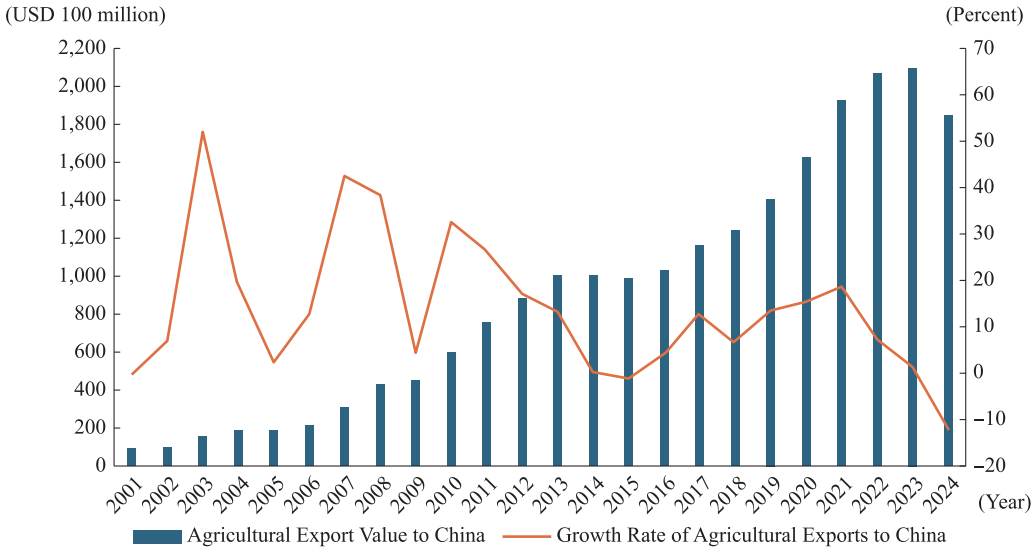


Figure 2.2 Value and Growth Rate of Agricultural Exports to China

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Agricultural exports to China can be divided into four stages of development. The first was the rapid growth stage from 2001 to 2013, with an average annual growth rate of 21.43%. The second was the adjustment and slowdown stage from 2014 to 2016, during which growth slowed significantly, with an average annual growth rate of 0.92%. The third was the recovery and growth stage from 2017 to 2021, with an average annual growth rate of 13.38%. The fourth has been the stable development stage from 2022 to the present, during which growth has slowed further. Although exports recorded negative growth in 2024, the export value remained well above the level of the previous stage.

In terms of specific products, agricultural exports to China exhibit the following characteristics. First, feed grains occupy an important position among grain exports to China. Since 2001, soybeans have consistently been the single largest agricultural export product to China by value. In 2024, soybean exports reached USD 47.001 billion, accounting for 25.43% of total agricultural exports to China , up 25.08% from 2014. This provided important basis for China's livestock farming and agricultural

processing industries. Second, changes in consumption patterns have driven agricultural exports to China from meeting basic needs toward greater quality and diversification. Compared with 2014, exports to China of boneless beef, fresh durians, and fresh cherries jumped by 986.17%, 1,196.43%, and 798.12%, respectively, in 2024, while products such as barley and cassava dropped out of the top 10 agricultural exports to China by value. Third, growing demand from food processing and the catering sector has driven a fast growth in exports of certain mid- to high-end agricultural products. Frozen shrimp exports grew by 721.6% in 2024 compared with 2014.

In terms of export sources, the economies with the largest values of agricultural exports to China in 2024 included Brazil, the United States, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Viet Nam, and Canada, in descending order. From 2014 to 2024, the value of U.S. agricultural exports to China edged up by 2.11%, while its relative share declined. Brazil's exports surged by 125.01%, surpassing the United States to become China's largest source of agricultural imports. The combined share of the top 10 trading partners fell from 80.08% in 2001 to 73.17% in 2014 and 69.71% in 2024, indicatingmore diversification of sources of export to China.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of Energy and Resource Exports to China

From 2001 to 2024, the value of global energy and resource exports to China rose from USD 17.24 billion to USD 580.273 billion, representing an average annual growth rate of 16.52%. Over the 24-year period, the value grew 32.66-fold, while its share of global exports to China increased by 18.04 percentage points.

Exports of energy and resource products to China have exhibited a fluctuating upward trend. From 2001 to 2008, exports of energy and resource products to China increased annually, with an average annual growth rate of 37.94%. This period coincided with rapid growth in China's heavy and chemical industries, generating an

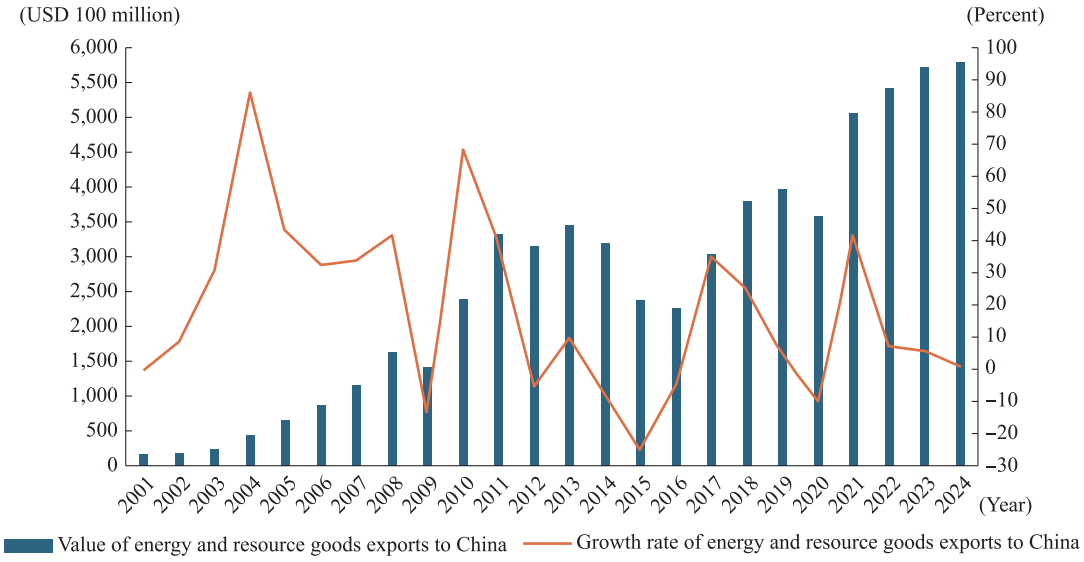


Figure 2.3 Value and Growth Rate of Energy and Resource Exports to China

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

explosive growth in demand for energy and minerals. From 2009 to 2013, exports of energy and resource products to China fluctuated considerably but continued to grow overall. From 2014 to 2016, the value of energy and resource exports to China declined for three consecutive years, affected by a "cliff-like" decline in the prices of commodities such as crude oil and iron ore. From 2017 to 2024, exports grew annually, except in 2020. Notably, the increase in energy and resource exports during this period was significantly influenced by the rise in global commodity prices amid geopolitical conflicts. For most products, the increase in prices exceeded the increase in quantities, with some even exhibiting a pattern of declining volumes but rising prices. Therefore, changes in the value of energy and resource exports do not fully correspond to changes in China's actual demand.

In terms of specific products, energy and resource exports to China consist primarily of ores, slag and ash (HS Chapter 26) and mineral fuels (HS Chapter 27), which accounted for 36.15% and 56.46%, respectively, of total energy and resource

exports to China in 2024. Exports of metal ores to China were mainly composed of iron ores, copper ores, and aluminum ores, representing 49.76%, 30.84%, and 4.56%, respectively, of total metal ore exports in 2024. Exports of mineral fuels to China primarily included crude oil, which accounted for 46.86% of mineral fuel exports in 2024, while bituminous coal, liquefied natural gas, and gaseous natural gas accounted for 9.96%, 7.34%, and 6.27%, respectively.

The product structure of energy and resource exports to China exhibits the following characteristics. First, the energy product structure has gradually shifted from a relatively high share of crude oil toward a pattern in which crude oil, coal, and natural gas jointly constitute the major components. From 2014 to 2024, crude oil's share of energy and resource exports to China decreased from 33.13% to 26.21%, while the shares of coal and natural gas grew. Within natural gas, the shares of gaseous natural gas and liquefied natural gas rose just by 0.28 and 0.51 percentage points, respectively. Second, iron ore remains the dominant mineral product, while the shares of other base metals and minerals associated with new energy have increased. From 2014 to 2024, iron ore's share of energy and resource exports dropped from 20.59% to 17.99%, while other minerals, such as bauxite, accounted for a larger share.

In terms of sources, the economies with the largest values of energy and resource exports to China in 2024 included Russia, Australia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Chile, Indonesia, Peru, the United States, and Qatar. The global supply of energy and resource products to China remains relatively concentrated. Petroleum is sourced mainly from the Middle East and other regions; coal mainly from Indonesia, Russia, and Australia; iron ore mainly from Australia and Brazil; liquefied natural gas mainly from Australia, Qatar, and other economies; and pipeline natural gas mainly from Central Asia and Russia.

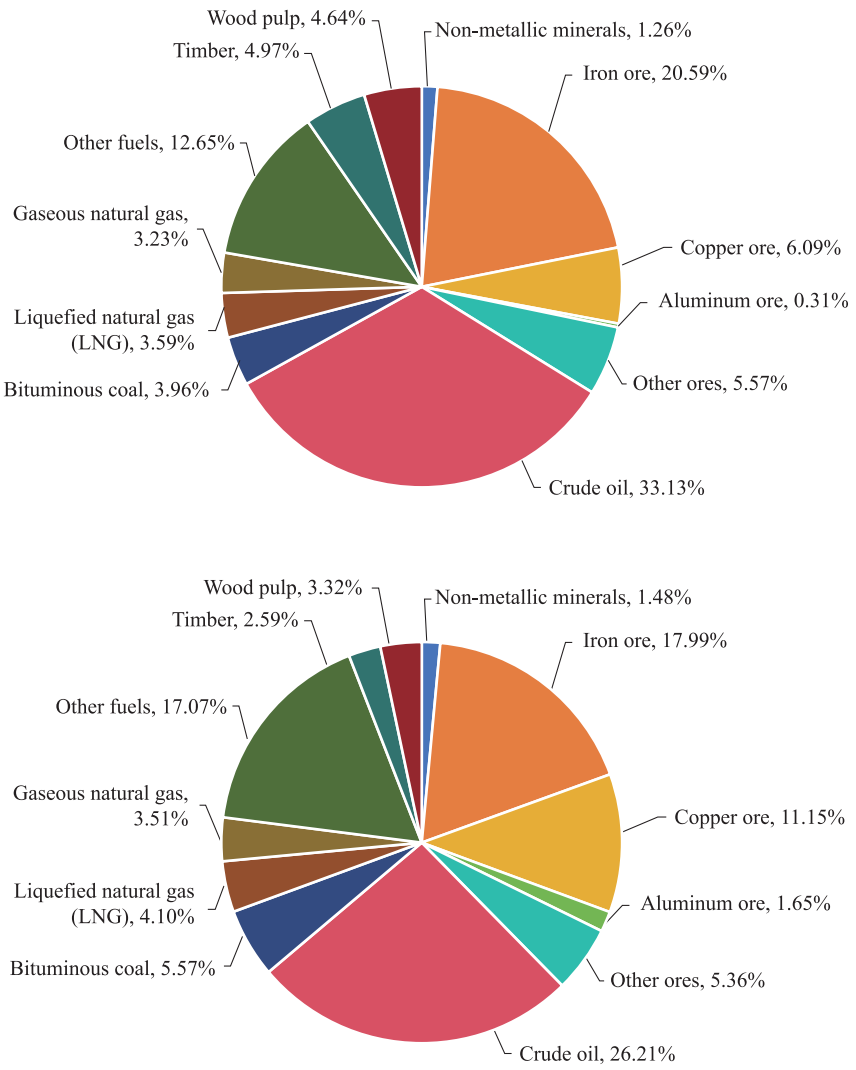


Figure 2.4 Structure of Energy and Resource Exports to China, 2014 and 2024

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

(Ⅲ) Evolution of Industrial Exports to China

From 2001 to 2024, the value of global industrial exports to China surged from USD 185.139 billion to USD 1,452.307 billion, representing an average annual growth rate of 9.37%. Over the 24-year period, the value grew approximately 6.84-fold, while its share of global exports to China decreased by 21.76 percentage points.

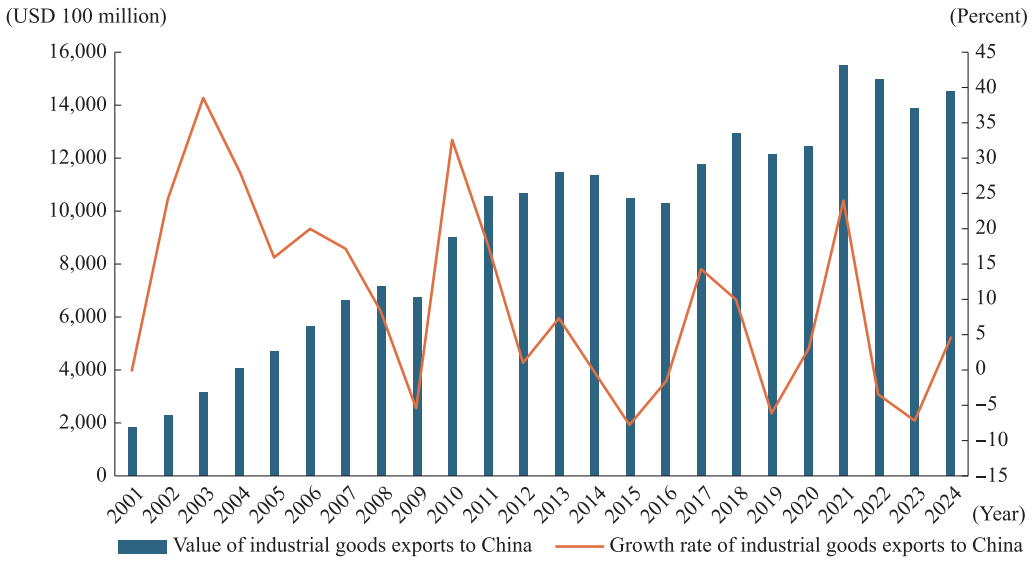


Figure 2.5 Value and Growth Rate of Industrial Exports to China

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Industrial exports to China can be divided into four stages. The first was the rapid growth stage from 2001 to 2011. Except in 2008 and 2009, when exports were affected by the global financial crisis, annual growth remained in double digits, with an average annual growth rate of 19.02%. The second was the significant slowdown stage from 2012 to 2016, during which export growth slowed significantly, with negative growth recorded in three years and an average annual growth rate of −0.46%. The third was the recovery stage from 2017 to 2021. Despite trade and economic frictions and the impact of the pandemic, industrial exports to China recovered, achieving an average annual growth rate as high as 8.46%. The fourth has been the stable adjustment stage from 2022 to the present, during which the growth rate of industrial exports to China has slowed considerably.

In terms of specific products, industrial exports to China exhibit the following characteristics. First, by major category, electrical and mechanical products (HS 84 and HS 85) account for the largest share, followed by optical, medical, and precision instruments, copper and articles thereof, plastics and articles thereof, automobiles,

and pharmaceuticals. By end use, a substantial proportion of industrial imports serves domestic production and manufacturing activities. Second, the industrial product structure has gradually shifted toward high-technology and high-value-added categories, including core components, advanced equipment, and precision instruments. Among the top 10 products by export value in 2001 and 2014, components accounted for four and three items, respectively, while by 2024, only parts of automatic data-processing machines remained among the top 10. At the same time, exports to China of core components such as processors and memory devices, as well as advanced equipment and precision instruments, increased. Third, the adjustment of industrial exports to China in recent years has been driven by multiple factors. Firstly, industrial trade as a whole has evolved from a model dominated by processing trade toward a new pattern centered on domestic use and general trade; Secondly, China has gradually expanded domestic production capacity in the mid- to high-end segments. For products such as smartphones and automobiles, export growth to China has slowed in recent years, while China's own production and exports have risen significantly; Finally, factors such as deglobalization, geopolitical conflicts, and fragmentation of the global trade landscape have driven the restructuring of global electronics, particularly integrated circuit, supply chains, resulting in adjustments to the structure of electronic product exports to China.

In terms of sources, the economies and regions with the largest values of industrial exports to China in 2024 included the Republic of Korea; Japan; the United States; Germany; Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, China. Hong Kong share of industrial exports dropped from 36.24% in 2001 to 25.61% in 2024, while the combined share of the top 10 trading partners also declined. China imports a substantial volume of technology-intensive products and core components from economies such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, supporting components from Southeast Asia, and certain high-technology equipment and final consumer goods from the United States and Europe.

The combined share of the top 10 trading partners fell from 84.84% in 2001 to 75.94% in 2024, indicating a more diversified source structure. Developing economies such as Viet Nam have also increased their relative importance.

Ⅱ. Classification by End Use

Based on the BEC product classification, global exports to China can be divided into three categories[①]: capital goods, intermediate goods, and final consumer goods. By end-use structure, intermediate goods account for the largest share of China's imports from the world, followed by capital goods and final consumer goods. As shown in Figure 2.6, the share of intermediate goods climbed from 73.46% in 2001 to 80.03% in 2024, underscoring China's close integration with global manufacturing and production networks. By contrast, the share of capital goods fell from 20.21% to 9.82%, reflecting factors such as the strengthening of domestic equipment supply capacity, changes in the investment structure, and shifts in equipment prices. Meanwhile, the share of final consumer goods grew from 6.32% to 10.16%, pointing to increasingly diversified and quality-oriented consumer demand.

(I) Evolution of Capital Goods Exports to China

From 2001 to 2024, the value of global capital goods exports to China surged from USD 32.88 billion to USD 206.711 billion, representing an average annual growth rate of 8.32%. Over the 24-year period, the value increased about 5.29-fold, while its share of total exports to China dropped by 10.4 percentage points.

---

① HS 6-digit products are mapped to 3-digit products under the Broad Economic Categories (BEC) classification, on the basis of which capital goods, intermediate goods and final consumer goods are identified. This report assigns a single classification to each product category according to its main use, so as to avoid double counting in aggregation. As unclassified products are included, the total differs to some extent from the sum of the products classified by attribute.

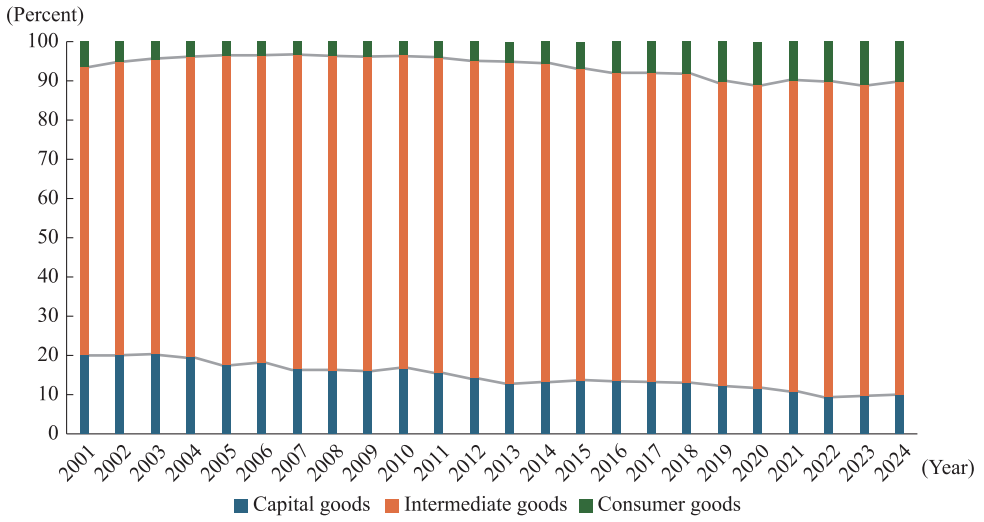


Figure 2.6 Share of Global Exports to China by Product End Use

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Capital goods exports to China exhibited a phased pattern of "increase-decline-recovery" (see Figure 2.7). From 2001 to 2011, capital goods exports to China expanded rapidly, with an average annual growth rate of 19.86%, mainly driven by

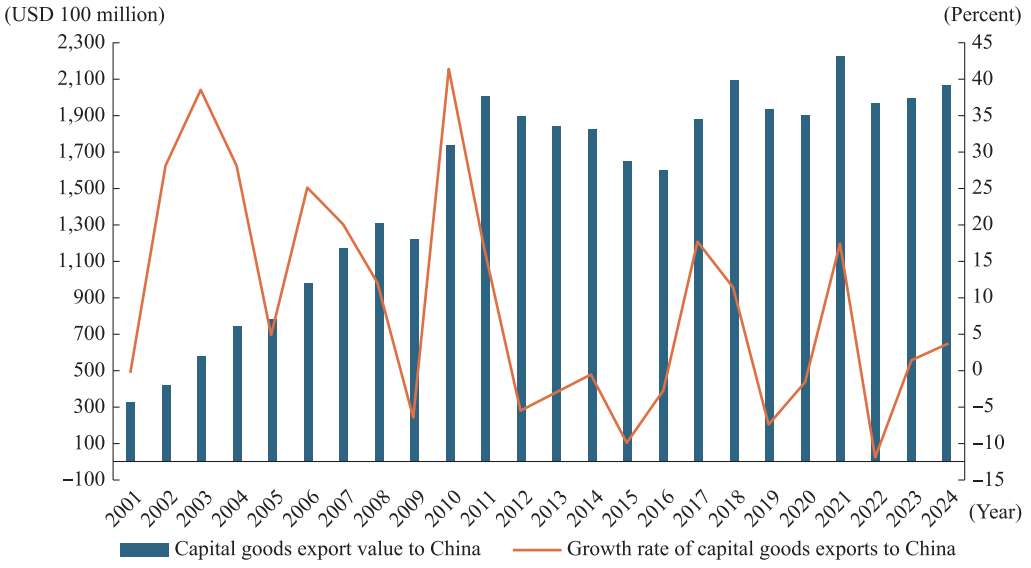


Figure 2.7 Value and Growth Rate of Capital Goods Exports to China

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

industrialization, fixed-asset investment, and rising demand for equipment. From 2012 to 2016, exports declined for five consecutive years, with an average annual growth rate of -4.46%, possibly reflecting the combined effects of strengthening domestic equipment supply capacity, changes in investment growth, and fluctuations in international demand. From 2017 to 2024, exports resumed a fluctuating upward trend, with an average annual growth rate of 3.24%, supported in particular by demand for high-end capital goods such as semiconductor manufacturing equipment.

In terms of specific products, capital goods exports to China exhibit the following characteristics. First, exports of certain traditional processing equipment to China have declined, partly due to factors such as improvements in domestic production capacity, changes in the investment structure, and product life cycles. However, trade values alone are insufficient to conclude that technological substitution has been completed in any specific field. Second, exports of high-end capital goods such as semiconductor manufacturing equipment, telecommunications equipment, and automatic data-processing equipment have generally risen, reflecting sustained demand for advanced equipment arising from the development of high-technology industries. Third, capital goods imports have become increasingly concentrated in leading products. In 2024, semiconductor manufacturing machinery and equipment accounted for 18.24% of total capital goods exports to China, while the combined share of the top 10 products increased.

In terms of sources, capital goods exports to China's mainland in 2024 were dominated by developed economies and regions. Major sources by export value included Japan; Germany; the United States; Singapore; the Netherlands; the Republic of Korea; Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, China. In recent years, developing economies such as Viet Nam and Malaysia have also entered the top 10. The combined share of the top 10 trading partners slipped from 87.86% in 2001 to 87.08% in 2014 and 83.57% in 2024, creating greater scope for capital goods from a wider range of

economies to enter the Chinese mainland's market.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of Intermediate Goods Exports to China

From 2001 to 2024, the value of global intermediate goods exports to China expanded substantially from USD 119.501 billion to USD 1,685.419 billion, representing an average annual growth rate of 12.19%. Over the 24-year period, the value rose approximately 13.1-fold, while its share of global exports to China climbed by 6.56 percentage points.

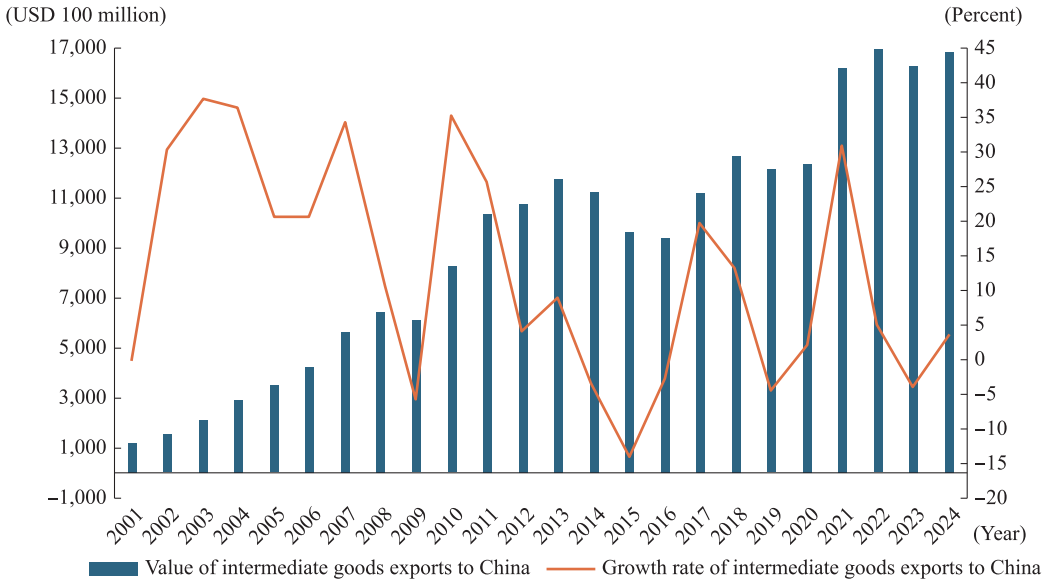


Figure 2.8 Value and Growth Rate of Intermediate Goods Exports to China

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

Intermediate goods exports to China can be divided into four stages. The first was the rapid growth stage from 2001 to 2011, with an average annual growth rate of 24.12%. The second was the slowdown stage from 2012 to 2016, with an average annual growth rate of -1.96%. The third was the recovery stage from 2017 to 2021, with an average annual growth rate of 11.56%. The fourth has been the second slowdown stage from 2022 to 2024, with an average annual growth rate of 1.29%.

In terms of specific products, intermediate goods exports to China exhibit the following characteristics. First, intermediate goods exports to China are dominated by electrical and mechanical products and energy and mineral products. Major products by export value include crude oil, processors, integrated circuits, iron ore, and memory devices. Second, intermediate goods exports to China have undergone a process of product upgrading. In the early 21st century, chemicals and components accounted for relatively large shares. Since the 2010s, integrated circuits, electronic components, machinery parts, and other products have gradually become more prominent, with the export structure continuing to shift toward higher-end products.

In terms of sources, the economies and regions with the largest values of intermediate goods exports to China's mainland in 2024 included Hong Kong, China; Taiwan, China; Russia; the Republic of Korea; Australia; the United States; Brazil; Japan; Indonesia; and Germany. Developed economies mainly supply semiconductor and precision-manufacturing intermediate goods; Australia and Brazil primarily supply resource-based intermediate goods; and Southeast Asian economies mainly supply intermediate goods that complement regional production-chain specialization. Together, these sources form a multilayered and complementary trade structure.

(Ⅲ) Evolution of Final Consumer Goods Exports to China

From 2001 to 2024, the value of global final consumer goods exports to China soared from USD 10.286 billion to USD 213.895 billion, representing an average annual growth rate of 14.1%. Over the 24-year period, the value expanded approximately 19.79-fold, while its share of global exports to China edged up by 3.83 percentage points.

Overall, final consumer goods exports to China maintained steady growth and generally increased year by year, except for a decline in 2024. The periods from 2001 to 2012 and 2016 to 2021 were two phases of rapid growth, with average annual growth

rates of 18.17% and 15.73%, respectively. The periods from 2013 to 2015 and 2022 to 2023 were two phases of slower growth, with average annual growth rates of 8.57% and 2.53%, respectively.

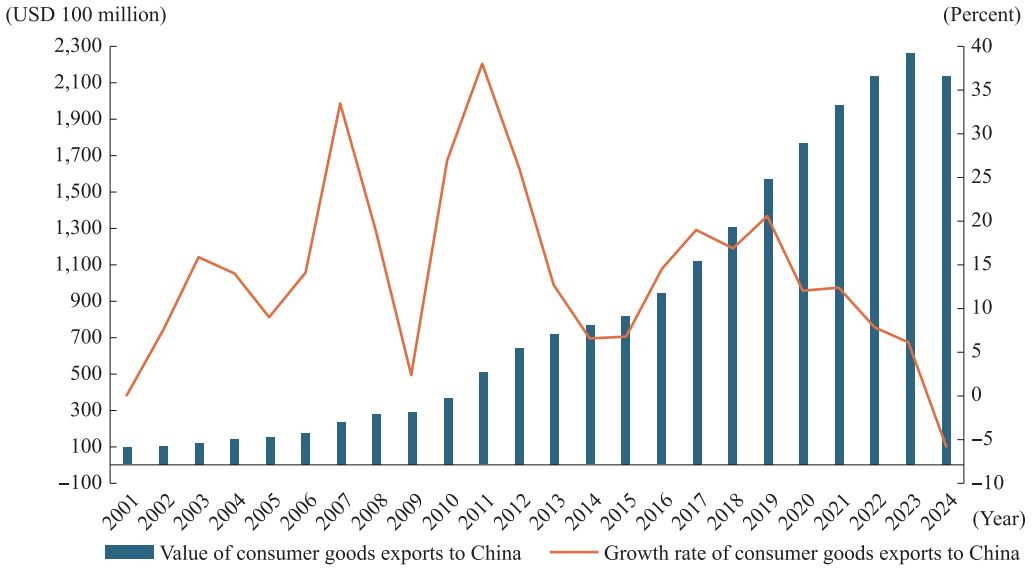


Figure 2.9 Value and Growth Rate of Final Consumer Goods Exports to China

Source: UN Comtrade Database.

In terms of specific products, final consumer goods exports to China exhibit the following characteristics. First, the product mix is relatively diverse, mainly including monitors, pharmaceuticals, electronic products, food, cosmetics, and precious metals. Second, categories such as food, beauty and personal care products, pharmaceuticals, and electronic products have grown rapidly in recent years, while textiles and apparel, certain types of vehicles, and lower-end food products have declined, reflecting the combined effects of changes in consumption patterns, domestic supply capacity, and relative prices. Third, final consumer goods exports to China have decreased in recent years, potentially due to factors including improvements in the domestic supply capacity of certain products, temporary changes in consumer demand, international trade protectionism, and geopolitical shocks.

In terms of sources, the economies and regions with the largest values of final consumer goods exports to China's mainland in 2024 included Viet Nam; Hong Kong, China; the United States; France; Thailand; Brazil; the Republic of Korea; Switzerland; Germany; and Japan. Developed economies mainly supply mid- to high-end consumer goods, while Brazil and the United States mainly supply agricultural and livestock products, and Southeast Asian economies mainly supply labor-intensive products and products with distinctive regional characteristics. The combined share of the top 10 trading partners dropped from 86.51% in 2001 to 60.10% in 2014 and 58.89% in 2024, indicating a significant decline in the concentration of final consumer goods sources.

Ⅲ. Conclusion

In terms of product attributes, global exports to China have gradually shifted from a pattern dominated overwhelmingly by industrial products toward one in which industrial products remain predominant, while the shares of energy and resource products and agricultural products continue to rise. In terms of end use, the dominant position of intermediate goods has strengthened further. These structural adjustments reflect China's transformation within global value chains from a simple processor dependent on external capital goods and manufactured industrial products into a deeply integrated participant across the entire value chain, absorbing global energy and resources, intermediate goods, and high-end technological inputs.

Going forward, export opportunities in the Chinese market are likely to be concentrated increasingly in feed grains and high-quality agricultural products, basic energy and resources, critical minerals related to the new energy sector, semiconductors and electronic components, advanced manufacturing equipment, precision instruments, pharmaceuticals, and health-related consumer goods. China

will continue to diversify its sources of imports, creating broad opportunities for developing economies with abundant natural resources and ample labor supplies. This will provide market space for their distinctive agricultural products and resource-based products, as well as for intermediate goods and components that complement Chinese industrial supply chains. However, export opportunities for individual countries will depend on factors such as resource endowments, industrial supporting capacity, and geopolitical risks. Countries should, therefore, focus on enhancing their export capacity, continuously promoting trade and investment facilitation, and further deepening economic and trade cooperation with China.

Box 2-1 China Continues to Expand Imports of High-Quality Products

In recent years, China has continued to promote imports of key and high-quality products throughvarious measures including tariff reductions, fiscal and tax support, and the development of import platforms.

1. Continued tariff reductions. Since joining the WTO in 2001, China has strictly fulfilled its tariff reduction commitments, and tariff levels across product categories have continued to decline. In recent years, China has continued to reduce tariffs on key products. In 2026, China applied provisional import tariffs lower than the most-favored-nation (MFN) rates to 935 products, bringing down import tariffs on certain raw materials, pharmaceuticals, equipment, and components. In 2026, China further cut import tariffs on certain key components, advanced materials, and energy and resource products, many of which are medical products related to people's livelihoods, such as artificial blood vessels and diagnostic kits for certain infectious diseases.

2. Fiscal and tax support through dedicated catalogues. To actively expand imports of products in short domestic supply, China introduced the Catalogue of

Technologies and Products Encouraged for Import in 2007, using fiscal and tax measures such as interest subsidies to encourage imports of advanced technologies, key equipment and components, as well as important resource-based products and raw materials. Through successive revisions, the scope of products covered by the Catalogue has continued to expand. In 2016, China extended the scope of encouraged imports from trade in goods to trade in services and introduced the Catalogue of Services Encouraged for Import. In 2026, the Ministry of Commerce and six other government authorities jointly issued a revised Catalogue of Services Encouraged for Import, continuing to support four categories—"R&D and design services". "energy conservation and environmental protection services". "environmental services". and "consulting services"—while adding two new categories, "other professional services" and "medical and health services". The revised Catalogue also optimized a number of entries, with a focus on areas such as "digital technology development services" and "technical testing and analysis services."

3. Development of multilayered import platforms. Since 2018, China has held the China International Import Expo (CIIE) annually, establishing dedicated exhibition areas for consumer goods, technology and equipment, food and agricultural products, medical devices and pharmaceuticals and healthcare, automobiles, and other major categories. These platforms provide dedicated channels for showcasing high-quality products from around the world and facilitate regular access to the Chinese market for developing economies and small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, China has provided coordinated policy support through platforms including comprehensive bonded zones, pilot free trade zones (ports), and demonstration zones for innovation in import trade, providing underlying policy support for high-quality products from around the world to enter the Chinese market.

Chapter Ⅲ

Regional and Country-Level Export Performance to China[①]

Since its accession to the WTO in 2001, China has continuously lowered tariffs, reduced certain non-tariff barriers, and systematically expanded its market openness, providing a more favorable institutional environment for global exports to China. This chapter examines the regional restructuring and the evolving patterns of the origins of global exports to China across the dimensions of geographical regions, development levels, income groups, specific locations, and individual countries.

Ⅰ. Regional Distribution of Exports to China

Based on the United Nations geographical region classification standard, economies exporting to China are divided into six major regions: Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean ("Latin America"), Africa, Oceania, and North America.[②] Between 2001 and 2024, exports to China from all six major regions achieved significant growth, with the average annual growth rates for Asia, Europe, Latin America, Africa, Oceania, and North America reaching 9.3%, 11.7%,

① Due to significant data gaps for 2025, including them in the analysis could substantially affect the robustness of the conclusions.

② This report covers 202 economies.

16.7%, 17.1%, 15.2%, and 9.2%, respectively[①] (see Figure 3.1).

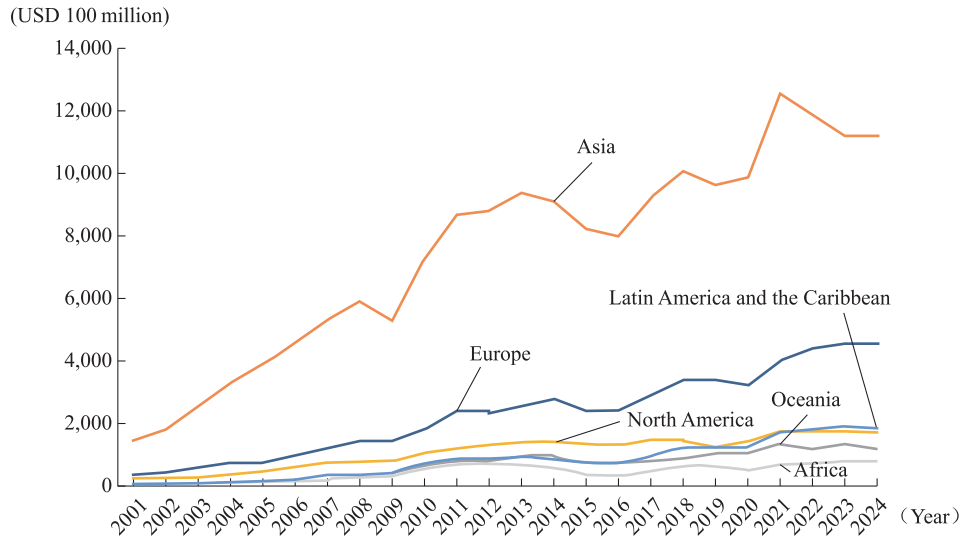


Figure 3.1 Merchandise Exports to China: Six Regions, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; author's calculations.

Notes: 1. The regional grouping of economies is obtained from the United Nations (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/). 2. Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented by the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information. It should be noted that data available in GTF but missing from UN Comtrade are mainly supplemented using mirror-image data officially released by China (data from the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China).

In terms of share of global exports to China, Asia has consistently held the leading position, followed by Europe, North America and Latin America, while Oceania and Africa account for relatively low shares. From a dynamic-evolution perspective, however, sources of exports to China have become more diversified instead of remaining concentrated.

Among them, the shares of Asia and North America declined, falling from 67.9% and 10.2% in 2001 to 52.8% and 7.8% in 2024 respectively; by contrast, the shares

① The average annual growth rates in this chapter are calculated using the geometric mean, i.e., the compound annual growth rate (CAGR).

of Europe, Latin America, Oceania and Africa kept rising, growing from 16.3%, 2.5%, 2.1% and 1.0% in 2001 to 21.2%, 8.7%, 5.5% and 3.9% respectively in 2024 (see Figure 3.2). Three potential factors may account for this trend.

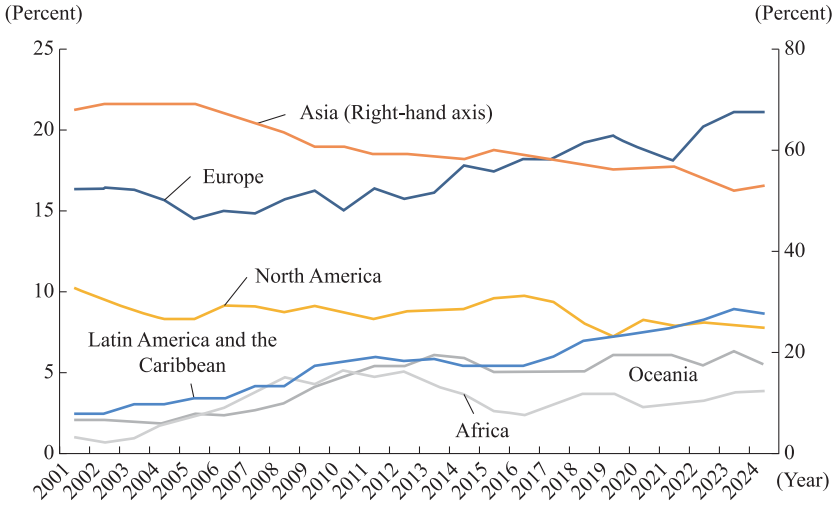


Figure 3.2 Share of Goods Exports to China, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; author's calculations.

Notes: 1. Regional grouping of economies is sourced from the United Nations (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/). 2. Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented using the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database developed by Hanwen Information.

First, China's demand for resource-intensive products such as energy and minerals has kept rising, and resource-rich regions including Latin America, Africa and Oceania have recorded more rapid growth in their exports to China.

Second, the decline in Asia's share is largely associated with shifts in the relative role of economies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Hong Kong, China in exports to Chinese mainland. On the one hand, as China has further integrated into the global division of labor, its manufacturing capacity has grown steadily and its position in the global value chain has continued to evolve. In this context, the demand structure and supply sources for intermediate and capital goods have become more diversified. The trade structures between China and economies like Japan and the Republic of

Korea have tended to be optimized and re-balanced, with deepening division of labor and collaboration among all parties within regional production networks. On the other hand, the falling share of processing trade, rising share of general trade, restructuring of supply chains, together with higher imports of bulk commodities, have jointly shifted trade routes away from indirect transit via Hong Kong towards direct bilateral engagement. This has led to a sustained drop in the share of trade trans-shipped through Hong Kong, China.

Third, the accelerated restructuring of global industrial and supply chains in recent years has reshaped the sources of exports to China. Against this backdrop, on the one hand, growing uncertainties surrounding United States economic and trade policies and stricter export controls in certain high-technology sectors have led to the decline in the share of U. S. exports to China. On the other hand, Europe boasts strong supply-side advantages in areas such as high-end equipment manufacturing. Coupled with its relatively stable trade environment, Europe's supply profile aligns well with China's demand structure, enabling it to achieve steady gains in market share amid structural adjustments.

Table 3. 1 Competitive Export Products of Global Regions to China

Region	Competitive Export Products to China	Growth Logic
Asia	Mechanical and electrical products, chemical products	Industrial-chain division of labor and regional production networks
Europe	Motor vehicles, mechanical equipment, pharmaceuticals, chemical products	Advantages in high-end manufacturing
Latin America	Iron ore, soybeans, copper, lithium	Resource endowments and China's industrial/new-energy demand
Africa	Crude oil, copper, cobalt, agricultural products	Resource complementarity and infrastructure cooperation

Continued

Region	Competitive Export Products to China	Growth Logic
Oceania	Iron ore, coal, liquefied natural gas, agricultural products	Complementarity in resource and agricultural-livestock products
North America	Agricultural products, energy, aircraft/high-technology products	Large-scale volume subject to the impact of trade frictions

Source: UN Comtrade; compiled by the author.

(I) Asia: Declining Share yet Sustained Dominance

Asia is the largest source of exports to China, although its share has declined. Between 2001 and 2024, Asia's exports to China rose from USD 145.9 billion to USD 1.1 trillion, representing an approximately 6.5-fold increase over the 24-year period. Its share of global exports to China dropped by 15.1 percentage points to 52.8%.

In terms of regional and country-level structure, all sub-regions of Asia registered substantial growth in exports to China from 2001 to 2024, yet growth rates diverged markedly. Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia led in growth, with their exports to China expanding by 38.3-fold, 19.0-fold and 16.1-fold respectively. West Asia and East Asia recorded relatively slower growth, at 13.7-fold and 5.0-fold respectively. Among major economies, exports to China's mainland rose 6.3-fold for the Republic of Korea, 4.4-fold for Hong Kong, China and 3.0-fold for Japan.

In terms of product structure, the decline in Asia's share of exports to China is mainly attributable to slower export growth of categories such as textiles, rubber and plastics, as well as optical and medical equipment. On the one hand, the shares of these products in total global exports to China have decreased: for instance, textiles fell from 9.1% to 1.3%, and rubber and plastics from 6.9% to 3.6%. On the other hand, Asia's share within China's imports of these products also dropped significantly; for example, Asia's share of textile imports to China fell sharply from 90.2% to 41.1%.

These two factors combined have driven down Asia's overall share of exports to China.

Nevertheless, Asia continues to play a central role in the global system of exports to China. Its export structure dominated by mechanical and electrical products and chemical products forms a highly embedded regional industrial-chain relationship with China's manufacturing sector. The implementation of agreements including the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership helps reduce institutional trade costs and creates more favorable conditions for Asian economies to expand their exports to China.

(Ⅱ) Europe: Rising Share and Consolidated Structural Advantages

Europe is the second-largest source of exports to China, with its share edging up steadily. From 2001 to 2024, Europe's exports to China rose from USD 35.0 billion to USD 448.5 billion, representing an approximately 11.8-fold increase over the 24-year period, outpacing Asia. Its share of global exports to China grew by 4.9 percentage points to 21.2% in 2024.

In terms of product structure, the rising share of Europe in exports to China is largely driven by growing exports of precious metals, transport equipment, chemical products, and optical and medical equipment. Overall, Europe's exports to China are dominated by high-end manufactured goods including motor vehicles, mechanical equipment, pharmaceuticals and chemical products, demonstrating strong technological and brand advantages. The steady gain in its share reflects China's expanding import demand for high-end manufacturing goods. Meanwhile, the relatively stable economic and trade relations between China and Europe help stabilize market expectations and underpin sustained growth in bilateral trade. However, it should be noted that the rising share of precious metals is mainly attributable to cyclical and price-related factors, partly driven by increases in international precious-metal prices.

(Ⅲ) Latin America: Marked Share Expansion and Resource-Driven Growth

Latin America records the most prominent increase in its export share to China. In 2024, Latin America's exports to China reached USD 183.5 billion, an approximately 33.8-fold increase compared with 2001. Its share of global exports to China climbed from 2.5% in 2001 to 8.7% in 2024, up 6.2 percentage points.

From the product-structure perspective, the rapid growth of Latin America's share in exports to China stems mainly from mineral products and agricultural products, which together account for more than 80% of the incremental value. Such growth is closely associated with China's rising demand for resource commodities including iron ore (Brazil), copper ore (Chile, Peru), soybeans (Brazil, Argentina), and more lithium ore (Chile, Argentina). Latin America's resource endowments are highly complementary to China's, and advancing trade liberalization has created favorable conditions for Latin American countries to expand exports to China. The sustained rise in Latin America's share underscores the region's reliability as China's trading partner. It also indicates that cooperation potential between the two sides in agriculture, manufacturing and new-energy sectors is being gradually unlocked, with promising prospects for further trade diversification going forward.

(Ⅳ) Africa: Fastest Export Growth and Broad Growth Potential

Africa is the region with the fastest-growing exports to China. In 2024, Africa's exports to China stood at USD 82.5 billion, an approximately 37.0-fold increase relative to 2001. Its share of global exports to China increased from 1.0% in 2001 to 3.9% in 2024, up 2.9 percentage points.

In terms of product structure, Africa's export growth to China mainly comes from

resource-intensive goods such as mineral products and base metals, concentrated in crude oil, ores and slag, copper, steel, and certain agricultural products, reflecting the complementary resource endowments of China and Africa. Although Africa's exports to China are highly susceptible to fluctuations in international commodity prices, improved infrastructure connectivity and advancing trade facilitation are expected to further enhance Africa's importance as a source of exports to China.

(Ⅴ) Oceania: Relatively Modest Scale with Generally Steady Growth

Oceania's exports to China are characterized by a high concentration in resources and agricultural products, featuring a relatively modest scale yet robust growth momentum. In 2024, Oceania's exports to China reached USD 117.0 billion, representing an approximately 24.9-fold increase from 2001. Its share of global exports to China rose from around 2.1% in 2001 to roughly 5.5% in 2024, up 3.4 percentage points.

In terms of product structure, Oceania's exports to China are heavily concentrated in mineral products, as well as agricultural goods including live animals and plant products. Its structural growth is mainly driven by Australia's exports of iron ore, coal and liquefied natural gas, alongside New Zealand's agricultural exports. Following the entry-into-force of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2015, tariff reductions have created favorable conditions for Oceania's exports to China. Notwithstanding periodic fluctuations in export growth stemming from commodity price cycles, the complementarity between Oceania countries and China in resources and agricultural products has continued to strengthen, and bilateral trade has maintained overall strong stability.

(Ⅵ) North America: Stable Volume with Relatively Declining Share

North America's exports to China have been considerably affected by China-

United States economic and trade frictions. Between 2001 and 2024, North America's exports to China expanded from USD 21.9 billion to USD 164.7 billion, marking a cumulative roughly 6.5-fold increase. Nevertheless, its share of global exports to China fell by 2.4 percentage points to 7.8%.

From 2017 to 2024, North America posted an average annual export-to-China growth rate of merely 1.6%, much lower than that of other major regions, and its share in global exports to China trended downwards. These changes are associated with heightened uncertainty in the China-US trade-policy environment, which has imposed certain constraints on bilateral trade expansion by raising transaction costs, shaping corporate expectations and influencing cross-border supply-chain configuration decisions. From a product-structure perspective, the slowdown in United States exports to China over this period is largely attributable to moderating growth in categories such as large-sized aircraft, motor vehicles and parts, paper products, wood products, mechanical equipment, and base metals. Even so, North America remains an important source of China's imports, with stable supply capacity in agricultural goods, energy and selected high-technology products.

Ⅱ. Sustained Export Growth to China by Belt and Road Partner Countries

Since the turn of the 21st century, alongside the collective rise of emerging markets and developing economies, the global pattern of exports to China has shifted from high concentration toward gradual diversification. In the early stage, exports to China were largely concentrated in developed East Asian economies with technological advantages as well as major European and American economies. As China's economic scale expanded and its industrial structure upgraded, sources of exports to China have become progressively more diversified, with a significant increase in participation by

emerging and developing economies. In particular, ASEAN member states and Belt and Road partner countries have achieved rapid expansion in their exports to China by integrating into global value chains or supplying resource-intensive goods such as energy and minerals, driving the overall pattern toward multipolarity. The concentration index of exports to China fell from 0.15 in 2001 to 0.06 in 2024 (see Figure 3.3), which directly reflects a substantial dispersion in the geographic distribution of export sources.

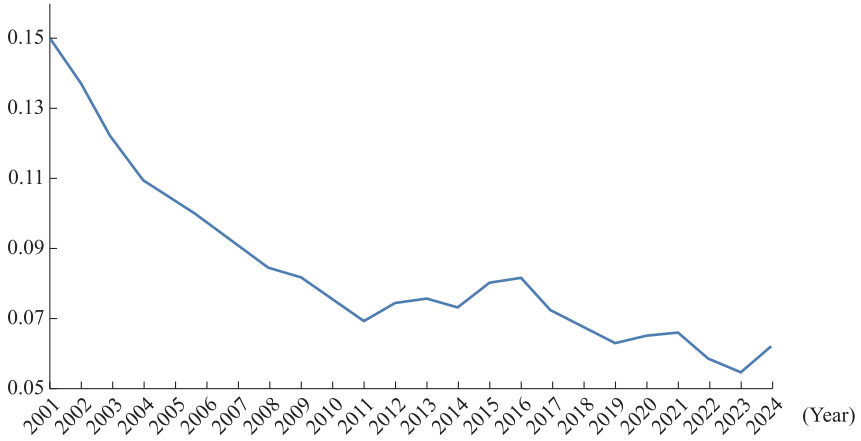


Figure 3.3 Changes in the Concentration of Global Export Sources to China, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; compiled by the author.

Note: Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented by the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information.

(I) Rising Share of Emerging Market and Developing Economies

In terms of development levels, the global pattern of exports to China is shifting from a highly-concentrated model dominated by advanced economies toward a diversified and balanced model jointly underpinned by advanced economies as well as emerging market and developing economies. Between 2001 and 2024, exports to China from emerging market and developing economies rose from USD 29.7 billion to USD

724.9 billion, with their share increasing from 13.9% to 34.2%① (see Figure 3.4).

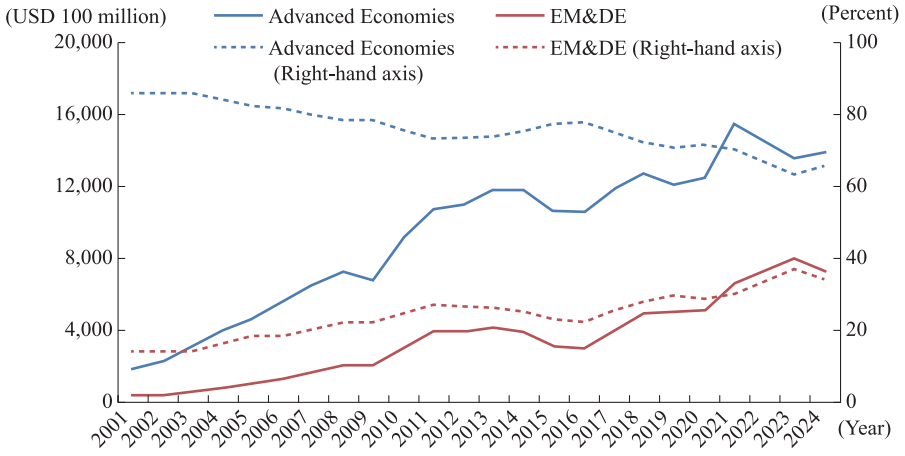


Figure 3.4 Changes in Export Volume and Share to China's Mainland: Advanced Economies, Emerging Market and Developing Economies, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; calculated by the author.

Notes: 1. The grouping list for advanced economies, emerging markets and developing economies is sourced from the International Monetary Fund. San Marino and Puerto Rico are excluded from advanced economies. "Other Asia, not elsewhere specified" mainly corresponds to Taiwan, China, and is therefore classified as an advanced economy. 2. Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented by the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information.

The two groups of economies have developed sound complementary relations in China's market. Advanced economies retain distinctive advantages in high-end manufacturing and precision instruments, while emerging markets and developing econonies excel in energy, minerals, agricultural products and other sectors. Together they underpin China's diversified import pattern as the "world's market".

This shift is driven by two major forces. First, China's industrialization has

① This report classifies global economies into two categories: advanced economies, emerging markets and developing economies, following the country classification standard of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF identifies 41 advanced economies, of which 39 are covered in this report. San Marino and Puerto Rico are excluded due to data unavailability. The remaining 163 economies are categorized as emerging markets and developing economies.

generated rigid demand for resource commodities including energy, minerals and agricultural products, which is highly compatible with the supply advantages of emerging markets and developing economies. Second, China has continued to cut tariffs, improve the business environment, advance free-trade-agreement negotiations and further expand opening-up, creating favorable conditions for all economies to expand their exports to China.

(Ⅱ) Fast-Growing Exports to China from Low- and Middle-Income Economies

From the perspective of income levels, the global pattern of exports to China is characterized by "dominance of high-income economies and leading growth among low- and middle-income economies". The growth dividends of China as the "world's market" are gradually spreading from high-income economies to a broader range of low- and middle-income economies.

Overall, high-income economies remain the primary sources of exports to China. Between 2001 and 2024, their exports to China surged from USD 194.4 billion to USD 1,596.0 billion, with an average annual growth rate of around 9.6%. Their share of global exports to China declined from 90.6% to 75.5%. Despite the falling share, high-income economies still hold comparative advantages in high-end manufacturing and technology-intensive goods and continue to occupy an important position in exports to China (see Figure 3.5).

By contrast, low- and middle-income economies economies have achieved faster export growth to China, featuring gradient growth characteristics. From 2001 to 2024, upper-middle-income, lower-middle-income and low-income economies posted average annual export growth rates to China of 14.9%, 15.0% and 38.0%, respectively. Their corresponding shares of global exports to China rose from 7.2%, 2.2% and 0 to 17.7%, 5.6% and 1.2%. In 2024, export volumes to China for these

three groups reached USD 373.7 billion, USD 117.9 billion and USD 26.2 billion, respectively. Such changes reflect sustained expansion in exports of resource-intensive and labor-intensive products to China. They also demonstrate deepening participation of low- and middle-income economies in China's market, which boosts domestic employment and economic growth.

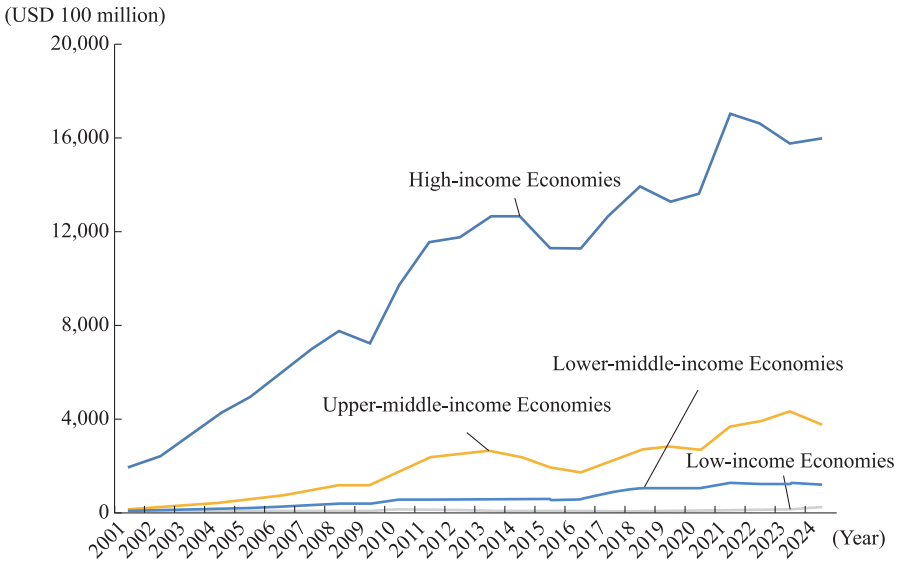


Figure 3.5 Value of Exports to China: Economies by Income Group, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; calculated by the author.

Notes: 1. Income-level groupings of economies are sourced from the World Bank (https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups). Income classifications for economies are subject to change. Given the analysis period of 2001-2024, classifications for the year 2013 are adopted as the benchmark. Among the 202 economies, 10 lack official income-group assignments. Five of them — Anguilla, Cook Islands, Faroe Islands, Mayotte and Montserrat — do not meet the population threshold for statistical inclusion. Two are defunct political entities: the Netherlands Antilles (dissolved in 2010) and Serbia and Montenegro (dissolved in 2006). The remaining three are Other Asia, not elsewhere specified, the State of Palestine, and pre-2011 Sudan, which feature ambiguous territorial definitions or missing data. In addition, Venezuela has not submitted official economic statistics to the World Bank since 2014. This paper assigns these 10 economies to respective income groups based on their per-capita GDP/GNI levels. It should be noted that re-classification of these economies exerts little influence on the analytical results, regardless of grouping criteria applied. 2. Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented by the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information.

(Ⅲ) Rising Status of Belt and Road Partner Countries

Exports to China from Belt and Road partner countries① have registered sustained expansion in volume and steady gains in share, emerging as an important driving force behind global export growth to China.

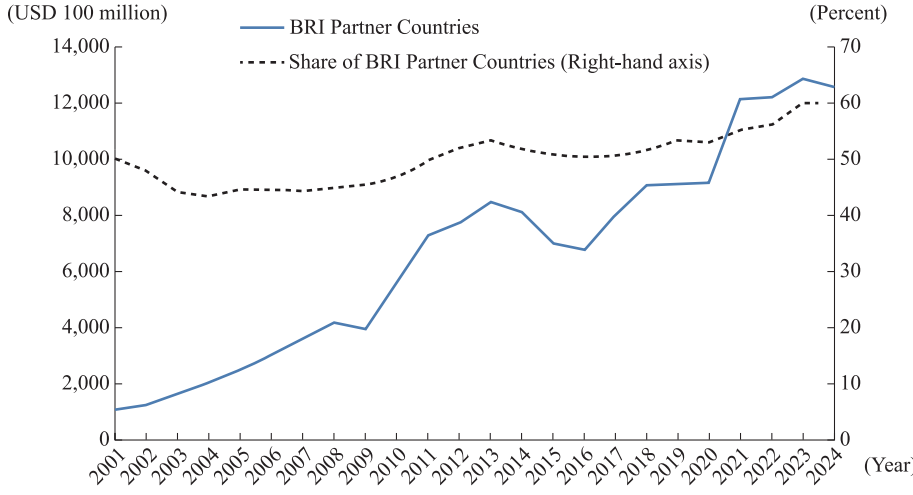


Figure 3.6 Value of Exports to China: Belt and Road Partner Countries, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; calculated by the author.

Notes: 1. The list of Belt and Road partner countries is obtained from the official Belt and Road portal of China (https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/country). As of 31 May 2026, this report counts 156 economies according to the official partner-country list, of which 134 are included in the export-to-China sample. 2. Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented by the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information.

In terms of volume, exports to China from Belt and Road partner countries jumped from approximately USD 107.1 billion in 2001 to USD 1.3 trillion in 2024, representing a nearly 11-fold cumulative increase, with an average annual growth rate of about 11.5%, outpacing the global average growth rate of exports to China (10.5%)

① As of May 31, 2026, there are 156 Belt and Road partner countries (see the official Belt and Road portal of China: https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/country). The statistics on exports to China by Belt and Road partner countries in this report cover 134 of these countries; the remaining 22 are excluded due to data unavailability.

over the same period. Following the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, export growth to China accelerated further, posting a cumulative increase of 48.3% between 2013 and 2024, well above the global level of 32.9%. This indicates that progress under the BRI has effectively strengthened bilateral trade ties by improving infrastructure connectivity and lowering institutional trade costs.

In terms of share, the proportion of global exports to China accounted for by Belt and Road partner countries climbed from 49.9% in 2001 to 59.4% in 2024, up nearly 10 percentage points. This means Belt and Road partner countries have become the main source of exports to China, with their status continuing to rise.

Overall, the rapid export growth and rising share of Belt and Road partner countries stem from both expanding Chinese demand and deepening regional division of labor, as well as trade facilitation and connectivity advances brought by the BRI. As Belt and Road cooperation enters a high-quality-development phase, further growth potential remains for these countries' exports to China.

(Ⅳ) Further Highlighted Proximity-Driven Advantages of ASEAN

In 2024, ASEAN's exports to China reached USD 283.2 billion, around a 16.1-fold increase compared with 2001, with an average annual growth rate of 13.1%. Its share of global exports to China rose from 7.7% in 2001 to 13.4% in 2024, up 5.7 percentage points (see Figure 3.7).

From an evolutionary perspective, the period can be divided into three phases. The first phase (2001-2008) was the market-driven rapid-expansion period, largely fueled by China's WTO accession and buoyant global demand. The second phase (2009-2017) was the post-crisis recovery and institutional-dividend-release period. After the 2008 global financial crisis, ASEAN's exports to China dipped briefly before embarking on a recovery-driven growth trajectory. The full establishment of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area in 2010 brought substantial tariff cuts and improved trade

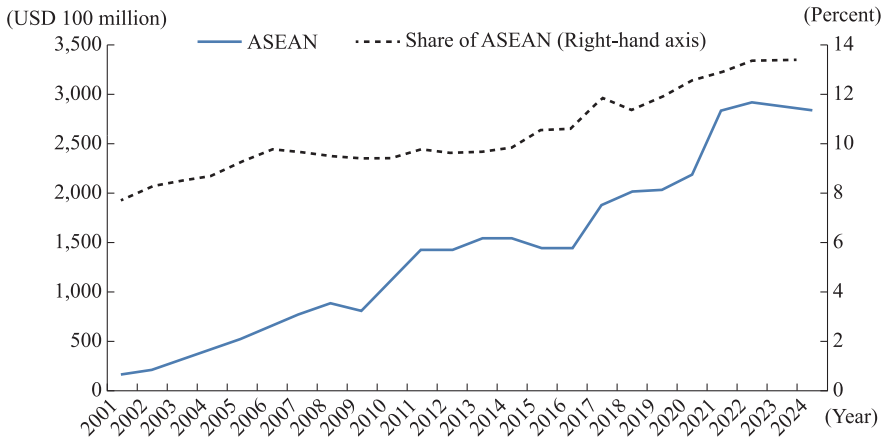


Figure 3.7 Value of Exports to China: ASEAN, 2001-2024

Source: UN Comtrade; calculated by the author.

Note: Missing values for individual economies in certain years are supplemented by the Global Trade Flow (GTF) database of Hanwen Information.

facilitation, with institutional dividends becoming a key driver of export expansion. During this phase, ASEAN's average annual export growth to China stood at 7.4%, 3.4 percentage points higher than the global average for exports to China. The third phase (2018-present) is the share-surge period. Amid the combined impacts of China-U.S. trade frictions, global supply-chain restructuring and deepening rules under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), regional industrial chains have undergone accelerated reorganization. ASEAN's industrial-chain complementarity as China's neighboring region has become more prominent, and its share of exports to China has increased from roughly 10% to above 13%, marking a substantial market-share gain.

On the whole, ASEAN has posted solid export growth to China and gained greater market weight. With the advancement of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 Upgrade and further deepening of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, ASEAN exports to China are expected to keep growing and generate more trade opportunities for enterprises on both sides.

Ⅲ. Export Performances at the Economy Level

Between 2001 and 2024, exports to China across global economies exhibited notable divergence and restructuring. Economies with varying income levels, regional attributes and industrial structures posted distinctly different performance in the Chinese market. To systematically characterize this landscape, we conducted analysis from two dimensions: overall grouped patterns and the top 30 economies by export value to China, so as to reveal the growth models, structural features and evolutionary logic of exports to China for different types of economies.

(I) Overall Profile

Based on export performance to China, 112 economies whose share of global exports to China exceeded 0.01% over 2001-2024 are classified into four groups (see Figure 3.8).

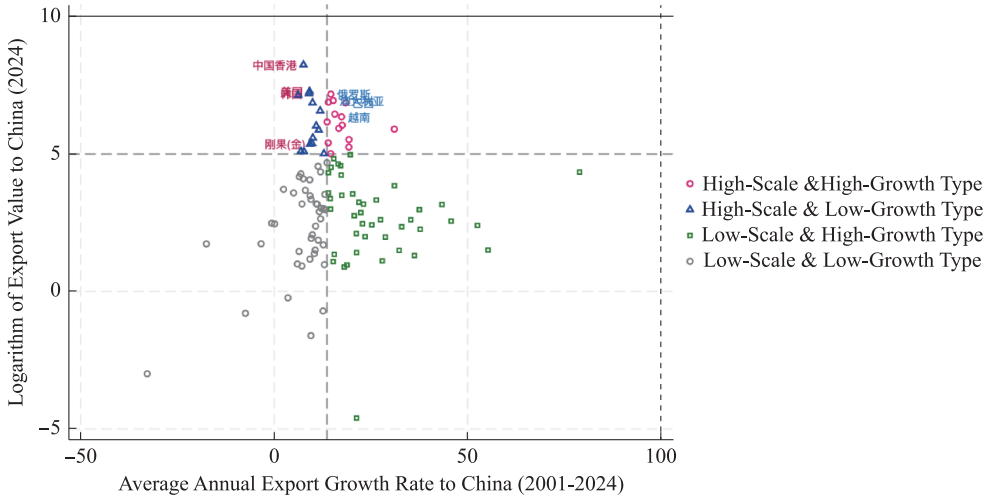


Figure 3.8 Distribution of Economies by Value and Growth Rate of Exports to China's Mainland

Source: UN Comtrade; calculated by the author.

Note: The sample covers economies whose total exports to China's mainland accounted for more than 0.01% of global total exports to China's mainland during 2021-2024.

The first group comprises high-scale and high-growth economies, namely those whose export value to China's mainland is above the 75th percentile and whose average annual export growth rate is above the 50th percentile. This group covers 13 economies: Australia, Other Asia, not elsewhere specified ①, Brazil, Indonesia, Viet Nam, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Chile, the United Arab Emirates, Peru, the Netherlands, Qatar and Kazakhstan. These economies are characterized by large-volume and fast-growing exports to China. Most of them are resource-rich countries together with some developing economies deeply involved in global value-chain restructuring. Benefiting from China's expanding demand and industrial-chain spill-over effects, their exports to China generally show strong growth elasticity alongside certain volatility.

The second group consists of high-scale and low-growth economies, with export value to China's mainland above the 75th percentile and average annual export growth rate below the 50th percentile. There are 14 such economies: Hong Kong, China; the United States; the Republic of Korea; Japan; Germany; Singapore; Malaysia; Thailand; France; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Canada; Angola; Italy; and India. Represented by Asia-Pacific manufacturing economies and several European countries, their exports to China are closely tied to China's manufacturing upgrading and deepening trade in intermediate goods, featuring large overall volume and relatively steady growth. However, it should be noted that the trade performance of some of these economies is significantly disturbed by policy factors such as export controls and tariffs, in addition to market fundamentals including supply and demand.

The third group is low-scale and high-growth economies, whose export value to China falls below the 75th percentile while average annual export growth exceeds the 50th percentile. This group totals 42 economies. Predominantly resource-based economies and selected emerging economies with wide geographic dispersion, their export growth to China partly stems from a low base, and is strongly driven by demand

① Including Taiwan, China.

for energy, minerals and primary commodities. They are undergoing accelerated export expansion to China, featuring high growth elasticity yet relatively limited stability.

The fourth group represents low-scale and low-growth economies, with both export value to China and average annual export growth below the 75th and 50th percentiles respectively, amounting to 42 economies. Concentrated mainly in Europe and also spread across the Middle East, Africa, parts of Latin America and transition economies, this group includes both advanced and developing economies. In general, their exports to China are relatively modest in size with moderate growth. Such performance relates to how well their supply matches China's demand structure and the depth of their industrial-chain integration, and is also affected by industrial-structure adjustments and external-environment factors. Further expansion potential remains for these economies going forward.

(Ⅱ) Top-30 Economies by Value of Exports to China in 2024

In terms of the scale of exports to China by individual economies in 2024, the United States ranks first, representing an improvement compared with most years between 2001 and 2022. Overall, across the 24-year period, the United States ranked 4th in 17 years, 5th in five years and 2nd in two years. From 2001 to 2024, U. S. exports to China rose sharply from less than USD 20 billion to USD 143. 5 billion, registering a higher growth rate than the overall growth of U. S. exports to the rest of the world over the same period.

The Republic of Korea ranks second, having overtaken Japan to take the second-place position intermittently during 2013-2019 and in 2022. The Russian Federation, Japan, Australia, Other Asia, not elsewhere specified, Germany, Brazil, Singapore and Indonesia occupy ranks of 3 through 10 respectively. Viet Nam, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Malaysia, Chile, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, France, Peru and the Netherlands are ranked 11-20. The Democratic Republic of the

Congo, Canada, Qatar, Angola, Italy, India, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, South Africa and New Zealand occupy ranks of 21-30.

It should be noted that since exports to the Chinese mainland by Hong Kong, China are dominated by re-exports, its trade value largely reflects merchandise trade flows between the Chinese mainland and other economies transiting through Hong Kong, rather than exports of locally-produced Hong Kong goods. For this reason, Hong Kong is excluded from the ranking. In 2024, Hong Kong's total exports to the Chinese mainland reached USD 377.8 billion, of which re-exports accounted for as high as 99.2%①, Hong Kong's actual domestic exports to the Chinese mainland amounted to less than USD 3 billion.

In terms of growth performance, ten economies recorded an average annual export growth rate to China above 15% over 2001-2024, namely Mongolia, Peru, Qatar, Brazil, Switzerland, Viet Nam, Chile, Indonesia, South Africa and Australia. Another ten economies saw their share of exports to China rise by more than one percentage point: Brazil, the Russian Federation, Australia, Other Asia, not elsewhere specified, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Switzerland, Chile, the United Kingdom and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Excluding the above-mentioned 30 economies and Hong Kong, China, the

① Calculated based on data from the Trade and Industry Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China (https://www.tid.gov.hk/tc/our_work/trade_relations/mainland/statistics.html). In 2024, re-exports from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to the Chinese mainland amounted to HK 20.4 billion, bringing total exports to HK $ 2,681.7 billion. Re-exports accounted for approximately 99.2% of the total. Converted at the average annual USD-to-HKD exchange rate of 7.803 published by the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, total exports from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to the Chinese mainland reached USD 343.7 billion. By contrast, UN Comtrade records exports from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to China at USD 377.8 billion, representing a discrepancy of around 10%. Furthermore, statistics from the General Administration of Customs of China show that imports by the Chinese mainland from Hong Kong totalled USD 18.6 billion in 2024, which diverges markedly from the above-mentioned figures. According to public explanations released by the Ministry of Commerce of China, three key factors give rise to statistical discrepancies between Hong Kong and the mainland: differences in trade-statistics rules, disparities in exchange-rate conversion, and effects of seasonal concentrated exports.

combined exports to China's mainland from all other economies reached USD 188.8 billion in 2024, accounting for approximately 9% of global exports to China's mainland. Among them, 20 economies recorded exports to China's mainland exceeding USD 3 billion, ranked in descending order of export value: Ireland, Turkmenistan, the Philippines, Mexico, Spain, Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Iran, Belgium, Argentina, Austria, Ecuador, Norway, Poland, Finland, Myanmar, Türkiye, the Czech Republic and Denmark.

Table 3.2 Top-30 Economies by Exports to China's Mainland

Economy	2001		2024		Total 2001-2024		2021-2024 Change	
	Export Value (USD 100 million)	Export Share (%)	Export Value (USD 100 million)	Export Share (%)	Total Export Value (USD 100 million)	Total Export Share (%)	Annual Export Growth Rate (%)	Change in Share (%)
United States	192	9	1,435	7	22,679	7	9	-2
Republic of Korea	182	8	1,329	6	26,056	9	9	-2
Russian Federation	56	3	1,299	6	9,788	3	15	4
Japan	310	14	1,246	6	27,658	9	6	-9
Australia	39	2	1,026	5	13,906	5	15	3
Other Asian regions, n. e. s.	48	2	969	5	17,168	6	14	2
Germany	107	5	946	4	17,425	6	10	-1
Brazil	19	1	944	4	9,700	3	19	4
Singapore	53	2	707	3	9,685	3	12	1
Indonesia	22	1	627	3	5,511	2	16	2
Viet Nam	14	1	569	3	5,251	2	17	2
United Kingdom	25	1	473	2	4,148	1	14	1
Switzerland	10	0	418	2	4,000	1	18	2
Malaysia	38	2	410	2	6,044	2	11	0
Chile	11	0	373	2	4,176	1	17	1
United Arab Emirates	1	0	363	2	1,095	0	31	2

Continued

Economy	2001		2024		Total 2001-2024		2021-2024 Change	
	Export Value (USD 100 million)	Export Share (%)	Export Value (USD 100 million)	Export Share (%)	Total Export Value (USD 100 million)	Total Export Share (%)	Annual Export Growth Rate (%)	Change in Share (%)
Thailand	29	1	352	2	5,225	2	12	0
France	29	1	264	1	4,006	1	10	0
Peru	4	0	248	1	2,017	1	19	1
Netherlands	11	1	221	1	2,293	1	14	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	—	0	216	1	858	0	—	1
Canada	28	1	212	1	3,378	1	9	0
Qatar	3	0	189	1	1,517	0	19	1
Angola	—	0	162	1	3,934	1	—	1
Italy	29	1	161	1	2,766	1	8	-1
India	9	0	149	1	2,857	1	13	0
Kazakhstan	6	0	149	1	1,812	1	15	0
Mongolia	2	0	144	1	1,020	0	20	1
South Africa	5	0	124	1	1,733	1	15	0
New Zealand	6	0	107	1	1,423	0	14	0
Top-30 economies	1,288	60	15,834	73	219,130	71	12	13
Hong Kong, China	703	33	3,778	18	57,585	19	8	-15
Other economies	156	7	1,888	9	30,679	10	11	2

Source: UN Comtrade database; author's calculations.

Note: Other Asia, not elsewhere specified is in principle used to aggregate territorial data within Asia not covered by other individual country codes. In practice, it mainly refers to Taiwan, China. According to the General Administration of Customs of China, the Chinese mainland's imports from Taiwan, China stood at USD 217.78 billion in 2024, which diverges substantially from the USD 96.9 billion reported by UN Comtrade. Two primary factors account for this gap. First, differences in statistical rules: the Chinese mainland applies the country-of-origin principle, whereas Taiwan, China adopts the destination-of-export principle. Many goods from Taiwan, China are shipped to the mainland via third-party locations (such as Hong Kong, China), and the mainland is not recorded as the final destination in Taiwan, China. Second, discrepancies in valuation methods: mainland imports are recorded on a CIF (cost, insurance and freight) basis, while exports from Taiwan, China are recorded on an FOB (free-on-board) basis.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

During 2001-2024, the global pattern of exports to China has shifted from heavy concentration among advanced economies and East Asia toward a diversified landscape led by Asia, with steady growth in Europe and rapid rises for resource-based regions and the Global South. In terms of regional distribution, East Asia's dominant position and North America's importance have both declined, while the shares of Europe, Latin America, Africa and Oceania have risen steadily, giving rise to an increasingly diversified supporting structure. By income group, export growth exhibits a gradient feature where lower income levels correspond to faster growth. The status of emerging markets and developing economies has risen markedly. Among them, Belt and Road co-building countries and ASEAN stand out as key drivers of export diversification. In terms of export growth drivers, Latin America, Africa and Oceania depend mainly on resource commodities including energy, minerals and agricultural products. Europe's core competitiveness lies in high-end manufactured goods such as automobiles, machinery and equipment, pharmaceuticals and chemical products. While Asia remains dominated by mechanical and electrical products and chemical goods, its overall export structure is also undergoing continuous adjustment. At the individual-economy level, marked divergence is observed. Countries including Brazil, the Russian Federation, Australia, Viet Nam, Chile and Indonesia have achieved notable share gains. This reflects that resource-based economies and countries deeply integrated into regional value-chain restructuring have benefited more prominently from the Chinese market.

Chapter Ⅳ

Trade Modes of Global Exports to China

Different from product structure and country-of-origin structure, trade modes reveal the customs clearance arrangements, industrial-chain organization and market-access pathways behind exports to China. This chapter adopts import-side data from China's General Administration of Customs as the mirror-statistics basis① to analyze shifts in the channels through which global commodities enter the Chinese market.

Ⅰ. Overall Changes in Trade Modes

Since 2001, the modes for global commodities to enter the Chinese market have shifted from heavy reliance on processing trade toward a multi-channel system dominated by general trade, supplemented by new channels such as bonded logistics and cross-border e-commerce. This reflects concurrent shifts in China's market demand and its connections with global supply chains. Accordingly, the capacity to export to China no longer depends solely on product quality, but also increasingly on capabilities in customs clearance, bonded operations, platforms, warehousing, compliance and order fulfilment.

---

① As databases such as UN Comtrade generally do not disclose trade-mode-based statistics, this chapter uses "China's imports from the world" as the mirror measure for global exports to China. To be consistent with the main analytical period of the report, this chapter focuses on structural changes over 2001-2024, with 2025 data presented as the latest observation.

In terms of aggregate volume, China's imports aggregated by trade mode soared from USD 242.30 billion in 2001 to USD 2.584 trillion in 2024, representing a compound annual growth rate of approximately 10.8% over 2001-2024. Imports peaked at a temporary high of USD 2.715 trillion in 2022, before falling to USD 2.556 trillion in 2023 and recovering slightly to USD 2.584 trillion in 2024. The latest observed figure for 2025 stands at USD 2.582 trillion, indicating that total import volumes have remained on a high-level plateau over the past three years (see Figure 4.1). Beneath this aggregate expansion, distinct structural shifts have taken place in trade modes for global exports to China. General trade has gradually become the primary channel for exports to China, meaning an increasing volume of goods enter China directly for domestic production, investment and consumption. By contrast, the share of processing trade has declined significantly. Its function has evolved from broad participation in China's processing, assembly and re-export activities to a more focused role serving high-tech intermediate-goods supply chains such as electronic information and semiconductors. Meanwhile, the development of trade modes related to bonded logistics and special-supervision zones has lifted the importance of other trade categories. As an emerging business format, cross-border e-commerce has further diversified channels for global commodities to access the Chinese market.

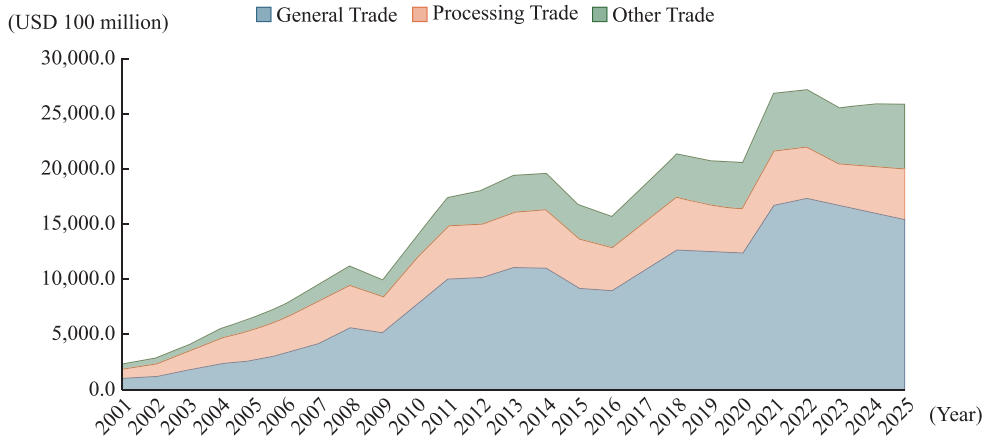


Figure 4.1 Decomposition of Global Exports to China by Trade Mode, 2001-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs of China.

The structural transformation of trade modes for exports to China can be broadly divided into four phases (see Table 4.2). The first phase (2001–2008) was a period of rapid expansion. Following China's accession to the WTO, it became deeply integrated into global division of labor. Global exports to China were driven simultaneously by processing-trade orders, infrastructure construction and industrial-sector investment. The second phase (2009–2012) was a post-crisis recovery period. External-demand shocks heightened volatility in processing trade, while China's expanded domestic demand and investment underpinned a swift rebound ingeneral trade. The third phase (2013–2019) constituted a structural-adjustment period. Growth in global value chains slowed and domestic supply capacity strengthened, pushing the share of processing trade further down. The fourth phase, the re-balancing period starting in 2020, has seen COVID-19 disruptions, geopolitics and supply-chain security jointly shaping the pace of global countries' and regions' exports to China. China's general-trade imports have stayed at elevated levels, while other trade categories have expanded steadily.

Table 4.1 Structure of Global Exports to China by Trade Mode, 2001–2025

Year	Total (USD 100 million)	General trade (USD 100 million)	Share (%)	Processing Trade (USD 100 million)	Share (%)	Other Trade (USD 100 million)	Share (%)
2001	2,423.0	1,130.5	46.7	936.1	38.6	356.4	14.7
2002	2,936.6	1,286.6	43.8	1,217.2	41.4	432.8	14.7
2003	4,115.5	1,873.0	45.5	1,624.7	39.5	617.8	15.0
2004	5,601.1	2,478.2	44.2	2,213.2	39.5	909.7	16.2
2005	6,589.8	2,792.6	42.4	2,737.2	41.5	1,060.0	16.1
2006	7,901.1	3,325.8	42.1	3,210.6	40.6	1,364.7	17.3
2007	9,547.7	4,282.7	44.9	3,682.0	38.6	1,583.0	16.6
2008	11,315.4	5,719.8	50.5	3,779.9	33.4	1,815.7	16.0
2009	10,049.6	5,340.7	53.1	3,220.3	32.0	1,488.6	14.8

Continued

Year	Total (USD 100 million)	General trade (USD 100 million)	Share (%)	Processing Trade (USD 100 million)	Share (%)	Other Trade (USD 100 million)	Share (%)
2010	13,953.0	7,690.9	55.1	4,172.2	29.9	2,089.9	15.0
2011	17,425.1	10,074.8	57.8	4,693.9	26.9	2,656.4	15.2
2012	18,174.1	10,221.2	56.2	4,808.7	26.5	3,144.2	17.3
2013	19,492.2	11,095.6	56.9	4,966.6	25.5	3,430.0	17.6
2014	19,596.6	11,096.3	56.6	5,242.2	26.8	3,258.1	16.6
2015	16,828.6	9,233.8	54.9	4,468.6	26.6	3,126.2	18.6
2016	15,870.5	9,004.5	56.7	3,961.9	25.0	2,904.1	18.3
2017	18,431.0	10,852.4	58.9	4,309.8	23.4	3,268.8	17.7
2018	21,346.1	12,737.2	59.7	4,700.5	22.0	3,908.4	18.3
2019	20,762.0	12,564.2	60.5	4,170.4	20.1	4,027.4	19.4
2020	20,545.5	12,418.4	60.4	4,031.2	19.6	4,095.9	19.9
2021	26,864.2	16,765.9	62.4	4,889.2	18.2	5,209.1	19.4
2022	27,153.5	17,358.9	63.9	4,587.0	16.9	5,207.6	19.2
2023	25,559.7	16,642.0	65.1	3,841.1	15.0	5,076.6	19.9
2024	25,841.2	16,141.1	62.5	4,059.3	15.7	5,640.8	21.8
2025	25,818.7	15,460.5	59.9	4,544.1	17.6	5,814.1	22.5

Source: General Administration of Customs of China; author's calculations.

Table 4.2 Phases in the Evolution of Trade Modes for Global Exports to China

Phase	Main Background	Features of Trade Modes
2001—2008	China's WTO accession and expansion of global manufacturing networks	All three trade modes grew in tandem; processing trade played a prominent role
2009—2012	Post-financial-crisis recovery	General trade rebounded with rapid growth; growth of processing trade slowed down
2013—2019	Industrial upgrading, rising costs and supply-chain restructuring	General trade became a stable primary channel; the share of processing trade declined markedly
2020—2025	Coexistence of COVID-19 shocks, geopolitical shifts and supply-chain-security orientation	General trade remained at a high level; other trade expanded; processing trade fluctuated at a low level

Source: Author's classification.

Ⅱ. Implications of Changes in Trade Modes

Trade modes are more than just customs-statistical classifications; they also reflect distinct pathways through which foreign goods enter the Chinese market and integrate into China's production system. General trade, processing trade and other trade categories differ in goods flows, domestic value-added stages in the production/processing process, regulatory arrangements and end-uses, and impose different capability requirements on foreign enterprises seeking access to the Chinese market.

(Ⅰ) General Trade: From Supplementary Imports to Dominant Imports

The sustained growth of general trade best illustrates the endogenization of China's import demand, namely the shift from processing-support-driven imports to domestic-demand-driven imports. In 2001, China's general-trade imports stood at USD 113.05 billion, accounting for 46.7% of total imports measured by trade mode. By 2024, general-trade imports reached USD 1,614.11 billion, representing a 62.5% share, up 15.8 percentage points relative to 2001. Over 2001-2024, general trade recorded an average annual growth rate of roughly 12.3%, outpacing that of the processing trade (6.6%) in the same period. In 2023, the share of general trade hit a temporary peak of 65.1%, with import value at USD 1,664.20 billion. In 2025, general-trade imports fell to USD 1,546.05 billion, with a share of 59.9%. Although down from the 2023 peak, this share remains 13.2 percentage points higher than in 2001. This indicates that global exports to China are increasingly oriented directly toward China's domestic production, investment, consumption and resource-security needs, rather than relying primarily on the traditional model of entering China for processing before re-export.

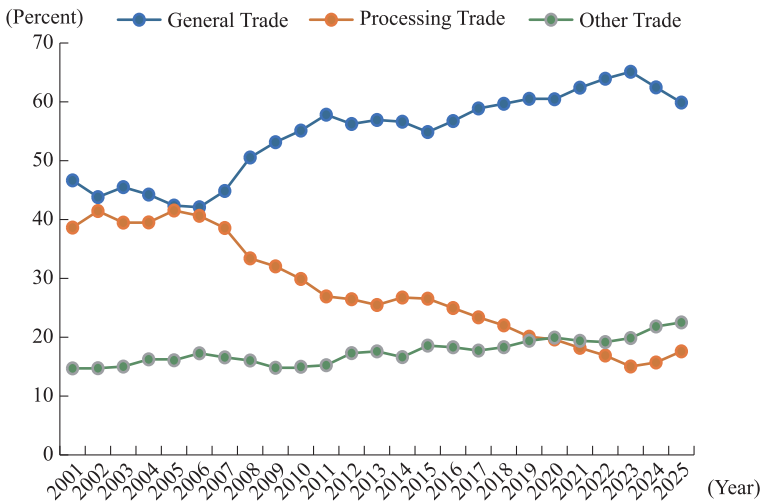


Figure 4.2 Changes in Shares of General Trade, Processing Trade and Other Trade, 2001-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs of China; author's calculations.

In terms of commodity import structure, the rising share of general trade reflects dual shifts in both demand and supply structures. In 2025, the top-ranked general-trade imports included crude oil, integrated circuits, iron ore, natural gas, gold, soybeans and semiconductor manufacturing equipment. These goods correspond respectively to energy security, manufacturing upgrading, urbanization and maintenance of existing infrastructure stock, residential consumption upgrading, and high-end industrial investment. Therefore, on the demand side, expanded household consumption, upgraded manufacturing investment, and tightening constraints on energy and food security in China have driven sustained inflows of crude oil, natural gas, iron ore, copper ore, soybeans, gold and other commodities via general trade. On the supply side, an increasing number of exporting countries no longer merely supply parts and components for further processing in China, but directly sell resource goods, final consumer goods, key equipment and technology-intensive intermediate goods to China. The dominant position of general trade essentially reflects China's dual absorptive capacity as a super-large-scale market and a global manufacturing hub: it absorbs not only resource

goods and agricultural products, but also high-tech components and key equipment.

Table 4.3 Major Import Commodities by Different Trade Modes, 2025

Trade Mode	Major Commodities in 2025 (Import value in parentheses, USD 100 million)
General trade	2709 Crude petroleum and crude oil obtained from bituminous minerals (1905.4); 8542 Integrated circuits (1230.9); 2601 Iron ores and concentrates, including roasted iron pyrites (1142.6); 2711 Petroleum gases and other gaseous hydrocarbons (723.8); 7108 Gold (including gold plated with platinum), unwrought, semi-manufactured or in powder form (641.8)
Processing Trade	8542 Integrated circuits (1623.6); 8523 Records, magnetic tapes and other media with recorded information (301.2); 2709 Crude petroleum and crude oil obtained from bituminous minerals (275.6); 2603 Copper ores and concentrates (247.8); 7108 Gold (including gold plated with platinum), unwrought, semi-manufactured or in powder form (179.4)
Other Trade	8542 Integrated circuits (1397.1); 2709 Crude petroleum and crude oil obtained from bituminous minerals (784.1); 8,471 Automatic data-processing machines and their units; magnetic or optical readers, machines for transcribing data onto data-recording media in coded form and machines for processing such data, not elsewhere specified (268.7); 7108 Gold (including gold plated with platinum), unwrought, semi-manufactured or in powder form (193.5); 2,603 Copper ores and concentrates (177.0)

Source: General Administration of Customs of China.

(Ⅱ) Processing Trade: Declining Share yet Remaining an Important Channel for High-Tech Intermediate Goods

Processing trade was once the core mode for global exports to China to integrate into China's manufacturing system. In 2001, processing-trade imports reached USD 93.61 billion, accounting for 38.6% of total imports. The value soared to USD 377.99 billion in 2008, with a share of 33.4%. Thereafter, driven by rising labor costs, strengthened domestic supporting capacity, the gradient transfer of processing-trade activities and supply-chain restructuring by multinational corporations, the share of

processing trade kept falling. It dropped to 15.7% in 2024 before rebounding to 17.6% in 2025, yet remained well below the level seen in the early years after China's WTO accession.

A shrinking share of processing trade does not mean its role in exports to China has weakened. Instead, it has become more concentrated on higher-technology intermediate-goods chains to serve specific manufacturing segments. Under processing-trade imports in 2025, integrated circuits ranked first, far exceeding other commodities. Recorded information media, crude oil, copper ore, gold, communications-equipment parts and discrete semiconductor devices also featured prominently. This shows that processing trade still links up electronic-information, semiconductor, communication-terminal and certain resource-processing value chains; its relative share is merely diluted by the expansion of general trade and other trade categories.

From the perspective of global exporting countries, shifts in processing trade signal the contraction of the traditional model: selling intermediate goods to China for further processing and then re-exporting finished products worldwide. Some labor-intensive and low-value-added processing segments have relocated to Southeast Asia, South Asia and other regions. Growth prospects for exporting countries' intermediate-goods trade with China are increasingly concentrated in integrated circuits, precision components, special-purpose materials and high-end equipment. In other words, exporting via processing-trade channels to China requires not only low-cost supply capacity, but also technical sophistication, reliable delivery performance and synergistic capabilities with China's advanced manufacturing clusters.

(Ⅲ) Other Trades: Joint Expansion of Multiple Special Trade Arrangements

In the three-part customs classification of trade modes, "other trades" is not a single business format but a consolidated statistical category covering diverse import

modes. In 2001, imports under other trade stood at USD 35.64 billion, making up 14.7% of total imports by trade mode. By 2024, this figure had grown to USD 564.08 billion, with its share rising to 21.8%. It further climbed to USD 581.41 billion in 2025, accounting for 22.5%.

The rise of other trades reflects the concurrent development of multiple special trade arrangements and new customs-clearance approaches. This is attributable to the growing role of bonded supervision sites and special-supervision zones in imports, as well as the expansion of consignment sales, duty-free goods, small-volume trade and other flexible trade arrangements. The exact mechanisms require further verification using more granular customs-supervision-mode data. Beyond general trade and processing trade, global goods now access the Chinese market through more diversified channels, and import arrangements outside conventional contract-based trade have gained greater importance.

In terms of commodity structure, major import items under other trades in 2025 included integrated circuits, crude oil, automatic data-processing equipment, gold, copper ore, pharmaceuticals and computer components. These goods are typically characterized by high unit value, stringent inventory-turnover requirements, volatile demand or special regulatory provisions. Institutionally, bonded supervision sites can act as a "reservoir" for certain imports, decoupling the timing of "exporting to China" from the timing of "entering China's domestic market". Foreign companies may first ship goods into bonded zones or comprehensive bonded zones, and complete domestic sales or transshipment later according to orders, prices and regulatory requirements. For bulk commodities, bonded inventories help smooth price cycles; for high-end electronics and pharmaceuticals, bonded distribution improves market responsiveness.

The growth of other trades indirectly demonstrates the rising importance of functions such as forward warehousing, bonded turnover, distribution and flexible customs clearance within China's import system. For companies seeking to export to

China, this means they must not only possess product supply capacity, but also enhance capabilities in compliant declaration, inventory management, logistics fulfilment and channel organization.

Ⅲ. New-Type Trade Formats: Cross-Border E-Commerce Imports

Cross-border e-commerce retail imports do not simply replace general trade. Rather, they serve as an effective supplement to traditional trade modes, better satisfying China's growing demand for upgraded household consumption, branded goods and small-batch, high-frequency imports.

Between 2016 and 2024, cross-border e-commerce retail imports rose from USD 3.93 billion to USD 17.90 billion, expanding to roughly 3.6 times the 2016 level (see Figure 4.3). In phases: 2016-2018 was a period of rapid expansion, with imports increasing from USD 3.93 billion to USD 11.78 billion. Growth continued during 2019-2021, reaching USD 17.09 billion in 2021. Affected by consumption adjustments, the volume dipped slightly to USD 16.85 billion and USD 16.57 billion in 2022-2023, before rebounding to USD 17.90 billion in 2024. The latest observed value for 2025 is USD 19.29 billion, representing further growth over 2024. Overall, although cross-border e-commerce retail imports remain far smaller in absolute terms than general trade, processing trade and other trades, they exhibit strong category-expansion capacity and have become a vital channel for foreign countries to boost exports to China.

Cumulative cross-border e-commerce retail imports totaled approximately USD 140.73 billion over 2016-2025. In terms of commodity composition, imports are heavily skewed toward goods with strong consumption attributes, high brand recognition, suitability for online display and small-batch fulfilment. To illustrate the consumer-goods nature of cross-border e-commerce imports more intuitively, this

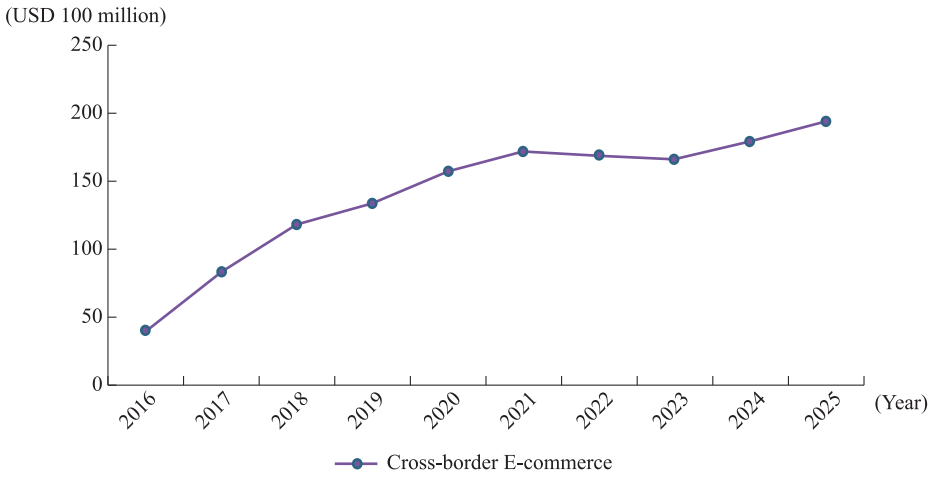


Figure 4.3 Changes in Cross-Border E-Commerce Import Volume, 2016-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs of China; author's calculations.

report conducts a research-based categorization of HS4 commodities based on HS chapters, commodity consumption attributes and cross-border e-commerce import scenarios. However, it should be noted that this classification is not an official customs categorization. It is used solely to demonstrate the consumer-goods characteristics of cross-border e-commerce imports, and its conclusions cannot be directly equated with official statistical classifications. ①

Under this research-based classification, food, nutritional products, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages accounted for 51.6% of total imports in 2025, while beauty-care and personal-cleaning products made up 29.1%. Together, these two categories exceeded 80%. This indicates that cross-border e-commerce imports are concentrated in consumer goods, especially those related to health and nutrition, branded beauty products, fashion consumption and differentiated supply. Unlike general trade, which features high shares of resource goods, agricultural products, high-end equipment and

① Research-based classification by the author based on HS codes and commodity consumption attributes, not official customs classification. Based on HS chapters and consumption attributes, HS4 commodities are grouped into several consumer-goods categories including food & nutrition, beauty & personal care, luggage & footwear & apparel, toys & entertainment, and pet supplies, so as to analyze the capacity and features of different goods entering China via cross-border e-commerce.

key components, cross-border e-commerce acts as a supplementary channel for foreign consumer goods, distinctive brands and small-and-medium-sized enterprises to access the Chinese market.

In terms of individual commodities, top-ranked HS4 goods for cross-border e-commerce imports in 2025 included other food/nutritional products (2106), beauty-care and cosmetic products (3304), malt-based dairy foods (1901), non-alcoholic beverages (2202), luggage (4202), perfumes and toilet waters (3303), hair-care products (3305), games and indoor entertainment articles (9504), skin-cleansing preparations (3401), and leather footwear (6403). These goods share strong end-consumer attributes, high brand and country-of-origin recognition, and are well-suited for online display, trial sales and repeat-purchase business models.

Therefore, cross-border e-commerce is not meant to substitute for traditional trade modes. Instead, it provides lower-threshold and more flexible trial-entry channels for foreign brands, SMEs and distinctive consumer goods to enter China. By lowering institutional costs for more countries and small-and-medium-sized enterprises to access the Chinese market, it improves the accessibility and sustainability of high-quality global consumer goods entering China.

Table 4.4 Major Category Distribution of Cross-Border E-Commerce Imports

Category	2025 Import Value (USD 100 million)	2025 Share (%)	2016-2025 Cumulative Value (USD 100 million)	Cumulative Share (%)
Food, nutritional products, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages	99.6	51.6	564.9	40.1
Beauty-care and personal-cleaning products	56.1	29.1	526.5	37.4
Luggage, footwear, apparel and fashion consumer goods	18.8	9.7	89.5	6.4

Continued

Category	2025 Import Value (USD 100 million)	2025 Share (%)	2016-2025 Cumulative Value (USD 100 million)	Cumulative Share (%)
Toys, games and entertainment articles	5.3	2.8	24.9	1.8
Electronics, household appliances and health-care equipment	4.4	2.3	50.8	3.6
Others	3.6	1.8	70.2	5.0
Watches, jewellery and light-luxury goods	2.2	1.2	22.4	1.6
Pet food and supplies	2.1	1.1	17.0	1.2
Maternity-baby care and daily sundries	0.8	0.4	41.1	2.9

Source: General Administration of Customs of China; author's calculations based on HS-code- and consumption-attribute-based classification (not official customs classification).

Box 4-1 Industrial-Chain Implications Behind Trade Modes

First, the rising share of general trade signifies that the Chinese market exerts a more direct pull on global exports. Resource goods, agricultural products and high-end equipment enter China via general trade channels, no longer merely serving as inputs for export-oriented processing, but integrating into domestic cycles of investment, production and consumption. For exporting countries, improving export capacity to China hinges not only on prices and production capacity, but also on their ability to align with China's demands for industrial upgrading, consumption upgrading, green transition and supply security.

Second, the declining share of processing trade reflects China's shifting role in global value chains. In the past, many countries and regions exported parts, raw materials and intermediate goods to China for processing and assembly, with finished products subsequently re-exported to third-party markets. Today, China's domestic

supply-chain supporting capacity has strengthened, some labor-intensive segments have relocated overseas, while high-end electronic value chains retain strong processing-trade characteristics. This means processing trade is no longer the main driver of "scaled expansion", but has evolved into a specialized channel for high-technology value chains, intra-firm trade of multinational corporations and specific industrial clusters.

Third, the expansion of other trade and cross-border e-commerce demonstrates that export capacity to China is increasingly reliant on trade-related infrastructure. Bonded warehouses, comprehensive bonded zones, cross-border e-commerce platforms, overseas warehouses, cold-chain logistics, digital payment and compliance services have become integral components of capacity for exporting to China. Particularly for consumer goods, pharmaceuticals and healthcare products, electronic goods and high-value components, those capable of faster forward-stocking, compliant declaration and last-mile fulfilment are better positioned to capture opportunities in the Chinese market.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

Since 2001, trade modes for global exports to China have undergone three-fold transformations. First, general trade has gradually become the dominant channel, indicating that China's import demand is increasingly driven directly by domestic production, investment and consumption, and the absorptive capacity of the Chinese market for global supply has become more prominent. Second, while the share of processing trade has kept declining, it still performs an irreplaceable chain-linking function in sectors including integrated circuits, electronic information and certain key

intermediate goods. Third, the continuous expansion of other trade and cross-border e-commerce shows that trade facilitation, bonded supervision and digital platforms are reshaping channel capabilities for exports to China. Going forward, for countries to enhance their export capacity to China, it is necessary to improve supporting conditions such as customs clearance, standard certification, logistics fulfilment, quality traceability and after-sales services in accordance with different trade modes, so that more high-quality goods can access the Chinese market in a more stable and convenient manner.

Chapter V

The Entity Structure of China's Imports

Importing enterprises of different ownership types exhibit marked differences in procurement motives, product composition, trade modalities, and supply chain layout. These differences collectively form the micro-foundation for the Chinese market's absorption of global exports to China. An analysis of the evolving structure of importing entities can provide clearer insights into the underlying logic of demand in the Chinese market and the mechanisms through which different types of economies interact with the Chinese market. ①

Ⅰ. Structural Evolution of Importing Entities

An examination of the historic changes in the total imports of the three core trading entities over more than two decades from 2001 to 2024 reveals clear structural shifts in China's import side across different stages of development. Overall, the process has

---

① In this chapter, the "trading entities" primarily refer to China's importing enterprises as defined by customs statistics (foreign-invested enterprises, private enterprises, and state-owned enterprises), rather than exporting enterprises located in the country of origin. As legal entities within China, foreign-invested enterprises' import behavior reflects the layout characteristics of multinational companies' global value chains and also constitutes an important component of global exports to China; imports by domestic private enterprises and state-owned enterprises, respectively, manifest different orientations of market-driven demand and strategic demand.

undergone three stages, "foreign-investment enterprise dominance—rapid rise of domestic private enterprises—diversified and balanced development." The structural changes in each stage were closely related to China's market-oriented reform process, adjustments to industrial guidance measures, and the external economic environment.

Box 5-1 Statistical Scope of Importing Entities and the Distinction with "Foreign Enterprises' Exports to China"

In trade analysis, studies often equate "imports by foreign-invested enterprises" with "foreign enterprises' exports to China". The two concepts are, in fact, belong to different statistical systems and have clear conceptual boundaries. China Customs classifies importing enterprises, according to the ownership attributes of domestic importing entities, into three categories: domestic state-owned enterprises, foreign-invested enterprises, and domestic private enterprises. Among them, foreign-invested enterprises refer to corporate legal entities registered and established in China with foreign capital. They are domestic market entities, and their imports are fully included in China's import statistics.

The distinction between the two concepts is reflected primarily in two respects. First, the statistical perspective is different. "Foreign enterprises' exports to China" is a statistical concept from the exporting country's customs perspective, with the statistical entities being overseas exporting enterprises; imports by foreign-invested enterprises are viewed from the perspective of China's import statistics, with the statistical entities being domestic legal entities. Second, the coverage is different. Imports by foreign-invested enterprises include both related-party transfer trade within the multinational corporation system and market-based purchases from overseas third parties. Imported products may either be processed and subsequently re-exported or directly supplied to the domestic end market; such imports do not necessarily correspond to exports to China by overseas entities.

As UN Comtrade, WTO and other international public databases do not currently provide breakdown data by the ownership attributes of exporting enterprise, this chapter adopts data on importing entities from China Customs import side as the mirror observation scope. While this scope cannot fully substitute for statistics from exporting countries' side, it provides a consistent basis for characterizing the structure of the entities through which global goods enter the Chinese market and the division of functions. Therefore, it represents a mature analytical perspective for examining the micro-level mechanisms through which global exports are absorbed by the Chinese market.

2001 to 2006: a period of absolute dominance by foreign-invested enterprises. The import structure during this period was highly related to the rapid expansion of processing trade. In 2006, imports for processing trade accounted for about 40.6% of China's total imports, while imports for processing trade by foreign-invested enterprises accounted for more than 80% of China's total imports for processing trade.① Multinational corporations, through internalized trade, imported large quantities of production-line equipment, components, and raw materials into China; after domestic processing and assembly, these goods were exported to global markets. This trade model positioned foreign-invested enterprises as the key link between China and global industrial chains and drove the rapid growth in exports to China of high-end capital goods and intermediate goods from developed economies.

2007 to 2016: a rapid-growth phase for domestic private enterprises. Beginning in 2007, imports by private enterprises consistently grew faster than the national average, with their import share rising steadily. In 2010, China's total imports exceeded USD

① National Bureau of Statistics of China. Statistical Communiqué on the 2006 National Economic and Social Development [R]. Beijing: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2007.

1.39 trillion, while imports by private enterprises increased to USD 214.3 billion, raising their share to 15.36%; in 2013, imports by private enterprises surpassed USD 400 billion, accounting for 22.39% of the total; by 2015, their import share rose further to 24.47%, surpassing domestic state-owned enterprises for the first time and making private enterprises China's second-largest importing entity group.

Meanwhile, the import share of foreign-invested enterprises began to show a gradual decline. In 2016, imports by foreign-invested enterprises were USD 770.47 billion, with their share falling to 48.54%, 11.16 percentage points below the 2006 peak. The import share of domestic state-owned enterprises continued to decline slowly, reaching 22.73% in 2016.

During this period, the rapid growth in imports by private enterprises was mainly driven by the rise of China's domestic manufacturing. As China's industrial supporting capacity continued to improve, domestic private enterprises progressively built complete production systems, sustaining growing demand for global bulk raw materials and intermediate goods. At the same time, the flexible market mechanisms and rapid responsiveness of domestic private enterprises enabled them to better capture changes in demands of domestic and international markets, and they began to occupy an increasingly important position in consumer goods imports.

2017 to 2024: a period of diversified and balanced development. Since 2017, the structure of China's importing entities had entered a relatively stable phase of diversified and balanced development. Imports by all three categories of entities continued to grow in scale, but with differentiated growth rates, and the changes in their import shares became more moderate.

By 2024, China's total imports approached USD 2.6 trillion. Among them, imports by domestic private enterprises exceeded USD 1.08 trillion, accounting for 41.97%, demonstrating strong market vitality and procurement capacity. Imports by domestic state-owned enterprises amounted to USD 651.55 billion, accounting for

25.20%. Following a period of growth in 2021 to 2022, their share eased but state-owned enterprises continued to play a stabilizing role in imports. Imports by foreign-invested enterprises reached USD 820.12 billion, accounting for 31.73%. Although their share substantially declined from their peak, the absolute scale increased by 550% from the 2001 level, sustaining high-quality growth in the volume of imports.

This structural changes during this period reflect a transformation of China's economic development model. As the Chinese economy shifted from high-speed growth to high-quality development, the domestic demand market continued to unleash its potential, and the role of domestic private enterprises in meeting the demands arising from consumption and manufacturing upgrades had become increasingly prominent. At the same time, China's industrial upgrading had brought profound changes to the import structure of foreign-invested enterprises, from importing general processing-trade components to high-end core components and precision equipment, resulting in a steady increase in the technological sophistication of imported goods. Domestic state-owned enterprises further focused on ensuring the import security, playing an important role in hedging against volatility in international commodity prices and risks of supply-chain disruptions.

The data in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 show that, although the share of imports by foreign-invested enterprises has been on a downward trend, their absolute import scale remains significantly higher than that in the early period of China joining WTO, indicating that foreign-invested enterprises remain important players in China's import system. Meanwhile, domestic private enterprises have emerged as a major force and become the most important engine for absorbing incremental exports to China from global markets. Domestic state-owned enterprises, by contrast, have maintained relatively stable import volumes. This diversified and balanced structure of importing entities has enhanced the resilience and stability of China's import market while providing diversified market opportunities for different types of trade partners around the world.

Table 5.1 Total Imports and Structural Shares of Foreign-Invested and Domestic Trading Entities in China, 2001-2024

Year	Total Imports (USD 100 millom)	Private Enterprise Imports (USD 100 millom)	Share of Private Enterprises (%)	State-Owned Enterprise Imports (USD 100 millom)	Share of State-Owned Enterprises (%)	Foreign-Invested Enterprise Imports (USD 100 millom)	Share of Foreign-Invested Enterprises (%)
2001	2,436.10	12.10	0.50	1,035.50	42.51	1,258.60	51.66
2002	2,952.10	95.60	3.24	1,144.90	38.78	1,602.70	54.29
2003	4,128.40	245.70	5.95	1,424.80	34.51	2,319.10	56.17
2004	6,211.20	419.80	6.76	1,764.50	28.41	3,245.70	52.26
2005	6,601.20	539.80	8.18	1,972.00	29.87	3,875.10	58.70
2006	7,916.10	728.40	9.20	2,252.40	28.45	4,726.20	59.70
2007	9,558.20	1,000.90	10.47	2,697.20	28.22	5,594.10	58.53
2008	11,330.90	1,078.90	9.52	3,538.10	31.23	6,199.60	54.71
2009	10,055.60	1,719.00	17.09	2,884.70	28.69	5,452.10	54.22
2010	13,948.30	2,142.50	15.36	3,875.50	27.78	7,380.00	52.91
2011	17,434.60	2,936.50	16.84	4,934.00	28.30	8,648.30	49.60
2012	18,178.30	3,460.60	19.04	4,954.20	27.25	8,712.50	47.93
2013	19,502.90	4,367.60	22.39	4,989.90	25.59	8,748.20	44.86
2014	19,602.90	4,475.30	22.83	4,910.50	25.05	9,093.10	46.39
2015	16,819.50	4,116.10	24.47	4,078.40	24.25	8,298.90	49.34
2016	15,874.20	4,179.40	26.33	3,608.20	22.73	7,704.70	48.54
2017	18,409.80	5,013.50	27.23	4,374.40	23.76	8,615.80	46.80
2018	21,356.40	6,116.90	28.64	5,473.50	25.63	9,320.50	43.64
2019	20,771.00	6,372.50	30.68	5,368.60	25.85	8,578.50	41.30
2020	20,556.10	6,982.80	33.97	4,582.40	22.29	8,653.20	42.10
2021	26,875.30	9,797.50	36.46	6,500.30	24.19	10,186.70	37.90
2022	27,160.00	9,990.40	36.78	7,317.20	26.94	9,530.40	35.09
2023	25,568.00	10,146.80	39.69	6,811.30	26.64	8,275.20	32.37
2024	25,850.70	10,848.90	41.97	6,515.50	25.20	8,201.20	31.73

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Private enterprises (including private and mixed-ownership), state-owned enterprises, foreign-invested enterprises (aggregating wholly-owned and joint ventures), each divided by the national total to obtain shares.

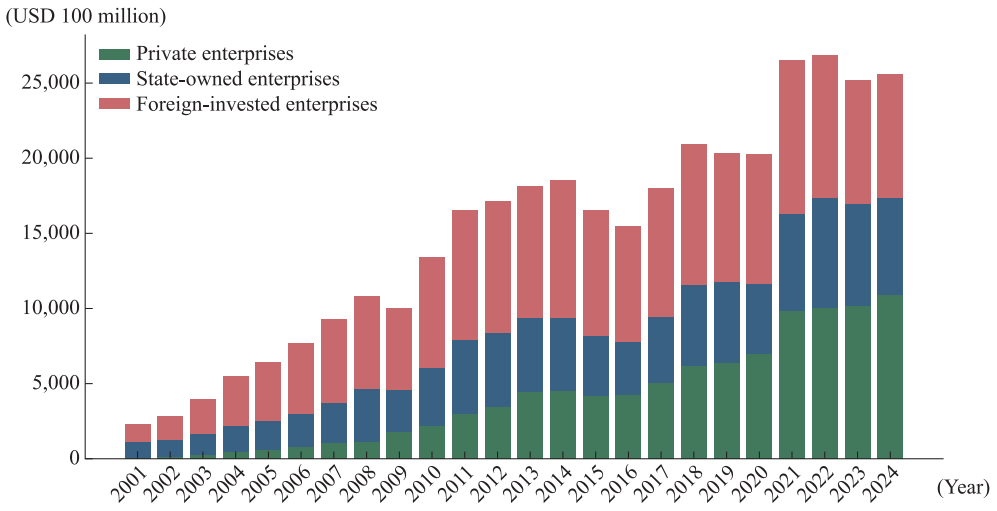


Figure 5.1 Changes in Import Volumes of Foreign-Invested and Domestic Trading Entities in China, 2001-2024

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Private enterprises (including private and mixed-ownership), state-owned enterprises, foreign-invested enterprises (aggregating wholly-owned and joint ventures), each divided by the national total to obtain shares.

Ⅱ. Import Characteristics of Foreign-Invested Enterprises

Foreign-invested enterprises are among the earliest importing entities in China to achieve substantial scale and remain the category most closely integrated with the global value chains. As the core vehicle of multinational corporations' production networks in China, foreign-invested enterprises exhibit distinct characteristics of internalized trade, with procurement decisions tightly connected to the layout of global industry chains. From 2001 to 2024, the absolute scale of imports by foreign-invested enterprises continued to expand, but their share in China's imports showed an inverted-U decline. This change reflects not only the strengthening of China's domestic industrial support capacity but also the upgrading of foreign-invested

enterprises' operations in China toward higher value-added segments. This section analyzes the import characteristics of foreign-invested enterprises from three dimensions: internalized trade mechanisms, evolution in scale and share, and the structure of key industries.

(I) Integrating into the Global Production Network Through Internalized Trade

Within the framework of international vertical division of labor under global value chains (GVCs), foreign direct investment and cross-border merchandise trade have an inherently symbiotic relationship. Based on the eclectic theory of international production proposed by British economist John Dunning, multinational corporations tend to set up wholly owned subsidiaries or joint ventures in host countries to avoid trade friction costs associated with external market transactions and to protect core intellectual property and technological advantages, thereby building an "internalized market within the multinational corporations". In this market, goods, technology, and services flow among branches of the multinational corporations in different countries, forming large-scale internalized trade.

Over the past two decades, the Chinese market has well accommodated global value chain layouts of multinational corporations. With ongoing improvements in China's business environment, upgraded infrastructure, and the gradual realization of the benefits of a large pool of highly skilled engineers, multinational corporations have integrated China's industrial system into their global production network at strategically advantageous points. Such internalized trade-based exports have become the key mechanism driving exports of high-technology intermediate goods and precision equipment from developed economies such as the United States, Germany, Japan, and the Republic of Korea to China.

From the perspective of trade modality, the imports by foreign-invested

enterprises are closely associated with processing trade. In 2001, the share of imports for processing trade by foreign-invested enterprises was 72.3% of their total imports; by 2024, this share had fallen to 38.5% but remained significantly higher than the shares for private enterprises (12.7%) and domestic state-owned enterprises (8.2%). This indicates that processing trade remains an important component of imports by foreign-invested enterprises. Through internalized trade, multinational corporations import core components and raw materials into China, where these goods are processed and assembled before being exported to global markets.

(Ⅱ) Expansion of Import Scale and Decline of Import Share

The data in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2 show that, overall, the import share of foreign-invested enterprises exhibits a clear inverted-U pattern, while the absolute import scale has maintained a long-term growth trend.

Table 5.2 Evolution of the Absolute Value and Share of Imports to China Driven by Foreign-Invested Enterprises (FDI), 2001-2024

Year	FDI Cumulative Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of China's Total Imports (%)
2001	1,258.60	51.66
2002	1,602.70	54.29
2003	2,319.10	56.17
2004	3,245.70	52.26
2005	3,875.10	58.70
2006	4,726.20	59.70
2007	5,594.10	58.53
2008	6,199.60	54.71
2009	5,452.10	54.22
2010	7,380.00	52.91
2011	8,648.30	49.60
2012	8,712.50	47.93

Continued

Year	FDI Cumulative Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of China's Total Imports (%)
2013	8,748.20	44.86
2014	9,093.10	46.39
2015	8,298.90	49.34
2016	7,704.70	48.54
2017	8,615.80	46.80
2018	9,320.50	43.64
2019	8,578.50	41.30
2020	8,653.20	42.10
2021	10,186.70	37.90
2022	9,530.40	35.09
2023	8,275.20	32.37
2024	8,201.20	31.73

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Extract the FDI cumulative subtotal and divide by the national total imports.

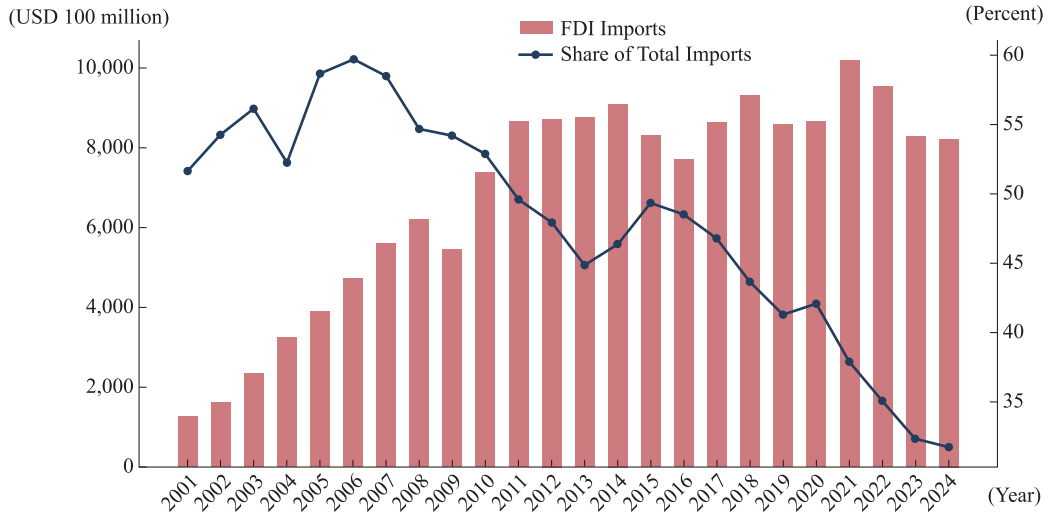


Figure 5.2 Inverted-U Pattern in the Share of Imports and Growth in Absolute Import Value of FDI in China, 2001-2024

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Extract the FDI cumulative subtotal and divide by China's total imports.

It should be noted that the decline in the import share of foreign-invested enterprises does not indicate a contraction in their contribution to imports to China. On the contrary, the absolute value of imports by foreign-invested enterprises grew from about USD 125.86 billion in 2001 to USD 820.12 billion in 2024, increasing by 550% in absolute scale. Even in the face of external shocks such as the 2018 US-China trade friction and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the imports by foreign-invested enterprises remained relatively stable, reaching a historical peak of USD 1,018.67 billion in 2021.

(Ⅲ) Strong Import Performance of Auto Parts and Electronic Semiconductors

The decline in the imports share of foreign-invested enterprises largely reflects the strengthening of China's domestic industrial support capabilities and the upgrading of foreign-invested enterprises' operations in China toward higher value-added segments. As China's domestic supply chains continue to improve, multinational corporations have gradually reduced cross-border transfers of low value-added products such as ordinary standard parts and general components, and instead, they have focused on importing high-end core components, precision industrial machine tools, and special materials that are difficult to replace with domestic alternatives. This shift has raised the technological sophistication of imported goods by foreign-invested enterprises. ①

The data in Table 5.3 show that typical industries represented by automotive manufacturing and electronic semiconductors clearly illustrate this characteristic:

① Kee H. L., Tang H., Domestic value added in exports: Theory and firm evidence from China[J]. *American Economic Review*, 2016, 106(6): 1402-1436.

Table 5.3 Changes in the Import Scale and Share of Key Sectors in Trade Associated with Foreign-Invested Enterprises, 2001-2024

Year	Automotive and Parts (USD 100 million)	Share of FDI Imports (%)	Electronic Semiconductors (USD 100 million)	Share of FDI Imports (%)
2001	24.70	1.96	125.40	9.96
2002	31.70	1.98	204.10	12.73
2003	61.40	2.65	344.80	14.87
2004	71.20	2.19	526.90	16.23
2005	63.50	1.64	726.90	18.76
2006	109.90	2.33	938.50	19.86
2007	155.90	2.79	1,157.10	20.68
2008	185.60	2.99	1,173.90	18.94
2009	204.20	3.75	1,055.10	19.35
2010	370.80	5.02	1,387.20	18.80
2011	499.20	5.77	1,493.00	17.26
2012	546.40	6.27	1,509.10	17.32
2013	576.50	6.59	1,546.40	17.68
2014	709.70	7.80	1,627.00	17.89
2015	558.40	6.73	1,664.00	20.05
2016	569.10	7.39	1,591.50	20.66
2017	621.00	7.21	1,820.60	21.13
2018	628.10	6.74	2,079.10	22.31
2019	588.90	6.86	1,969.50	22.96
2020	599.50	6.93	2,204.60	25.48
2021	692.30	6.80	2,453.00	24.08
2022	611.60	6.42	2,399.30	25.18
2023	515.20	6.23	1,963.30	23.73
2024	457.60	5.58	2,095.60	25.55

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Extract the primary entity "foreign-invested enterprises," and consolidate integrated circuit and semiconductor manufacturing equipment into the Electronic Semiconductors category,[①] and consolidate motor vehicle parts into the Automotive Parts category.[②]

① Four-digit product names: [8486] semiconductor devices, integrated circuits and flat-panel display manufacturing equipment +[8542] integrated circuits and microelectronic components.

② Four-digit product names: [8703] vehicles principally for the transport of people (passenger cars) + [8708] parts and accessories of motor vehicles (automobile components).

First, the automotive manufacturing industry. To maintain brand-specific technical standards and product quality, joint-venture carmakers in China typically import high-value intermediate parts such as high-priced power-train control modules and advanced chassis electronic systems into China. Moreover, the intelligent upgrading of production lines in China and the shift from internal-combustion engine vehicles to new energy vehicle platforms have been accompanied by cross-border transfer of complete high-end production equipment. ① In 2001, imports of automobiles and parts by foreign-invested enterprises totaled USD 2.47 billion, accounting for 1.96% of their total imports; in 2014, the figure rose to a peak of USD 70.97 billion, with the share increasing to 7.81%; in 2024, though imports declined somewhat to USD 45.76 billion, the share remained relatively high at 5.58%.

Second, the electronic semiconductor industry. The semiconductor industry features a high degree of global specialization, where integrated device manufacturers (IDMs) typically retain the highly capital-intensive and technologically demanding wafer fabrication stages in their home country or nearby regions, while relocating labor-intensive stages such as packaging and testing to China. This physical fragmentation of the industry value chain is reflected in customs data by large imports of "unpackaged wafers or bare integrated circuits". After packaging and testing by Chinese subsidiaries, these chips are supplied locally to China's vast consumer electronics, smart vehicle, and Internet of Things industrial clusters. ② In 2001, foreign-invested enterprises' electronic semiconductors imports amounted to USD 12.54 billion, accounting for 9.96% of their total imports; by 2024, the imports had risen to USD 209.56 billion, with its share increasing to 25.55%, making electronic semiconductors the largest import category of foreign-invested enterprise.

---

① Xie W., The Chinese Automobile Industry in the Global Production Network [J]. *Management World*, 2006 (12): 67-77.

② Ou S., Yang Q., Liu J., The global production pattern of the semiconductor industry: an empirical research based on trade network[J]. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, 2024, 11: 325.

Even amid relatively severe external conditions, multinational corporations have continued to export core components and equipment to the Chinese market. This reflects, to some extent, the high friction costs involved in relocating the industrial value chains in business reality and China's important position in global semiconductor packaging, testing, and automobile manufacturing.

Ⅲ. Import Characteristics of Domestic Private Enterprises

Domestic private enterprises are the fastest-growing and most market-oriented category of importing entities in China's import structure. Unlike foreign-invested enterprises whose imports rely on internalized trade, imports by private enterprises are mainly driven by domestic market demand, with general trade as the dominant mode and procurement decisions characterized by flexibility and diversity. Since 2001, imports by private enterprises had continued to grow rapidly; in 2022, they officially surpassed foreign-invested enterprises to become China's largest category of importing entities. Structurally, imports by private enterprises were characterized by parallel development in bulk industrial raw materials and final consumer goods. Driven by cross-border e-commerce, private enterprises have become an important channel for global long-tail goods entering the Chinese market. This section analyzes import characteristics of private enterprises from three aspects: market-driven expansion, trade modalities and product structure, and long-tail product procurement.

(I) Market-Driven Expansion

From the growth rate of imports, from 2002 to 2024, the compound annual growth rate of imports by domestic private enterprises reached 27.3%, substantially exceeding the growth rates for China's total imports (11.2%) and imports by domestic state-

owned enterprises (8.2%) over the same period. In 2002, imports by private enterprises amounted to only USD 9.56 billion; the figure surpassed USD 400 billion in 2013 and approached the trillion-dollar mark in 2021, reaching USD 979.75 billion; in 2024, imports by domestic private enterprises rose further to USD 1,084.89 billion, accounting for 41.97% of China's total imports.

(Ⅱ) Characteristics of Trade Modality and Product Structure

Imports by domestic private enterprises are dominated by general trade, with processing trade occupying a smaller share. In 2024, the share of general trade in total imports by domestic private enterprises was 91.3%, significantly higher than the corresponding shares for foreign-invested enterprises (56.7%) and domestic state-owned enterprises (85.6%). This trade mode indicates that private enterprises' import activities are more market-oriented, with procurement decisions primarily driven by domestic market demand and less influenced by the global value chain configurations of multinational corporations.

In terms of product structure, imports by private enterprises mainly focus on two areas: bulk industrial raw materials and final consumer goods. In the area of bulk raw materials, private enterprises are the main importers of crude oil, iron ore, copper concentrates, natural rubber, and plastic raw materials in China. In 2024, private enterprises accounted for 42.7% of China's total crude oil imports, 68.3% of iron ore imports, and 75.2% of copper concentrate imports. These raw materials are mainly used to meet the production needs of domestic industries such as textiles, chemicals, steel, and nonferrous metals.

In the area of consumer goods, imports by private enterprises have grown particularly rapidly. With rising household incomes and upgrading consumption in China, domestic demand for imported consumer goods has expanded steadily. Leveraging the booming development of digital trade and cross-border e-commerce,

private enterprises have built global procurement networks to bring various specialty consumer goods into China. From 2015 to 2024, imports of consumer goods by private enterprises recorded a compound annual growth rate of 18.7%, substantially exceeding the 12.3% annual growth rate of China's total consumer goods imports in the same period. In 2024, imports of consumer goods by private enterprises accounted for more than 50% of China's total consumer goods imports, making private enterprises the driving force in consumer goods imports.

(Ⅲ) Long-Tail Product Procurement

Beyond traditional bulk industrial goods and general consumer goods, domestic private enterprises play a central role in reshaping channels for consumer goods import and absorbing global long-tail products. Cross-border e-commerce, as a new mode of trade, is characterized by low barriers to entry, fewer intermediaries, and high efficiency, greatly lowering barriers for overseas small and medium brands to enter the Chinese market. Domestic private enterprises, leveraging strengths in internet technology, logistics and marketing, have become the importing entities in cross-border e-commerce.

Through cross-border e-commerce platforms, numerous small-sized, distinctive overseas brands can bypass traditional international distribution channels and directly reach Chinese consumers. This enables long-tail products, such as specialty agricultural products, fine household chemical products, and niche cosmetics and skincare products, to enter the Chinese market via more streamlined channels, greatly expanding the diversity of goods imported to China.

Table 5.4 Procurement Trends by Selected Segments of Domestic Private Enterprises, 2001-2024

Year	Consumer Goods Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of Private Enterprises (%)	Bulk Raw Materials Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of Private Enterprises (%)
2001	0.60	4.96	11.60	95.87
2002	1.00	1.05	18.40	19.25
2003	1.90	0.77	35.40	14.41
2004	2.70	0.64	56.50	13.46
2005	2.80	0.52	86.40	16.01
2006	3.30	0.45	100.40	13.78
2007	4.30	0.43	147.00	14.69
2008	7.40	0.69	230.20	21.34
2009	9.10	0.53	281.10	16.35
2010	14.20	0.66	417.50	19.49
2011	23.60	0.80	589.50	20.07
2012	31.90	0.92	633.90	18.32
2013	54.30	1.24	766.90	17.56
2014	61.30	1.37	727.40	16.25
2015	58.40	1.42	502.30	12.20
2016	82.90	1.98	484.20	11.59
2017	99.30	1.98	601.20	11.99
2018	140.60	2.30	646.20	10.56
2019	202.70	3.18	732.10	11.49
2020	297.90	4.27	904.60	12.95
2021	356.00	3.63	1,291.50	13.18
2022	313.60	3.14	1,171.30	11.72

Continued

Year	Consumer Goods Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of Private Enterprises (%)	Bulk Raw Materials Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of Private Enterprises (%)
2023	272.00	2.68	1,321.60	13.02
2024	258.50	2.38	1,425.40	13.14

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Notes: 1. Calculation steps: Extract the entity "other sector enterprises." Group dairy, bags, daily chemical products, etc. into "Consumer Goods"①, and group iron ore, plastics, rubber, etc. into "Bulk Raw Materials"②. 2. In this table, "Consumer Goods" and "Certain Industrial Raw Materials" are representative categories only and do not cover the full scope of imports by domestic private enterprises; therefore the sums of their shares do not necessarily equal 100%.

Ⅳ. Import Characteristics of Domestic State-Owned Enterprises

Domestic state-owned enterprises are an important category of importing entities responsible for ensuring the stable supply of key commodities in China's import structure. Unlike the internalized trade of foreign-invested enterprises and market-oriented procurement of private enterprises, imports by state-owned enterprises are more concentrated in key areas such as energy, food, and critical equipment. Since China joined the World Trade Organization, state-owned enterprises have gradually

① Four-digit product names: [0201] Fresh, chilled beef+[0202] Frozen beef+[0203] Fresh, chilled, frozen pork+[0401] Milk and cream that are not concentrated or sweetened+[0402] Concentrated or sweetened milk and cream+[0804] Fresh or dried dates, figs, pineapple, avocado, guava, mango and rambutan+[0805] Fresh or dried citrus fruits+[0806] Fresh or dried grapes+[3303] Perfume and Toilet Water+[3304] Cosmetics or skincare products+[4202] Luggage and bags+[9503] Toys.

② Four-digit product names: [2601] Iron ore and its concentrates+[2603] Copper ore and its concentrate+[7402] Unrefined copper, copper anodes for electrolytic refining+[7403] Refined copper and copper alloys, unwrought+[3901] Primary forms of ethylene polymers+[3902] Primary forms of propylene or other olefin polymers+[3903] Primary forms of styrene polymers+[3904] Primary forms of vinyl chloride or other halogenated olefin polymers+[4001] Natural rubber, balata, gutta-percha+[4002] Synthetic rubber and refined gums from petroleum.

withdrawn from general competitive sectors, with their import structure concentrating on essential commodities, forming a supply mechanism that relies primarily on stable supply arrangements based on long-term agreements and law-based, compliant, market-oriented operations. Structurally, energy imports have accounted for nearly half of the total imports of state-owned enterprises, while food imports have grown steadily, and imports of high-end equipment in aerospace and aviation industry, have adapted to changes in domestic supply capacity. This section analyzes import characteristics of state-owned enterprises from three aspects: functional positioning, procurement model, and segmented structure.

(I) Functional Focus and Strategic Support

As market entities have evolved, the import behavior of domestic state-owned enterprises has exhibited clear features of "functional optimization and strategic convergence." In the early years of China joining WTO, domestic state-owned enterprises had a relatively broad import scope, covering heavy industrial equipment and strategic materials as well as general consumer goods and light-industry raw materials. As foreign trade rights were fully liberalized and the domestic market became increasingly market-oriented, domestic state-owned enterprises gradually reduced their shares of imports in general competitive sectors, shifting procurement focus to safeguarding national energy security, food security, and supporting aerospace and related sectors.

From the perspective of import scale, domestic state-owned enterprises have maintained relatively stable growth in imports. In 2001, imports by state-owned enterprises amounted to USD 103.55 billion; in 2022, the figure reached a historical peak of USD 731.72 billion; in 2024, it stood at USD 651.55 billion, accounting for 25.20% of China's total imports. Although the share of imports by domestic state-owned enterprises gradually declined from 42.51% in 2001 to 25.20% in 2024, their

dominance in strategic materials import remains intact.

(Ⅱ) Stable Long-Term Agreements and Centralized Procurement

In capital-intensive, long-investment-cycle bulk commodity sectors such as oil and gas and iron ore, large state-owned enterprises widely adopt "long-term agreements (LTA)" to establish long-term supply relationships with resource-producing countries. Such offtake commitments, which may extend for more than a decade or even several decades, provide explicit demand expectations and stable cash flow support for upstream resource exploration and development, helping mitigate short-term fluctuations in international bulk commodity markets and maintain long-term market stability.

Industry statistics indicate that about 85% of China's natural gas imports are covered by long-term agreements; by contrast, crude oil, where spot transactions are more prevalent and local refineries hold larger shares, typically sees long-term agreement imports at less than 50%. These long-term agreements are largely signed by domestic state-owned enterprises such as China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec Group), and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) with international energy giants. For example, Sinopec and CNPC respectively signed 27-year liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply agreements with QatarEnergy, under which 4 million tonnes of LNG are supplied per year, making these agreements among the longest-term LNG supply agreements in the world. Such long-standing, stable partnerships not only ensure China's energy security but also provide reliable market access for source-producing countries to support the development of their energy industries.

Meanwhile, in technology-intensive sectors such as aerospace, domestic state-owned enterprises procure large commercial aircraft and key equipment through stable supply arrangements based on law-based, compliant, and market-oriented operations.

This not only helps reduce total procurement costs but also, in practical terms, stimulates exports by related manufacturing sectors in developed economies and supports high-skilled employment. China, as the world's largest growth market for civil aircraft, predominantly procures mainline aircrafts from Airbus (European aircraft manufacturer) and the Boeing Company (U.S. aircraft manufacturer) by domestic state-owned enterprises such as China Aviation Supplies Holding Co., Ltd. through stable supply arrangements based on law-based, compliant, and market-oriented operations. This approach gives China substantial bargaining power in the international aviation market and also serves as a strategic link underpinning economic and trade relations among major economies.

(Ⅲ) Import Structure Across Key Segments

In terms of key segments, energy imports have already accounted for almost half of the total imports by domestic state-owned enterprises. In 2001, energy imports by domestic state-owned enterprises were USD 11.04 billion, accounting for 10.66% of their total imports; by 2024, energy imports rose to USD 293.80 billion, representing 45.09% of their total imports. By contrast, the share of aerospace imports declined from 2.78% in 2001 to 0.16% in 2024.

Table 5.5 Import Trends in Key Product Segments among Domestic State-Owned Enterprises, 2001-2024

Year	Energy Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of State-Owned Enterprises (%)	Aerospace and Aviation (USD 100 million)	Share of State-Owned Enterprises (%)
2001	110.40	10.66	28.80	2.78
2002	122.90	10.73	31.00	2.71
2003	186.20	13.07	36.30	2.55

Continued

Year	Energy Imports (USD 100 million)	Share of State-Owned Enterprises (%)	Aerospace and Aviation (USD 100 million)	Share of State-Owned Enterprises (%)
2004	324.10	18.37	38.00	2.15
2005	455.50	23.10	52.00	2.64
2006	620.40	27.54	87.40	3.88
2007	748.40	27.75	69.10	2.56
2008	1,218.20	34.43	69.70	1.97
2009	886.50	30.73	72.80	2.52
2010	1,347.40	34.77	82.00	2.12
2011	1,939.10	39.30	82.80	1.68
2012	2,171.90	43.84	107.90	2.18
2013	2,244.20	44.97	124.60	2.50
2014	2,308.40	47.01	148.30	3.02
2015	1,392.50	34.14	137.60	3.37
2016	1,135.00	31.46	79.80	2.21
2017	1,613.80	36.89	65.60	1.50
2018	2,354.40	43.01	62.80	1.15
2019	2,260.20	42.10	29.70	0.55
2020	1,584.00	34.57	15.80	0.34
2021	2,405.90	37.01	12.20	0.19
2022	3,297.30	45.06	6.80	0.09
2023	3,052.90	44.82	24.20	0.36
2024	2,938.00	45.09	10.30	0.16

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Extract the entity "State-owned enterprises". Classify crude oil, coal, and natural gas as Energy;[①] classify aircraft and parts as Aerospace and Aviation.[②]

① Four-digit product names: [2701] Coal and coke, whether or not formed into coal+[2709] Crude petroleum and crude oil derived from bituminous minerals+[2711] Petroleum gas and other hydrocarbon gases (natural gas).

② Four-digit product names: [8802] Other aircraft (e.g., helicopters, airplanes); spacecraft+[8803] Aircraft parts.

V. Dual-Track Characteristics of China's Import Structure

From the structure of importing entities to the structure of commodities, China's imports have long shown a clear "dual-track" pattern: one track consists of technology-intensive goods represented by electromechanical products and transportation equipment, while the other track comprises bulk primary commodities represented by energy, minerals, and food. The simultaneous growth of these two categories in China's imports reflects China's dual role as a major global production center and a major market. Continuous imports of high-end electromechanical products provide a stable market for high-tech manufacturing industries of developed economies, while stable supply arrangements for bulk commodities based on law-based, compliant, market-oriented operations offer reliable export channels for resource-producing countries. This trade structure, spanning different stages of development, demonstrates the inclusiveness of the Chinese market in the global economy. This section analyzes from three aspects: the evolution of the dual-track structure, the linkage with electromechanical products, and mutual benefits in bulk commodities.

(I) Evolution of the Dual-Track Import Structure

Taking into account the differentiated characteristics of importing entities described above, a closer examination of the overall commodity import structure reveals that China's imports have long displayed a clear "dual-track" pattern: one track centers ontechnology-intensive goods represented by electromechanical and transportation equipment, while the other is rooted in essential bulk primary commodities. The two growth paths indicate that the Chinese market has provided extensive application scenarios and commercial returns for high-end technologies and equipment from

developed countries, while offering substantial absorption space for primary products from developing countries and resource-producing countries. This capacity to absorb products from economies at different stages of development underscores the endogenous complementarity of China's trade structure.

Table 5.6 Evolution of Dual-Track Import Value of Key Products, 2001-2024

Year	Electromechanical and Transportation Equipment (USD 100 million)	Bulk Commodities Composite (Energy + Food) (USD 100 million)
2001	1,070.20	224.40
2002	1,370.10	245.20
2003	1,928.30	351.50
2004	2,528.30	571.50
2005	2,904.80	733.40
2006	3,570.20	990.00
2007	4,124.60	1,164.30
2008	4,417.60	1,832.90
2009	4,078.00	1,388.70
2010	5,494.20	2,105.70
2011	6,305.70	3,045.50
2012	6,529.40	3,483.50
2013	7,101.40	3,568.60
2014	7,242.00	3,635.80
2015	6,824.20	2,490.90
2016	6,578.30	2,256.80
2017	7,348.70	3,039.30
2018	8,396.60	4,141.60
2019	7,866.40	4,279.70
2020	8,285.40	3,683.20
2021	10,058.00	5,281.70

Continued

Year	Electromechanical and Transportation Equipment (USD 100 million)	Bulk Commodities Composite (Energy + Food) (USD 100 million)
2022	9,380.80	6,668.10
2023	8,302.00	6,452.00
2024	8,891.20	6,228.30

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Extract electromechanical products from "Machinery and Transportation Equipment";① Bulk commodities are the sum of "Energy and Food". ②

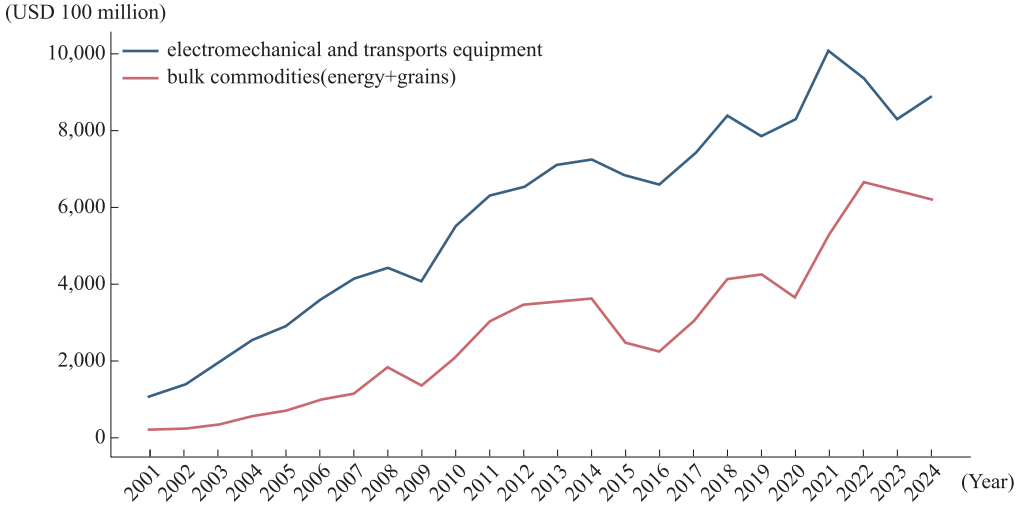


Figure 5.3 Trends of the Dual-Track Import Value of Electromechanical Equipment and Bulk Commodities, 2001-2024

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Calculation steps: Extract electromechanical products from "Machinery and Transportation Equipment"; Bulk commodities are the sum of "Energy and Food".

① Section-Chapter Value Table: Machinery and Transportation Equipment.

② Section-Chapter Value Table: Mineral Fuels, Lubricants and Related Materials + Food stuffs and Live Animals.

(Ⅱ) Deep Links Between Electromechanical Products and Developed Economies

Electromechanical products have consistently been the largest category of China's imports. From 2001 to 2024, the share of electromechanical product imports in China's total imports remained above 34%, peaking at 37.42% in 2021.

China's sustained imports of high-end electromechanical products, through stable supply arrangements based on law-based, compliant, market-oriented operations, have provided stable sources of profits and extensive application scenarios for high-tech manufacturing industries in developed economies, supporting the R&D investment cycle for cutting-edge technologies. For example, in the field of semiconductor manufacturing equipment, China is the world's largest market. In 2024, China's imports of semiconductor manufacturing equipment approached USD 40 billion, mainly from Japan, the United States, and the Netherlands. In the field of industrial robotics, China is also the world's largest consumer. Large quantities of core components such as precision reducers and servo motors were imported, primarily from Japan and Germany.

This deep integration of technology and market indicates that, in promoting industrial upgrading and technological self-reliance, China has not closed its domestic market but has continually pursued greater openness and commitment to sharing benefits of market development with global technology companies. At the same time, these deep links have made high-tech industries in developed countries dependent on the Chinese market to some extent, forming a mutually beneficial, win-win pattern of intertwined interests.

(Ⅲ) Bulk Commodities and Mutually Beneficial Development with Resource-Producing Countries

The large-scale imports of bulk commodities directly provide stable export markets

and foreign-exchange earnings for resource-producing countries such as oil producing countries in the Middle East, agricultural economies in Latin America, and mining economies in Africa and Australia, serving as a major external driver of economic growth in these countries.

China is the world's largest importer of crude oil, iron ore, copper concentrates, and a variety of agricultural products. In crude oil, for example, China's imports reached 553 million tonnes in 2024, mainly from Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, and other countries. In iron ore, In 2024, China imported 1.237 billion tonnes of iron ores and concentrates, primarily from Australia and Brazil. In agricultural products, China is also a major buyer of commodities such as soybeans and beef; in 2024, imports of soybeans were about 100 million tonnes, mainly from Brazil and the United States.

China's massive infrastructure development and growing demand associated with consumption upgrade have provided broad and stable end-markets for these primary products of resource-producing countries. This trade relationship, based on complementary resource endowment, not only ensures the underlying resource needs for the stable economic operation of the Chinese economy, but also generates tangible development benefits for countries across the "Global South", reflecting the broad-based inclusiveness of the Chinese market within the global economy.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

China's importing entity structure has undergone a phased transition from "foreign-invested enterprise dominance- the rise of private enterprises-diversified and balanced development". At present, domestic private enterprises have become the largest category of importing entities, with ongoing release of market vitality. The share of imports by foreign-invested enterprises has declined but remains the core hub for imports of high-tech intermediate goods. Domestic state-owned enterprises consistently

play a stabilizing role in the supply chain.

These categories of importing entities have formed a relatively clear division of functions. Foreign-invested enterprises, relying on internalized trade within multinational corporations to connect to the global value chain, are important recipients of exports to China of certain technology-intensive products. Private enterprises, through market-oriented procurement, engage broadly with suppliers of bulk raw materials and a diverse range of consumer goods.

China's import structure exhibits a dual-track pattern, with high-end electromechanical products and primary bulk commodities in parallel. This enables the Chinese market to absorb export supplies from economies at different stages of development simultaneously, demonstrating strong trade inclusiveness and industrial chain resilience.

Chapter Ⅵ

China's Import Demand

From 2021 to 2025, the structure of China's imports of segmented product categories continued to evolve. Imports of energy, core industrial goods, and consumer goods exhibited different cyclical and structural changes, reflecting the combined effects of industrial upgrading, shifts in consumption patterns, international price and supply-chain adjustments.

Ⅰ. China's Import Scale and Structure

During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, China unswervingly promoted opening up, with its attractiveness as a market steadily increasing and the country becoming a preferred destination for high-quality commodity exports from an increasing number of countries. China's imports grew steadily and the range of categories of imported products continued to expand. In terms of product structure, bulk commodities, core industrial goods and intermediate goods constituted the main categories of China's imports; at the same time, domestic new consumption demands and industrial upgrading fostered new import growth drivers.

(Ⅰ) Bulk Commodities Including Energy, Minerals, and Agricultural Products, Form the Foundation of Imports

This section studies HS 2-digit products from 2021 to 2025. Sorted by import scale, the 10 product categories with the largest import values in each year are identified, and in combination with their industry sectors, the main characteristics of China's import structure are analyzed.

Bulk commodities such as energy provide important supports for the operation of the national economy and the development of the industrial system, and they are also a prominent component of China's imports. Figure 6.1 shows that the top 10 HS 2-digit products by import scale in China from 2021 to 2025 mainly included HS27 (Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation, bituminous substances, and mineral waxes), HS26 (Ores, slag and ash), and HS12 (Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, etc.). These products have long ranked among China's leading imports, reflecting sustained domestic demand for energy, mineral resources, and important agricultural products.

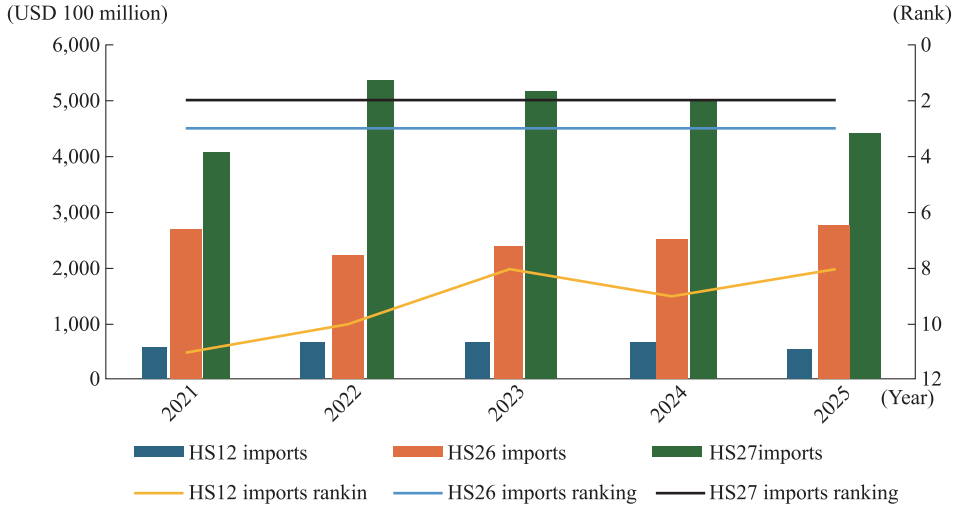


Figure 6.1 Import Value and Ranking of Bulk Commodities (Energy) among the Top 10 HS 2-Digit Products Imported by China, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

Among bulk energy commodities, mineral fuels, mineral oils, and products of their distillation have consistently been China's core import categories. From 2021 to 2025, this category ranked second among all HS 2-digit product categories in terms of import value; in 2021, its import value reached USD 405.433 billion, ranking first among all bulk commodities. Although the import value for this category fluctuates due to multiple factors such as international energy price volatility, the changing international situation, and adjustments to the domestic energy mix, it has remained above USD 400 billion throughout the period. This shows that energy remains a major segment of China's imports, with related imports mainly driven by domestic demand, energy mix, and international market prices.

Among bulk mineral commodities, ore, slag, and ash consistently ranked third in the import value rankings for all HS 2-digit products from 2021-2025, making this category an indispensable pillar of China's import structure. As essential materials that underpin the operation of China's modern industrial system, mineral commodities hold a crucial position in national economic development. In 2021, imports of this category totaled USD 271.682 billion; influenced by fluctuations in international bulk commodity prices and adjustments in domestic demand, the figure dropped to USD 223.891 billion and USD 238.796 billion in 2022 and 2023, respectively, before gradually recovering to USD 277.105 billion in 2025. The fluctuations in imports of mineral bulk commodities are driven primarily by the combined effects of domestic infrastructure investment cycles, manufacturing activity, and global commodity cycles. Nevertheless, the high ranking of this category by import value fully demonstrates the fundamental role of mineral commodities within China's import system.

Among bulk agricultural products, imports of agricultural products represented by oilseeds have shown a stable and upward trend in the ranking among China's overall imports. In 2021, imports of these agricultural products totaled USD 59.726 billion, ranking 11th among all imported goods and remaining smaller in scale than

imports of energy and mineral commodities. In 2025, imports of these products reached USD 56.921 billion, while their ranking rose steadily to 8th place among all imported goods. This indicates that, against the backdrop of domestic consumption upgrading, growing demand for livestock feed, and diversified edible oil supply, imports of agricultural products have gradually occupied a structural position in China's import system.

(Ⅱ) Strong Demand for Core Industrial Goods and Intermediate Goods

Core industrial goods provide important support for high-quality economic development. Figure 6.2 shows the import values of core industrial goods and intermediate goods among the top 10 HS 2-digit product categories imported by China by import scale from 2021 to 2025. Notably, HS85 (electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof) remained the largest import category by a wide margin. In 2021, imports of electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof reached USD 665.992 billion; after a period of decline in 2022-2023, they rebounded to USD 626.297 billion in 2025, illustrating strong demand in the Chinese market for high-end electronic components. HS84 (automatic data-processing machines and units thereof, machines for the manufacture of semiconductor devices, etc.) and HS74 (copper and articles thereof) followed highly similar import trajectories, with both resuming growth after a period of temporary decline. Imports of automatic data-processing machines and units thereof, and machines and apparatus for the manufacture of semiconductor devices and parts thereof increased from USD 230.992 billion in 2021 to USD 251.374 billion in 2025, while imports of copper and articles thereof rose from USD 66.114 billion to USD 75.145 billion. These trends indicate that demand for importing high-end manufacturing equipment and industrial goods has continued to expand despite short-term fluctuations.

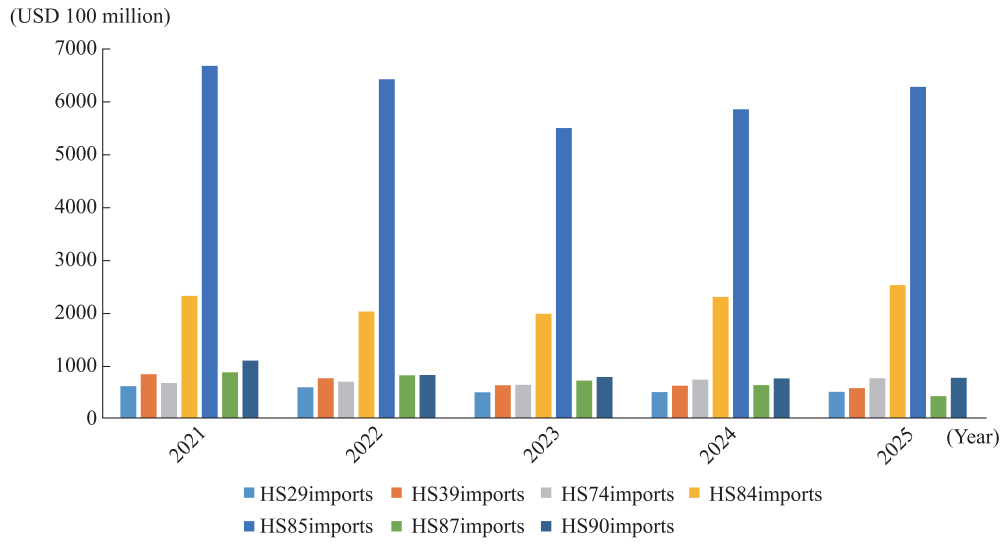


Figure 6.2 Import Value of Core Industrial Goods among the Top 10 HS 2-Digit Products Imported by China, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

Figure 6.3 presents the ranking of the imports of core industrial goods among China's top 10 HS 2-digit products from 2021 to 2025. Imports of electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof consistently remained in first place, underscoring their pivotal role in China's import structure; automatic data-processing machines and units thereof, and machines and apparatus for the manufacture of semiconductor devices and parts thereof, consistently ranked fourth, indicating sustained, strong, and stable demand for machinery and equipment within the domestic industrial system. Imports of plastics and articles thereof declined slightly in ranking, from seventh place in 2021 to ninth place in 2025, suggesting that the relative dependence of downstream consumption and manufacturing on plastic raw materials weakened to some extent, although the demand remained high. Imports of copper and articles thereof ranked ninth in 2021-2023 before rising modestly to seventh in 2024-2025. Vehicle and parts and accessories thereof dropped in ranking from sixth place in 2021 to 11th place in 2025.

Imports of optical instruments and apparatus and organic chemicals remained stable in the fifth-to-sixth and 10th-to-11th places, respectively, reflecting relatively stable domestic dependence on imports of specialized instruments and basic organic chemicals.

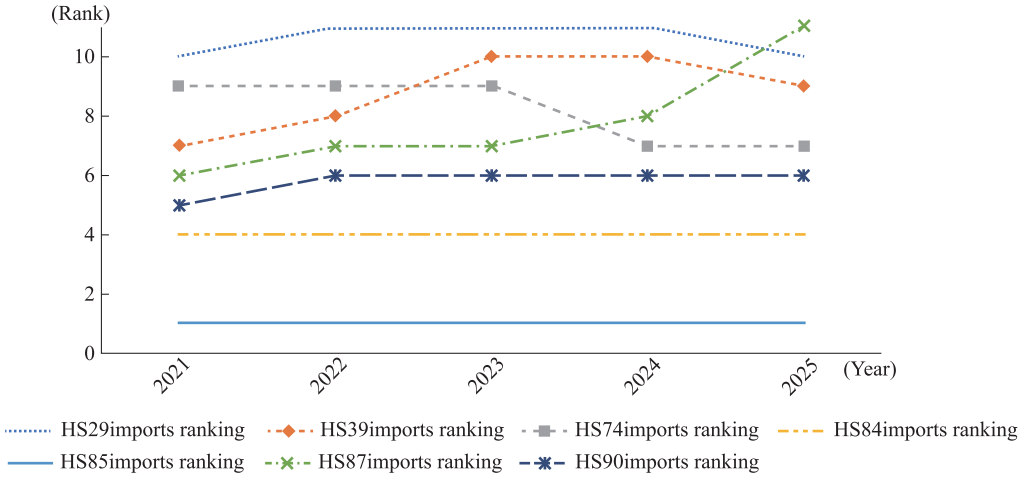


Figure 6.3 Ranking of Core Industrial Goods Imports in China's Top 10 HS2-Digit Products, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

(Ⅲ) Concentration of Leading Product Categories at the Segmented Level

This section further estimates the cumulative import scale for HS 6-digit products over the past five years to analyze the characteristics of China's import structure at a more segmented product level. Figure 6.4 shows the distribution of the top 15 HS 6-digit products by cumulative import value in China from 2021 to 2025. Overall, the leading import categories were concentrated primarily in energy resources, core components, basic agricultural products, and precious metals.

Energy resource products hold an overwhelming dominance in China's import system. Among these products, HS270900 (petroleum oils and oils) recorded a five-

year cumulative import value of USD 1,583.88 billion, ranking first by a substantial margin. HS271111 (LNG) and HS270112 (bituminous coal) ranked ninth and twelfth, respectively, with cumulative imports of USD 219.844 billion and USD 135.701 billion. Meanwhile, HS260111 (non-agglomerated iron ores and concentrates) and HS260300 (copper ore and concentrates) ranked third and seventh, respectively, with five-year cumulative imports of USD 684.625 billion and USD 325.361 billion. This profile reflects the sustained and stable demand from China's industrial production and energy supply for resources available in international markets.

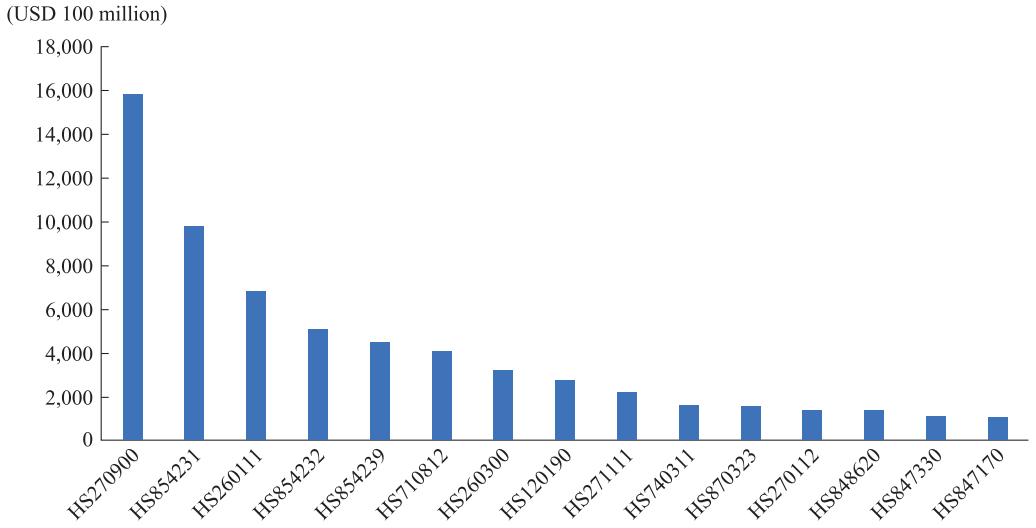


Figure 6.4 Top 15 HS 6-digit Products by Cumulative Imports in China, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

Core electronic information components also constitute another major pillar of China's import trade. HS854231 (processors and controllers), HS854232 (memories), and HS854239 (other integrated circuits) ranked 2nd, 4th, and 5th respectively; the cumulative imports of these three categories over the past five years have totaled nearly USD 2 trillion, indicating the deep integration of China's electronic information industry into the global industrial and supply chain networks in

the area of core components. In addition, HS870323 (other motor vehicles), HS847330 (parts and accessories of data-processing machines), and HS847170 (storage units) ranked 11th, 14th, and 15th respectively, showing that China maintained strong import demand in areas such as high-end manufacturing, the digital economy, and consumption upgrading.

Agricultural products and precious metals likewise occupy important positions in China's imports. HS120190 (other soybeans, non-seed) ranked 8th, with a five-year cumulative import value of USD 275.382 billion, reflecting China's sizable demand for international soybean markets for edible oil and feed raw materials. HS710812 (gold, non-monetary, unwrought) ranked 6th, with cumulative imports exceeding USD 400 billion; HS740311 (copper, refined, unwrought, cathodes and sections of cathodes) ranked 10th, with cumulative imports of USD 163.936 billion. These figures fully reflect the dual import demand arising from domestic precious metal reserve allocation and the supply of industrial raw material.

Ⅱ. Products with High Import Growth Rates in China

During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, the global industrial and supply chains underwent profound restructuring, and China's economy continued to achieve high-quality development with significant progress. At the same time, domestic demand for high-quality, high-standard material goods continued to grow, bringing new opportunities for global exporters to the Chinese market.

(Ⅰ) Identification of Products with High Import Growth Rates

To identify imported products with relatively high growth rates and substantial potential for future expansion, this section screens and analyzes fast-growing products

based on the compound import growth rates of HS 6-digit products over 2021-2025. High and sustained import growth rates typically signal rapid expansion in demand for certain products and the continued release of market space, and therefore, to some extent, representing their potential for future import growth. Figure 6.5 presents the top 20 HS 6-digit products in China with high import growth rates over the past five years, mainly covering 17 HS 2-digit product categories, with these products concentrated in basic materials, products associated with industrial upgrading, and specialty agricultural and food products. ①

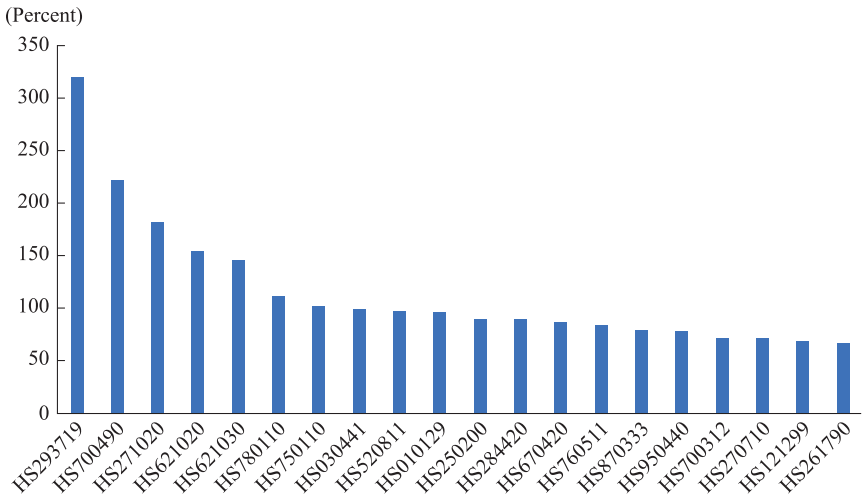


Figure 6.5 Top 20 HS 6-Digit Products in China by Compound Import Growth Rate, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

① The first quartile of cumulative imports for all HS 6-digit products over the five past years was USD 9.5817 million, and the first quartile of annual imports was USD 2.1855 million. Based on this, a scale threshold was set whereby cumulative imports over the five-year period were not less than USD 10 million and annual imports not less than USD 2 million, in order to exclude categories with excessively small scale or highly volatile growth rates. Subsequently, for industries that remained active from 2021 to 2025, their compound import growth rate over the five-year period was calculated.

(Ⅱ) Continued Expansion of Demand for Basic Materials Driven by Industrial Upgrading

Among the top 20 HS 6-digit products by compound import growth rate over the past five years, basic materials included unroasted iron pyrites, other ores and concentrates not specified elsewhere, benzol (benzene), petroleum oils and oils from bituminous minerals, specialty inorganic chemical materials, nickel matte, and unwrought refined lead. Figure 6.6 shows the import growth rates of these product categories over the past five years.

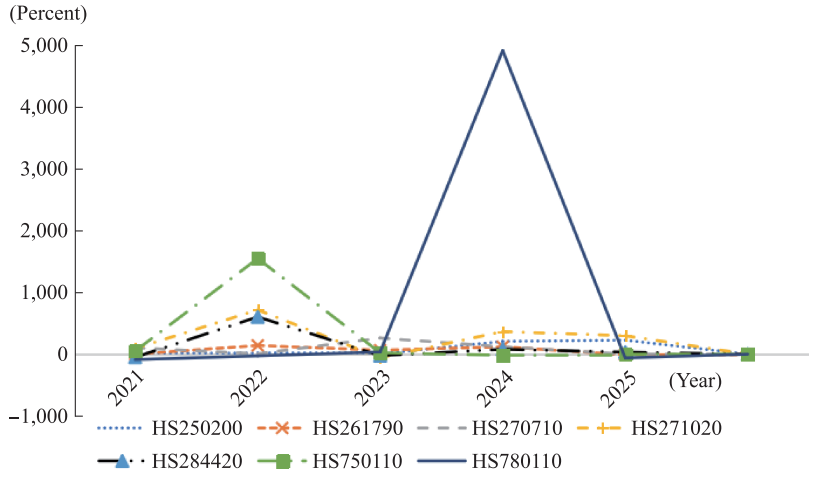


Figure 6.6 HS 6-Digit Products with High Import Growth Rates in China: Basic Materials, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

Except in 2023, imports of iron- and petroleum-related bulk commodities maintained overall high growth rates in the past five years. The former was mainly driven by rigid domestic demand for iron pyrites from industries such as sulfuric acid production and nonferrous metal smelting, while the latter was related to China's substantial demand for petroleum and refined petroleum products in economic

activities. Effective January 1, 2026, the import tariff rate on unroasted iron pyrites was reduced from 1% to zero, and their imports are expected to continue rising. Import demand for benzol (benzene) was also strong, with relatively rapid growth in all years except 2022, when the growth rate decelerated to 6.46%. The remaining basic material products showed more pronounced cyclical patterns in import growth: imports of certain ores and concentrates maintained high import growth rates from 2022 to 2024; imports of lead continued to increase in 2023-2024; and the import growth rate of nickel peaked mainly in 2021-2023.

(Ⅲ) Products with High Import Growth Rates Driven by Emerging Demand

Among the top 20 HS 6-digit products by compound import growth rate in the past five years, products associated with industrial upgrading mainly included HS670420 (wigs, false beards, eyebrows, eyelashes, and the like of human hair), HS700312 (cast glass and rolled glass, optical, in non-wired sheets, colored throughout the mass "body tinted"), HS700490 (other drawn glass or blown glass, in sheets), HS870333 (other motor vehicles), HS950440 (playing cards), and HS760511 (wire of non-alloy aluminum, with a maximum cross-sectional dimension of > 7 mm). Figure 6.7 presents the import growth rates for these product categories over the past five years.

As China's residents consumption levels have continued to rise and consumer demand has become more diversified, import demand for certain cultural recreational and creative products, and personalized consumer goods, has continued to expand. Imports of wigs and other human-hair products maintained positive growth rates over the past four years, reflecting increasing demand for personalized, quality-oriented consumption in beauty and fashion-related services. As China has accelerated its transition toward advanced manufacturing and green-building sectors, domestic demand for high-end glass materials has increased significantly. In 2022-2024, imports of

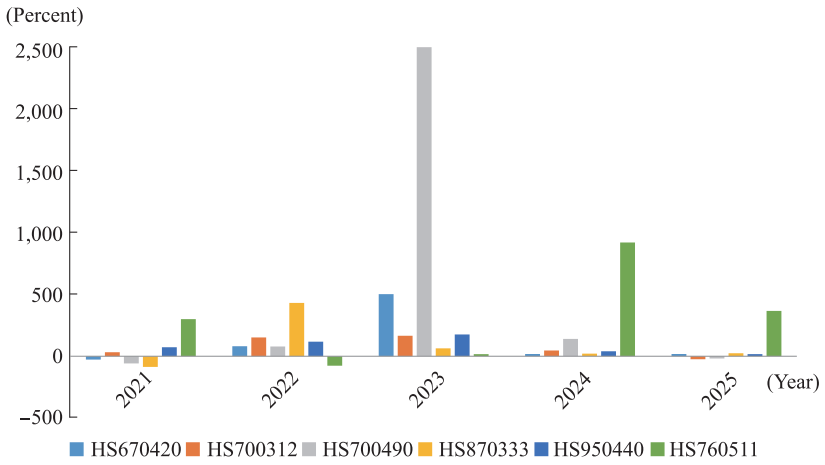


Figure 6.7 HS 6-Digit Products with High Import Growth Rates in China: Products Associated with Industrial Upgrading, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

glass materials maintained rapid growth, mainly driven by the expansion of the photovoltaic and new-energy industries, technological iterations in the electronic display industry, and the demand for high-performance glass in green buildings for energy efficiency and aesthetic applications. In addition, driven by the high-end equipment upgrading and demand in specific-use scenarios, the import growth rate of other motor vehicles (including large-displacement vehicles powered by traditional energy sources) reached 430.05% in 2022; although growth slowed in subsequent years, the overall trend remained upward, indicating continued potential for import growth of related products in certain application scenarios. Imports of aluminum-related products maintained relatively high growth rates in all years except 2022, indicating that the development of industries such as new-energy vehicle, photovoltaic power generation, and electric power transmission sustained demand for high-quality aluminum products.

(Ⅳ) Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Products Driven by Consumption Upgrading

Among the top 20 HS 6-digit by compound import growth rate in the past five years, agricultural and food products mainly comprised four categories: HS010129 (other live horses, other than pure-bred breeding animals), HS030441 (fresh or chilled fillets of Pacific salmon, Atlantic salmon and Danube salmon), HS121299 (other edible vegetable products), and HS520811 (unbleached plain-weave cotton fabrics, containing 85% or more cotton, weighing not more than 100 g/m^2). Figure 6.8 shows the trends of import growth rates for these products over the past five years.

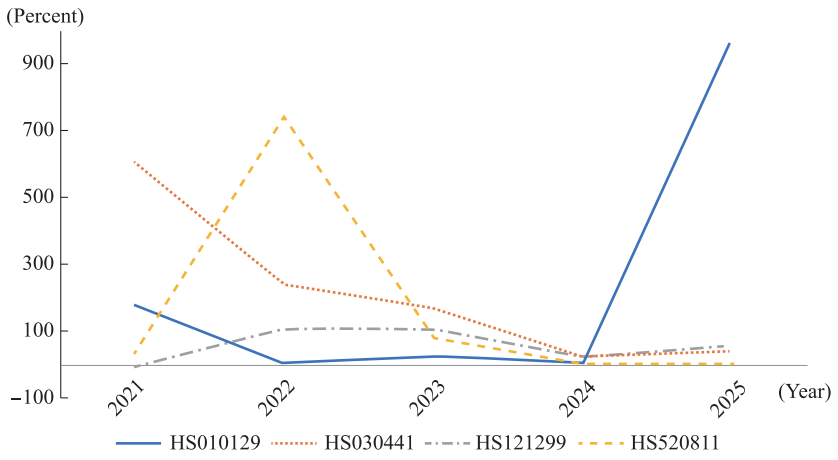


Figure 6.8 HS 6-Digit Products with High Import Growth Rates in China: Agricultural and Food Products, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

Some fish products achieved an import growth rate as high as 602.84% in 2021, primarily driven by the recovery of food-service consumption after the pandemic and the rising demand for healthcare. In recent years, the import scale of these products has continued to expand, indicating that the consumption of high-quality aquatic

products is gradually becoming a major component of consumption upgrading and retaining considerable potential for import growth going forward. Meanwhile, the import growth rate of other edible vegetable products has remained relatively high, reflecting steady increases in demand for specialty foods and diversified agricultural products in the context of consumption upgrading. Imports of cotton fabric rose rapidly from 2021 to 2023, indicating deeper integration between China and economies such as ASEAN members in the textile and apparel supply chains, as well as strengthened regional specialization and supply-chain cooperation, which provided stable demand support for related imports. The organization of equestrian events and accelerated rollout of themed cultural and tourism projects in China generated periodic procurement demand for high-end sport and show horses, driving the import growth rate of horses other than pure-bred breeding animals to surge to 984.94% in 2025.

(Ⅴ) New Opportunities for Exports to China from Global South Countries

Figure 6.9 shows China's imports from Global South countries from 2021 to 2025. Over the past five years, China's imports from Global South countries exhibited a clear upward trend, rising from USD 1.20 trillion in 2021 to USD 1.27 trillion in 2025, reflecting the increasing importance of Global South countries in China's import system. With growing capacity to absorb relocated industries and improving export competitiveness, Global South countries are poised to secure more development opportunities in the Chinese import market and become an increasingly important source of China's import growth.

Infrastructure and digitalization in Global South economies have continued to improve. Meanwhile, some economies, by receiving relocated international industries and participating in regional industrial value chains, have gradually developed into regional manufacturing and export hubs. This has created favorable conditions for

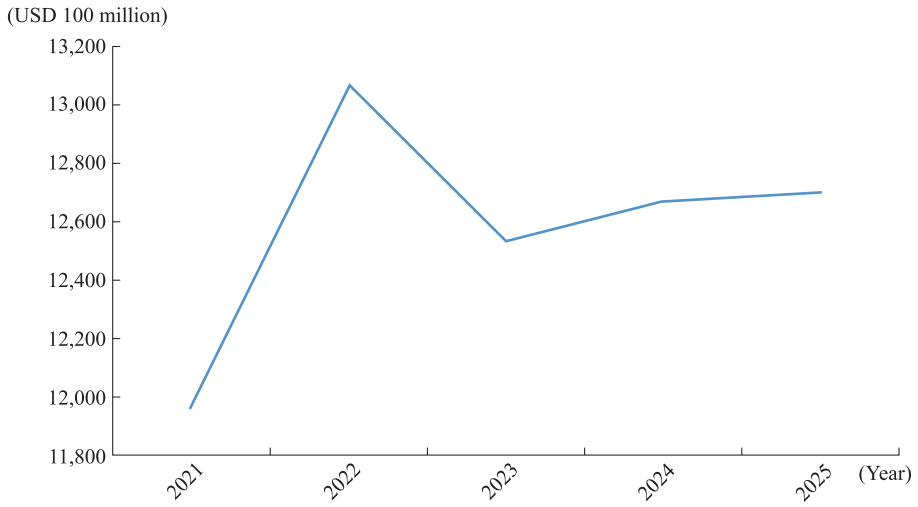


Figure 6.9 China's Imports from the Global South, 2021-2025

Source: General Administration of Customs China.

Note: Import-side mirror statistics; figures may differ from those reported of exporting countries.

expanding exports to China and elevating their positions in global supply chains. Additionally, regional integration among Global South economies has progressed significantly; the implementation of high-level economic and trade agreements such as the RCEP has effectively reduced cross-border trade costs, promoted industrial value-chain coordination, and created a more conducive trade environment for Global South countries to export competitive raw materials, intermediate goods, and consumer products to China. Moreover, Global South economies have generally maintained robust growth, while their industrial structures have continued to optimize and upgrade, continuously enhancing their capacity to meet China's import needs for diversified raw materials, industrial finished products, and consumer goods. This development aligns closely with China's strategy to diversify supply chains and strengthen the resilience of industrial value chains. As a result, the Global South is well positioned to provide new momentum for optimizing China's import structure and building a more open and stable trade system.

Ⅲ. Conclusion

During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, imports of bulk commodities such as energy, minerals, and agricultural products remained among the largest import categories, while strong demand for core industrial goods and intermediate goods persisted, and the potential of new import demand associated with improving living standards and increasingly diversified consumption continued to be unleashed. This pattern not only reflects China's deep integration into global industrial and supply chains through its manufacturing industry, but also demonstrates China's diverse contributions to global economic stability and growth. In line with China's industrial upgrading and transformation, basic materials (iron pyrite, benzol, nickel, lead, etc.), products related to industrial upgrading (high-end glass, aluminum products, motor vehicles), and specialty agricultural and food products driven by consumption upgrading (high-end aquatic products, edible vegetable products, cotton fabric, horses) recorded relatively high compound growth rates, making these areas important directions for future import expansion. At the same time, China has played a pivotal role in global sustainable development and eradication of absolute poverty. China's imports from other Global South countries increased from other USD 1.20 trillion in 2021 to USD 1.27 trillion in 2025, making the Chinese market an important force in absorbing supplies from many developing countries and driving industrialization and technological upgrading in emerging economies.

Chapter Ⅶ

China's Import Policies

China is building a higher-quality and more attractive import market through more supportive policies, a more transparent regulatory framework, more streamlined institutional procedures and greener regulatory standards. Its import policy is evolving towards a new integrated framework centred on institutionalization, modernization and green development.

Ⅰ. Comprehensive Policy Innovation

China has established a systematic policy innovation framework spanning three levels—regions, industries and market entities—and covering multiple stages of the import process, including the storage, distribution, exhibition and sale of imported commodities. These measures have helped further advance China's opening up. Innovative initiatives such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE) have become a new epitome of China's opening-up.

(Ⅰ) Pilot Free Trade Zones as New Platforms for Integrated Innovation

Pilot Free Trade Zones (FTZs), the Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP), demonstration zones for import trade promotion and innovation, and other key areas serve as important

platforms for China's efforts to deepen institutional innovation in opening-up. They also provide important windows for the international community to understand China's opening-up policies and share in the benefits of its opening-up.

At present, China has 23 Pilot Free Trade Zones. A core institutional innovation of the FTZs is the implementation of a "negative list for market access", under which market entry is permitted in principle unless otherwise restricted by the list. This approach gives market entities greater freedom to enter the market, while using the negative list as the main regulatory framework and providing greater clarity on the scope of regulation. In the areas of imports and foreign investment, this system places greater emphasis on interim and ex post oversight, resulting in three changes: fewer administrative approval requirements, lower institutional transaction costs, and greater stability in market expectations. ①

The Hainan FTP represents a deeper phase of China's opening-up experiment. Its core institutional framework is based on "liberalization at the first line" (towards overseas markets) and "efficient control at the second line" (towards China's mainland), supplemented by a "zero-tariff list system". Specifically, the Hainan FTP applies a "three-category list" to goods: the catalog of imported taxable commodities (subject to duties), goods outside the list (duty-free), and specially bonded goods (subject to regulatory controls). Under the core rule, goods outside the list entering Hainan are exempt from customs duties, value-added tax and consumption tax. ②

---

① Xinhua News Agency, *China's Pilot Free Trade Zones Expanded to 23, with Inner Mongolia Added*, 9 April 2026. See: https://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2013-09/27/content_2496147.htm; National Development and Reform Commission and Ministry of Commerce, *Market Access Negative List (2025 Edition)*. See: https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xxgk/zcfb/ghxwj/*202504/P020250424307430450848*.pdf.

② The Ministry of Finance, the General Administration of Customs, and the State Taxation Administration, *Notice on Tax Policies for Goods Entering and Exiting "First Line" and "Second Line" Ports and Circulating within the Island of the Hainan Free Trade Port*, 2025. See: https://hq.mof.gov.cn/tongzhitonggao/202509/t20250929_3973443.htm; the Ministry of Finance, the General Administration of Customs, and the State Taxation Administration, *Notice on the "Zero-Tariff" Policy on Self-Use Production Equipment in Hainan Free Trade Port*. See: https://www.hainan.gov.cn/hainan/zchbbwji/*202103/1f3262f3210d487194811285455e7b0e*.shtml.

The import trade promotion and innovation demonstration zones are designed to expand imports, optimize the import structure, reduce institutional transaction costs, and improve trade facilitation. ① Key sectors covered include medical devices, high-end equipment, consumer goods, and trade in services. Common policy instruments used in the demonstration zones include trade facilitation reforms, such as advance customs declaration, optimization of inspection and quarantine procedures, coordinated bonded exhibition and trading, and facilitation of cross-border payments. To date, China has established 43 Import Trade Promotion and Innovation Demonstration Zones. ②

(Ⅱ) China International Import Expo as a New Epitome of China's Opening-Up

The China International Import Expo (CIIE), launched in 2018, is an important policy initiative for China to expand imports. By providing platforms for international procurement, investment promotion, people-to-people exchanges and open cooperation, the CIIE effectively reduces the information costs and transaction costs for overseas enterprises entering the Chinese market. In support of the CIIE, Chinese customs, market regulation and other authorities have continued to introduce supporting measures, including expedited customs clearance, bonded exhibition transactions, post-exhibition purchase of exhibited goods, and streamlined inspection and quarantine procedures, thereby facilitating imports. The eighth CIIE was successfully held in November 2025, with the intended transaction value increasing by approximately 4.4% from the previous edition. From 2018 to 2025, the CIIE attracted exhibitors from more

① The Ministry of Commerce and seven other national authorities, *Notice on Establishing 29 National Import Trade Promotion and Innovation Demonstration Zones*, November 2022. See: https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-11/03/content_5724082.htm.

② The Ministry of Commerce, Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of Commerce (30 October 2025). See: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfbzt/2025/swbzklxxwfbh2025n10y30r/index.html.

than 180 countries, regions and international organizations, with more than 23,000 overseas enterprises participating. The number of Fortune Global 500 companies and industry-leading enterprises participating reached a record high, with the cumulative intended transaction value exceeding USD 500 billion. ①

(Ⅲ) Cross-Border E-Commerce Retail Imports as a New Driver of Demand

China has actively innovated the tax model for cross-border e-commerce retail imports. The main measures include: First, the positive list system. China applies a positive list of goods elegible for cross-border e-commerce retail imports. First, released in 2016, the list was expanded for the third time in 2022 to cover 1,476 tariff lines, with the range of eligible products continuing to expand. ② Second, the transaction limits. For cross-border e-commerce retail imports, a per-transaction limit of RMB 5,000 and an annual transaction limit of RMB 26,000 apply. For cross-border e-commerce retail imports within the limits, the tariff rate is set at 0; the exemption threshold for import-stage value-added tax and consumption tax no longer applies, and these taxes are temporarily levied at 70% of the statutory tax payable. Single transactions exceeding the per-transaction limit or, on a cumulative basis, the

---

① English.gov.cn (the official English-language website administered by the State Council of the People's Republic of China), *The Eighth China International Import Expo Records a Record High in Intended Transaction Value on an Annualized Basis*, 10 November 2025. See: https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202511/content_7047680.htm.

② The Ministry of Commerce, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the General Administration of Customs, the State Taxation Administration, and the State Administration for Market Regulation, *Notice on Improving the Regulation of Cross-border E-commerce Retail Imports*, November 2018. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2018-12/31/content_5437823.htm; the Ministry of Finance, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, the General Administration of Customs, and the Endangered Species Import and Export Management Office of the People's Republic of China, *Announcement on Adjusting the List of Cross-border E-commerce Retail Imports*, 28 January 2022. See: https://www.mof.gov.cn/jrttts/202202/t20220221_3788894.htm.

individual annual limit, as well as individual indivisible goods with a duty-paid value exceeding RMB 2,000, are subject to full taxation under the general trade regime. ①

The digital transformation of customs supervision is also advancing. China Customs has established a unified information system for cross-border e-commerce retail imports, through which cross-border e-commerce enterprises, payment enterprises and logistics enterprises transmit transaction, payment and logistics data to customs. The system automatically cross-checks and verifies the data before customs clearance and release. Enterprises can connect their ERP systems and production planning processes with customs clearance procedures, enabling efficient coordination of orders, inventory and customs declarations. ②

(Ⅳ) Bonded Logistics as a New Model for Cross-Border Trade

China has leveraged special customs supervision zones, such as comprehensive bonded zones and bonded logistics centers, to develop new trade models based on the bonded status of goods. These models primarily includebonded exhibition and trading

---

① The Ministry of Finance, the General Administration of Customs, and the State Taxation Administration, *Notice on Tax Policies for Cross-border E-commerce Retail Imports* (*Cai Guan Shui* [*2016*] *No. 18*), March 2016. See: https://fgk.chinatax.gov.cn/zcfgk/c102416/c5203746/content.html; the Ministry of Finance, the General Administration of Customs, and the State Taxation Administration, *Notice on Improving the Tax Policies for Cross-border E-commerce Retail Imports* (*Cai Guan Shui* [*2018*] *No. 49*), December 2018. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2018-12/31/content_5440499.htm.

② The General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Matters Concerning the Supervision and Administration of Imported and Exported Goods and Articles via Cross-Border E-commerce* (*Announcement No. 56 of 2014*), July 2014. See: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zcfb/zgdwjjmywg/art/2014/art_d276efa8b2c4431d95c69cb378183ab2.html; the General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Matters Concerning the Supervision and Administration of Cross-border E-commerce Retail Imports and Exports* (*Announcement No. 194 of 2018*), December 2018. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302266/302267/2141321/index.html; the General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Matters Concerning Enterprise Access to the Unified Information System for Cross-border E-commerce Imports* (*Announcement No. 57 of 2016*), October 2016. See: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zcfb/zgdwjjmywg/art/2016/art_31be55310c7f4d5c9ccc09786434d9a4.html; the General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Matters Concerning Enterprise Access to the Unified Information System for Cross-border E-commerce* (*Announcement No. 56 of 2018*), June 2018. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2018-12/31/content_5446316.htm.

and bonded maintenance, among others. Specifically: First, bonded exhibition and trading, under which goods entering a bonded zone or comprehensive bonded zone are not immediately subject to import duties or value-added tax, but may be exhibited, traded and distributed. Second, the bonded maintenance system, under which imported equipment may enter a comprehensive bonded zone for maintenance and is not subject to taxation when exported or re-exported, with taxes payable only if the maintained equipment enters the domestic market. The system applies to aircraft, vessels, high-end equipment and precision instruments, among other products. ①

Efforts to facilitate customs clearance for bonded trade continues to advance. Customs authorities have introduced the "batch entry and exit, centralized declaration" ("distributed delivery and consolidated declaration") model, changing the process from "one batch, one declaration" to "multiple batches, one declaration". Since 2023, advanced certified enterprises in comprehensive bonded zones have been permitted to apply for exemption from providing guarantees when using the distributed delivery and consolidated declaration model. ② Some comprehensive bonded zones have implemented round-the-clock delivery of goods in batches, consolidated customs declarations and "24/7" customs clearance support, providing strong support for enterprises to adopt Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) soultions and zero-inventory

---

① The State Council, *Several Opinions on Promoting High-level Opening up and High-quality Development of Comprehensive Bonded Zones*, January 2019. See: https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2019/content_5366474.htm; Shenzhen Customs, *Announcement of Shenzhen Customs on Launching Bonded Exhibition and Trading Operations* (*Shenzhen Customs Announcement* [*2025*] *No. 1*), January 2025. See: http://shenzhen.customs.gov.cn/shenzhen_customs/zfxxgk15/2966748/tzgg23/hggg82/6325936/index.html; the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, and the General Administration of Customs, *Notice on Matters Concerning the Implementation of Bonded Maintenance* (*Shang Ban Mao Han No. 276 of 2025*), March 2025. See: https://wms.mofcom.gov.cn/zcfb/wmzc/art/2025/art_67e1ea72473e42f4ad18f09885bc5586.html.

② The General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Supporting Advanced Certified Enterprises in Comprehensive Bonded Zones in Obtaining Exemption from Guarantees for Distributed Delivery and Consolidated Declaration* (*Announcement No. 148, 2023*), 27 October 2023. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2023 11/content_7063009.htm; the General Administration of Customs, *Implementation Plan for Comprehensive Reform to Promote the High-quality Development of Comprehensive Bonded Zones*, August 2023. See: https://www.beijing.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengcefa gui/qtwj/202403/t20240325_3600365.html.

production models. ①

(V) Financial Innovation as a New Safeguard for Import Risk Control

China has developed a series of financial innovations to help enterprises reduce import financing costs and operational risks. First, it has strengthened policy-based and inclusive financing support for import enterprises, increased targeted credit provision for imports of key resource products, advanced technological equipment and consumer goods for people's livelihoods, and promoted the "relending + insurance policy financing" model. Under this model, import advance payment insurance and other insurance policies are used to enhance the creditworthiness of small and micro import enterprises. ② Second, it has leveraged policy-based credit insurance as a backstop, covering risks throughout the import procurement process, promoting coordination between insurance for domestic and foreign trade, and expanding coverage while reducing premiums to benefit small and micro import entities. ③ Third, it has addressed exchange-rate fluctuation risks faced by import enterprises when purchasing foreign exchange, taking "exchange-rate risk neutrality" as the core principle, expanding the range of hedging products available, and lowering the barriers to and

---

① Nanjing Municipal People's Government, *Facilitating 24/7 Fast Customs Clearance for Enterprises: China's First "Self-service Verification" Project Launched in Nanjing Comprehensive Bonded Zone*, 2 December 2021. See: https://www.nanjing.gov.cn/njxx/202112/t20211202_3216780.html.

② The General Office of the State Council, *Opinions on Strengthening Cross-cycle Adjustment to Further Stabilize Foreign Trade (Guo Ban Fa [2021] No. 57)*, January 2022. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-01/11/ content_5667631.htm.

③ The Ministry of Commerce and China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation, *Notice on Fully Leveraging the Role of Export Credit Insurance to Promote High-quality Trade Development and Accelerate the Development of a Strong Trading Nation*, May 2024. See: https://www.gov.cn/lianbo/bumen/202405/P020240522476483501669.pdf; the Ministry of Commerce and China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation, *Notice on Fully Leveraging the Role of Export Credit Insurance to Ensure a Strong Start to High-quality Business Development under the 15th Five-Year Plan*, March 2026. See: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zwgk/zcfb/ art/2026/art_f5ef741c9f604890b7c8c3af1cbdba7b.html.

costs of exchange-rate risk management for small and micro enterprises. ① It has issued the *Guidelines for Corporate Foreign Exchange Risk Management* to guide enterprises in establishing sound hedging mechanisms and stabilize import enterprises' exchange-rate expectations through both market development and guidance for market entities. ②

Ⅱ. Continued Improvement of Import Regulatory and Product Standards Systems

China continues to improve the rules and regulatory systems governing the inspection and supervision of imported goods, enhancing the transparency, stability and predictability of the institutional frameworks covering rules, regulation, administration and standards.

(Ⅰ) Improving Trade Facilitation Throughout the Export Process to China

China continues to advance special initiatives to facilitate cross-border trade. In recent years, China has carried out pilot programs for cross-border trade facilitation in multiple cities, covering expedited customs clearance for rail shipments, combined port operations, remote inspection and quarantine conducted at the enterprise's location, batch-based inspection, and smart ports, among others. Specific measures include shortening the processing time for certain quarantine approval, improving the customs

---

① The People's Bank of China, the National Financial Regulatory Administration, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, and Shanghai Municipal People's Government, *Notice on Issuing the Action Plan for Further Enhancing the Facilitation of Cross-border Financial Services in Shanghai as an International Financial Services Center*, April 2025. See: https://www.gov.cn/lianbo/bumen/202504/content_7020211.htm.

② The State Administration of Foreign Exchange, *Guidelines for Corporate Foreign Exchange Risk Management (2024 Edition)*, August 2024. See: https://www.safe.gov.cn/safe/2024/0830/24924.html.

clearance efficiency of fresh agri-food products, simplifying the import and export procedures for R&D equipment and samples, and expanding "Single Window" services for international trade. The time required for goods to enter the Chinese market has been significantly shortened, while both economic costs and time-related costs have been substantially reduced. ①

In 2026, the General Administration of Customs will roll out nationwide 25 relatively mature measures developed under the Special Action on Cross-Border Trade Facilitation, which it carrid out jointly with 20 other government authorities in 2025. These measures included "one declaration" for multimodal transport, direct delivery of bulk cargo by air, mutual recognition of electronic signatures and electronic certificates, simplified procedures for import vehicle certificates, facilitation for Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) enterprises, and data exchange through the

---

① The General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Optimizing the Business Model for Fast Customs Clearance of Rail Shipments* (*Announcement* [*2023*] *No. 178*), December 2023. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302266/302267/5575092/index.html; The General Administration of Customs, *36 Combined Port Routes Opened under the "Greater Bay Area Combined Port" Initiative in Three Years*, November 2023. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/xwfb34/302425/5483912/index.html; The General Administration of Customs, *16 Measures Introduced by the General Administration of Customs to Further Optimize the Port Business Environment and Facilitate Enterprise Customs Clearance*, December 2024. See: http://beijing.customs.gov.cn/customs/xwfb34/302425/6246719/index.html; Department of Audit-Based Control and Department of Commodity Inspection, the General Administration of Customs, *Notice on Implementing a Pilot Reform of "Batch-Based Inspection" for Exported Hazardous Chemicals and the Packaging of Dangerous Goods Nationwide* (*Ji Cha Han* [*2024*] *No. 17*), July 2024. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/zfxxgk/zfxxgkml34/5979459/index.html; the General Administration of Customs, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport, the National Immigration Administration, the National Railway Administration, the Civil Aviation Administration of China, and China State Railway Group Co., Ltd., *Guiding Opinions on the Development of Smart Ports* (*Shu An Fa* [*2024*] *No. 89*), September 2024. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/202409/content_6975795.htm; the General Administration of Customs, *Significant Progress Made in the Special Action to Facilitate Cross-border Trade*, October 2024. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/xwfb34/mtjj35/6142456/index.html; the General Office of the State Council, *Notice on Replicating and Promoting Reform Measures from the Business Environment Innovation Pilot Programs* (*Guo Ban Fa* [*2022*] *No. 35*), October 2022. See: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2022-10/31/content_5722748.htm; the General Administration of Customs, *General Administration of Customs Holds an Event to Launch the 2024 Special Action for Promoting Cross-border Trade Facilitation*, March 2024. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/xwfb34/302425/5771803/index.html.

Single Window with foreign customs systems, among others.① The relevant measures have provided substantial convenience for enterprises. Following the nationwide expansion of the "two certificates in one" pilot for imported motor vehicles, 460,000 certificates were issued, with efficiency increasing by more than 80%;② China has used the "Single Window" system for data exchange with 15 countries and regions.③ China's cross-border trade facilitation continues to improve.

In 2026, China will expand the Special Action on Cross-border Trade Facilitation to 45 cities, with 29 measures introduced by 24 national authorities.④ Measures of more direct relevance to importers include differentiated supervision of imported agri-food products, support for the launch and debut of new products, improvements to the import of mechanical and electrical equipment and high-tech products, optimized inspection and supervision of bulk resource commodities, simplification of customs clearance documentation for pharmaceutical imports, self-service printing of customs clearance documents for imported pharmaceuticals through the Single Window, and the promotion of a "single-document" customs supervision model for multimodal transport.

(Ⅱ) Streamlining the SPS Compliance Review Process

In recent years, China has developed an import biosafety regulatory model featuring a "negative list plus dynamic management" approach, integrating biosafety

---

① The General Administration of Customs, *25 Cross-border Trade Facilitation Measures to Be Rolled out Nationwide: Nationwide Replication and Promotion*, January 2026. See: http://gkb.customs.gov.cn/customs/2026-01/16/article_2026011614325123410.html.

② The Generol Administration of Customs, *A "Package" of Facilitation Measures Unlocks New Momentum for Foreign Trade*, 16 January 2026, http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/2026-01/16/article_2026011614382211286.html.

③ English.gov.cn, *The "Single Window" Enhances Trade Efficiency among SCO Member States*, August 2025. See: https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202508/content_7037260.htm.

④ The General Administration of Customs, *Interpretation of the Policy Measures for the 2026 Special Action on Cross-border Trade Facilitation* (Ⅲ). See: http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/2026-04/28/article_2026042810373429747.html.

controls with trade facilitation. In 2024, the General Administration of Customs revised the approval system for the inspection and quarantine of imported animals and plants, exempting five categories of products, including cured meat and dairy products, from inspection and quarantine approval requirements. From December 25, 2025, the digitalization of inspection and quarantine certificates for imported goods began to be rolled out, further simplifying customs declaration procedures. ①

As of June 1, 2026, the revised Regulations on the Administration of Registration of Overseas Manufacturers of Imported Food officially entered into force. ② The upgraded management system not only provides more effective safeguards for food safety, but also facilitates trade in food products. The application process for newly registered enterprises has been streamlined, and the application materials have been simplified; 95% of registered enterprises are eligible for automatic renewal, while the application period for enterprises not eligible for automatic renewal has also been extended to 3-12 months. ③ This initiative represents another proactive effort by China to balance the objectives of expanding openness and safeguarding biosafety. In June 2026, the General Administration of Customs issued the *Announcement on the Inspection and Quarantine Requirements and Sanitary Requirements for Imported African Cashews*, marking the full opening of China's quarantine market access to cashews produced in

---

① The General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Adjusting the List of Imported Foods Subject to the Inspection and Quarantine Approval for Imported Animals and Plants* (*Announcement* [*2024*] *No. 158*). See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/*302249/2480148/6205207/*index.html; the General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Matters Concerning the Electronic Version of the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Imported Goods* (*Announcement* [*2025*] *No. 255*), December 2025. See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/ customs/302249/302266/302267/6910197/index.html

② The General Administration of Customs, *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Administration of Registration of Overseas Manufacturers of Imported Food* (*General Administration of Customs Order No. 280*). See: http://ickspi.customs.gov.cn/spi/*2026-03/30/*article_*20260330164935864l0*.html.

③ The Ministry of Commerce, *General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China Revises Regulations on the Registration and Administration of Overseas Manufacturers of Imported Food to Further Facilitate Food Trade with China*, April 2026. See: https://gw.mofcom.gov.cn /jmxw/art/2026/art_0436bdeef8be46429a9ca21061fde3a7.html.

African countries that have diplomatic relations with China. ① While ensuring safety, China will continue to streamline inspection and quarantine market access procedures for imported food, enhance the "green channel" for African agricultural products exported to China, and further facilitate the imports of high-quality African food products into China.

(Ⅲ) Strengthening the Alignment of Technical Standards and Certification Systems with International Rules

China's technical standards and certification system relies on mandatory national standards (GB) and China Compulsory Certification (CCC) as key instruments for controlling safety, quality, and environmental risks associated with imported products. The national standards system consists of mandatory national standards (GB), recommended national standards (GB/T), industry standards, and local standards. Mandatory national standards are legally binding, and products that do not comply with them may not be manufactured, sold or imported, and relevant services may not be provided. The China Compulsory Certification (CCC) system is one of China's core market access regimes and constitutes a mandatory market access certification scheme. Products that have not obtained CCC may not be imported, sold, or used for commercial purposes. ②

China has gradually increased the openness of its product standards system. The adoption rate of ISO and IEC standards has risen, while the openness and transparency of standardization activities have improved significantly. Mutual recognition of

---

① The General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on the Inspection and Quarantine Requirements and Sanitary Requirements for Imported African Cashews* (*Announcement* [*2026*] *No. 80*), June 2026. See: http://zhs.customs.gov.cn/customs/2026-06/10/article_2026061210581877 76.html.

② State Administration for Market Regulation, *Regulations on the Administration of Compulsory Product Certification*, see: https://www.samr.gov.cn/cms_files/filemanager/1647978232/attach/20233/9d4904b4e88c4dc1add282c485aae896.pdf

inspection results for imported products has been progressively introduced, and more qualified Chinese and foreign inspection bodies have been included in the list of bodies whose inspection results are accepted. China has also consolidated fragmented industry standards into a unified national GB standards system. Technical regulations and supervision have shifted from market access management towards full-chain regulation, resulting in a full life-cycle regulatory system covering "ex ante approval, ongoing supervision, and ex post accountability." Digital supervision has also been significantly strengthened, with the single window, electronic certificates, and risk early-warning systems now widely used. ①

Box 7-1 CCC

CCC refers to "China Compulsory Certification" (CCC), which is one of China's core market access systems and one of the most important compliance requirements for imported goods entering the Chinese market. Products covered by the CCC catalog, including those involving personal health and safety, national security, environmental protection, and consumer rights and interests, must obtain CCC and bear the "CCC" mark before they can be manufactured, sold, imported, or

---

① The State Administration for Market Regulation, *Measures for the Administration of Adopting International Standards*, see: https://www.samr.gov.cn/zw/zfxgk/fdzdgknr/fgs/art/2025/art_f32bbf79511348699d385a86cf1fffaa0.html; the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, *Administrative Measures of the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China for the Inspection and Acceptance of Import and Export Commodities* (*General Administration of Customs Order No. 259*), September 2022, see: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302266/302267/4593093/index.html; the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, *Directory of Customs-Approved Inspection Bodies for Imported Commodities*, April 2026, see: http://gjs.customs.gov.cn/sjs/2026-04/30/article_2026043016231822293.html; the General Office of the State Council, *Notice on Issuing the Work Plan for the Integration and Streamlining of Mandatory Standards* (*State Council General Office* [*2016*] *No. 3*), January 2016, see: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-02/15/content_5041316.htm; the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, *Smart Customs Development Enters Full-Scale Implementation*, March 2024, see: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/xwfb34/mtjj35/5754794/index.html.

used for other business activities within China. The latest catalog for 2026 covers 17 categories and 106 types of products, including major areas such as household appliances, electronic products, motor cars and components, wires and cables, explosion-proof electrical equipment, products for children, electric bicycles, and gas appliances. For products included in the catalog, import enterprises must complete procedures such as type testing, factory inspection (or production consistency evaluation), and certification review before importation, and may conduct customs declaration and sales only after obtaining CCC. CCC is subject to unified administration by the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), following a management model featuring a unified catalog, unified standards, unified certification procedures, and a unified certification mark.

Source: Based on the *Regulations on the Administration of Compulsory Product Certification* (2022 revision) issued by the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), and information published on the official website of the China National Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) (www.cnca.gov.cn).

Ⅲ. Tariff Reductions and Continued Expansion of Opening-Up

The Tariff Commission of the State Council of China issued the *2026 Tariff Adjustment Plan*, which adjusts tariff rates for key commodities and imports from least developed countries (LDCs), with the scale of unilateral tariff preferences for LDCs continuing to expand. The tariff burden on exports to China from countries around the world has decreased significantly, allowing the competitive potential of high-quality products to be better realized. ①

① Tariff Commission of the State Council, *2026 Tariff Adjustment Plan*, January 2026, see: https://gss.mof.gov.cn/gzdt/zhengcefabu/202512/P020251229510520940591.pdf.

(I) Clearer Tariff Collection Rules and Compliance Requirements

At present, taxes levied at the import stage in China mainly comprise customs duties, value-added tax (VAT), and consumption tax. Customs duty rates include most-favored-nation (MFN) rates, tariff rates under trade agreements, preferential tariff rates, and general tariff rates. Tariff-quota rates apply to commodities subject to tariff quotas, while provisional rates are applied to certain products for specified periods. Customs duties are generally calculated as the dutiable value multiplied by the applicable duty rate. The tax base for import-stage VAT is generally calculated as (customs value + customs duties + consumption tax) × VAT rate. VAT rates are mainly set at two levels, 13% and 9%, with additional preferential VAT policies available for specific products and activities. Import-stage consumption tax mainly applies to certain products, including tobacco, alcoholic beverages, refined oil products, high-end cosmetics, luxury consumer goods, and certain high-end watches. Depending on the product category, consumption tax may be levied on an ad valorem basis, a specific-quantity basis, or a compound basis combining the two.

In terms of compliance requirements, exporters to China should pay particular attention to five aspects. First, tariff classification. In 2026, the *Import and Export Tariff of the People's Republic of China* continues to refine China's tariff subheadings, and the tariff codes for certain new industries, materials, and consumer products may be revised. Second, proof of origin. To benefit from tariff rates under trade agreements, preferential tariff rates, or zero tariffs for the LDCs or African countries, exporters must provide evidence demonstrating that the goods meet the applicable rules of origin. Third, customs valuation. Customs authorities not only review the invoice price but also examines freight and insurance costs, commissions, packaging, molds, royalties, and related-party transactions. Fourth, document consistency. The information contained in contracts, invoices, packing lists, bills of lading, certificates of origin,

and regulatory documents must be consistent with one another. Fifth, trade remedies and special tariffs. Anti-dumping duties, countervailing duties, safeguard measures, and retaliatory tariffs may be imposed in addition to the normal import tax burden.

(Ⅱ) Provisional Tariff Rates Closely Aligned with High-Quality Development

In 2026, China will apply provisional tariff rates lower than the MFN rates to 935 commodities, covering key components, advanced materials, resource-based products, medical products, and certain consumer goods. The tariff reductions on key components and advanced materials are aimed at promoting greater self-reliance and strength in key sectors. For example, the tariff rate on gas diffusion layers for fuel cells has been reduced from 17% to 9%. The tariff adjustments also show a clear orientation towards the green transition, with resource-based products and products associated with the circular economy benefiting significantly. For example, the tariff rate on bio-based avaiation fuel has been reduced to 0. Tariff reductions on medical and livelihood-related products focus on high-value medical consumables and diagnostic equipment. For example, import tariffs on artificial heart valves, artificial blood vessels, and hearing aids, have been reduced to 1%-2%. Tariff reductions on high-quality consumer goods place greater emphasis on attracting high-quality products and supplies. For example, certain foods for special medical purposes are elegibe for zero tariffs. Adjustments to China's import tariffs enable high-quality global products and supplies to benefit more fully the opportunities presented by China's vast market.

(Ⅲ) Greater Unilateral Opening-Up

China has provided unilateral preferential treatment to the LDCs through various measures, firmly supporting their development while proactively shouldering its

responsibilities as a major country in promoting global economic development.

China has firmly committed to providing LDCs with zero-tariff treatment across 100% of tariff lines. Since December 1, 2024, China has officially applied a zero preferential tariff rate to products originating in LDCs that have established diplomatic relations with China across all tariff lines, making it the first developing country and major global economy to implement such an initiative. In 2026, the initiative remains in operation. Certain imported goods from countries such as Bangladesh also enjoy preferential tariff rates in accordance with the relevant trade agreements and exchange of letters. ①

China remains committed to promoting common development with Africa and providing African countries with substantial unilateral tariff concessions. From May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2028, 20 non-LDC African countries that have established diplomatic relations with China will also be granted zero-tariff treatment. China will thereby extend zero-tariff treatment to imports from all African countries with which it has diplomatic relations. This will substantially lower tariff barriers to African agricultural products, mineral products, food products, light industrial goods, and certain processed products entering the Chinese market, while also providing African exporters with greater policy certainty in the Chinese market.

Ⅳ. Import Requirements Related to Green and Sustainable Development

In terms of green and sustainable development, driven by the "Dual Carbon" goals of "carbon peaking" and "carbon neutrality", China's import regime is gradually shifting from a traditional tariff and customs clearance management system towards a

① The Tariff Commission of the State Council, *Announcement on Granting Zero-Tariff Treatment Across100% of Tariff Lines to the Least Developed Countries*, 2024, see: https://www.gov.cn/lianbo/bumen/202409/content_6974163.htm.

comprehensive governance framework centered on environmental requirements and green standards. The green and sustainable dimensions of China's market opening are becoming increasingly prominent.

(Ⅰ) Supporting the Import of Green and Low-Carbon Products, Technologies and Services

In 2025, the Ministry of Commerce issued the *Implementation Opinions on Expanding Green Trade*, proposing to ensure the import of relevant resources, products and services related to green and low-carbon development, improve standards and management measures for imports of recycled resources, and promote the standardized import of recycled copper, recycled aluminum, recycled steel and other recycled resources, while supporting the development of a standards system for green and low-carbon products, technologies and services. ①

(Ⅱ) Prohibiting and Restricting Imports Posing High Pollution Risks

China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment and other relevant authorities have prohibited the import of solid waste in any form and stopped approving the relevant import licenses. ② For recycled resources, China distinguishes and regulates qualifying recycled raw materials separately from solid waste under a standards-based classification system. According to a 2024 announcement on the import management of

---

① The Ministry of Commerce, *Implementation Opinions on Expanding Green Trade*, 2025, see: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zwgk/zcfb/art/2025/art_5058aa3f9e7e46f8ac2bc036e5d85de9.html.

② The Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the Ministry of Commerce, the National Development and Reform Commission, the General Administration of Customs, *Announcement on Matters Concerning the Comprehensive Prohibition of the Import of Solid Waste*, 2020, see: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-11/27/content_5565456.htm.

recycled copper and aluminum raw materials,[①] recycled copper and copper-alloy raw materials, as well as recycled aluminum and aluminum-alloy raw materials that meet the relevant requirements are not classified as solid waste and may be imported in accordance with the applicable rules. Where the Customs identifies materials suspected of being solid waste, it may commission a specialized institution to determine whether the materials constitute solid waste.

(Ⅲ) Strengthening Regulation for Green Imports of Hazardous Chemicals, Controlled Ozone-Depleting Substances and Hydrofluorocarbons

The Catalog of Goods Prohibited from Import (Batch IX)[②], implemented in 2024, includes decabromodiphenyl ether (DecaBDE), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) its salts, and related compounds, among the goods subject to import prohibitions. The policy is based, inter alia, on the need to protect human health and safety and the environment. The 2026 quota scheme for ozone-depleting substances and hydrofluorocarbons continues to provide for quota licensing for their production, use, imports and exports, as well as import and export approval requirements. These arrangements support China's implemenation of the Montreal Protocol and the Kigali Amendment.

---

① The Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the General Administration of Customs, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Commerce, the State Administration for Market Regulation, *Announcement on Matters Concerning the Regulation of the Import Management of Recycled Copper and Copper-Alloy Raw Materials and Recycled Aluminum and Aluminum-Alloy Raw Materials (Announcement No. 23 of 2024)*, October 2024, see: https://www.mee.gov.cn/xxgk2018/xxgk/xxgk01/202410/t20241024_1090051.html.

② The Ministry of Commerce, the General Administration of Customs, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, *Announcement on the Publication of the Catalog of Goods Prohibited from Import (Batch IX) and the Catalog of Goods Prohibited from Export (Batch Ⅷ)* (Announcement No. 63 of 2023), December 2023, see: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zwgk/zcfb/art/2023/art_484e1af6b242467cb7681c66d44fd3df.html

(Ⅳ) Strengthening Green Import Management through Mandatory Standards and Certification Labels

The energy efficiency labeling system requires energy-using products included in the relevant catalog① to undergo testing against mandatory energy efficiency standards, with manufacturers or importers responsible for determining their energy efficiency ratings, completing the required filing procedures and using the prescribed labels. The water efficiency labeling system establishes requirements for water efficiency ratings, filing and labeling for products such as faucets, toilets and dishwashers. The system governing the restriction of hazardous substances in electrical and electronic products is also being updated. The *Requirements for the Restriction of the Use of Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Products* have been issued and will enter into force on 1 August, 2027. From that date, relevant products will be subject to the hazardous-substance restrictions set out in the new standards. ②

(Ⅴ) Regulating Green Claims and the Use of Sustainability Labels Through Certification Systems

Imported products sold in China as "organic products" must be accompanied by documents including a Chinese organic product certification certificate, organic product sales certificate, certification mark and product label. Regulatory authorities also verify

---

① The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ), *Measures for the Administration of Energy Efficiency Labeling*, see: https://www.samr.gov.cn/cms_files/filemanager/samr/www/samrnew/samrgkm/nsjg/bgt/202106/W020211127644004815044.pdf.

② The Ministry of Commerce, *China RoHS Mandatory National Standard GB 26572-2025 Officially Released and to Be Implemented in 2027*, 2025, see: https://chinawto.mofcom.gov.cn/article/jsbl/zcfg/202509/20250903596912.shtml.

the consistency between the goods and the accompanying documentation. ① The Green Product labels are uniformly issued and administered by the State Administration for Market Regulation. Relevant certification bodies and certified enterprises are required to use the labels in accordance with applicable requirements. Overseas enterprises using terms such as "organic", "green", "low-carbon", "environmentally friendly" and "sustainable" on Chinese-lauguage labels, e-commerce pages, promotional materials and distribution-channel materials shall have corresponding certification, testing, accounting or other supporting documentation. For consumer products such as food, chemicals and fresh edible agricultural products, attention should also be paid to the mandatory standards governing ecessive packaging.

(Ⅵ) Establishing and Developing the Product Carbon Footprint Management System

In 2024, several Chinese government authorities jointly issued the *Implementation Plan for Establishing a Carbon Footprint Management System*. The plan calls for China to put in place the foundations of a product carbon footprint management system by early 2027, formulate and issue a national general standard for product carbon footprint accounting and carbon footprint accounting rules and standards for approximately 100 key products, and establish a product carbon footprint labeling, certification and grading system. By 2030, the carbon footprint management system is expected to be further refined and improved. ② At present, product carbon footprint information has not

---

① General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China, *Measures for the Administration of Organic Product Certification*, see:https://www.cnca.gov.cn/hlwfwy/wwzl/spncp/flfg/art/2024/art_71134c02b6b34d21a130e59f03cc196d.html.

② The National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the State Administration for Market Regulation and other government authorities, *Implementation Plan for Establishing a Carbon Footprint Management System*, May 2024, see:https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/2024/issue_11506/202408/content_6966477.html.

yet become a unified customs clearance requirement for all imported goods. However, in key sectors such as lithium batteries, photovoltaics, steel and electronic appliances, carbon footprint data, accounting rules and carbon footprint labels are becoming increasingly integrated into procurement, certification and market-access processes.

Ⅴ. Conclusion

China is opening up to the outside world at a higher level and building a more attractive, stable and predictable import market environment, enabling China's vast market to better connect and advance together with the diverse supply provided by the rest of the world.

China has established a three-tier policy innovation framework covering regions, industries, and market entities. Under this framework, pilot free trade zones and free trade ports serve as platforms, international trade fairs as the China International Import Expo serve as windows, and new business models such as cross-border e-commerce and bonded logistics serve as key drivers. These efforts have helped develop a diverse range of import channels, substantially improve trade facilitation, and enable global business to benefit from China's institutional and policy arrangements.

China has comprehensively deepened reforms to cross-border trade facilitation, actively replicated and scaled up effective measures for opening up, streamlined inspection and quarantine procedures, and advanced the alignment of technical standards with international rules, effectively reducing the institutional costs of exporting to China.

China has significantly increased the level of tariff concessions, applying provisional tariff rates lower than the MFN rates to 935 products, with tariff reductions focused on key components, advanced materials, medical products and other priority categories. China has also provided zero-tariff treatment across 100% of tariff lines for

the LDCs and African countries that have established diplomatic relations with China.

China has established an import governance system guided by the "dual carbon" goals, supporting the import of green and low-carbon products and technologies, banning the import of solid waste in all forms, strengthening controls on hazardous chemicals, ozone-depleting substances and hydrofluorocarbons, regulating certification for organic and green products, and steadily developing a product carbon footprint management system.

Chapter Ⅷ

Trade Agreements and Related Trade Facilitation Arrangements

China is developing a global network of high-standard free trade areas and continuing to deepen regional economic integration. Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has implemented a range of trade facilitation measures, effectively reducing the time costs of trade and cross-border transaction costs while enhancing the stability of transnational supply chains. Through these measures, China is helping to create a favorable institutional environment for exports to China, enhancing partner countries' capacity to export to China and enabling them to share in the growth opportunities generated by China's vast domestic market.

Ⅰ. Analysis of the Effects of Free Trade Agreements in Force

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) further open markets and reduce trade barriers beyond commitments made under the WTO, serving as a useful complement to the multilateral trading system. China is one of the world's most active users of FTAs. As of December 2025, China had signed 24 free trade agreements with 31 countries and regions, with FTA partners accounting for approximately 45% of its total trade in goods.[①] In addition to market access for goods, services and investment,

① FTA Net, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, https://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/.

comprehensive FTAs typically also include rules and standards covering intellectual property rights, e-commerce, competition policy and the environment. ①②

(I) Release of RCEP Benefits and Regional Supply Chain Coordination

In 2022, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) entered into force. According to Wind data, exports from RCEP member countries to China increased significantly from 2021 onwards, rising by 24.66% year on year in 2021 and by 9.59% in 2022. The negotiation and entry into force of the RCEP had a pronounced "expectation effect", reflecting member countries' confidence in the growth of intra-regional trade. As the world's largest free trade agreement, covering 15 member countries, the RCEP recorded intra-regional trade of USD 6.039 trillion in 2025, an increase of 34% from 2019. In 2025, imports from RCEP member countries accounted for approximately 36% of China's import basket. ③ Emerging economies among ASEAN members, such as Cambodia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Lao PDR, recorded the most significant growth in exports to RCEP member countries, with export growth rates of 120.9%, 47.2%, 35.9% and 24.1%, respectively, from 2022 to 2025. In 2025, Cambodia's and Viet Nam's exports to China increased by 29.9% and 14.8%, respectively. Other ASEAN member countries, by contrast, generally experienced a gradual stabilization of exports to China following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, before subsequently rebounding. In 2024 and 2025, Thailand's exports to China increased by 15.59% and 4.62%, respectively, while Malaysia's exports to China increased by 14.85% in 2024. Among East Asian countries, the

① According to WTO statistical definitions, the European Union, as a single customs territory, is listed as an independent contracting party. Source: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/region_e/recent-rta-developments_e.pdf.

② FTA Net, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China: https://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/.

③ Source: Asia Global Institute, the RCEP trade tracker. See https://www.asiaglobalinstitute.hku.hk/news-post/third-anniversary-rcep-trade-trends-strategic-sectoral-growth-and-road-ahead; FTA Net, the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, https://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/.

recovery and rebound in bilateral trade between the Republic of Korea and China was the most pronounced, with exports to China surging in 2026. According to data from the Bank of Korea, monthly exports from the Republic of Korea to China posted year-on-year growth exceeding 50% for five consecutive months as of July 2026. Following the entry into force of the agreement, more than 90% of intra-regional goods trade will gradually become subject to zero tariffs over a 20-year period, generating significant trade-creation effects. ①

RCEP has reshaped regional supply chains through unified Rules of Origin (ROO) (APEC Policy Support Unit, 2022; Asian Development Bank, 2022; Crivelli et al., 2023). For the first time, RCEP established a unified set of rules of origin and regional cumulation rules among its 15 members. These rules have effectively facilitated deeper integration of supply chains within the region, improved the efficiency of regional production networks, and strengthened trade in intermediate products. Following the entry into force of the agreement, manufacturers in member countries have been able to source raw materials, intermediate products and components at lower costs, thereby reducing production input costs, enhancing the competitiveness of regional industries, and improving the resilience and efficiency of global supply chains. ②

---

① Source: Asia Global Institute, the RCEP trade tracker. See: https://www.asiaglobalinstitute.hku.hk/news-post/third-anniversary-rcep-trade-trends-strategic-sectoral-growth-and-road-ahead; Calculated based on data from the Bank of Thailand, Bank Negara Malaysia and Bank of Korea and other central banks.

② APEC Policy Support Unit, 2022, "Study on Tariffs: Analysis of the RCEP Tariff Liberalization Schedules". see: https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/publications/2022/5/study-on-tariffs-analysis-of-the-rcep-tariff-liberalization-schedules/222_psu_study-on-tariffs_rcep.pdf; Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2022, The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement: A New Paradigm in Asian Regional Cooperation?; P. Crivelli, S. Inama and M. Pearson, 2023, "An Assessment of Rules of Origin in RCEP and ASEAN+1 Free Trade Agreements," Asian Development Bank Working Paper. See: https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/916421/rules-origin-rcep-asean1-free-trade-agreements.pdf.

Box 8-1 RCEP Accelerates Regional Supply Chain Integration: The Case of Integrated Circuits

China has become the world's largest importer of integrated circuits. According to data from the General Administration of Customs of China, China's imports of integrated circuits amounted to USD 385.64 billion in 2024, with RCEP member countries accounting for 43.4% of China's total integrated circuit imports, up from 31.6% in 2021. The Republic of Korea was China's second-largest source of integrated circuit imports after Taiwan, China, with imports from the Republic of Korea reaching USD 83.93 billion in 2024, up 27.9% year on year and accounting for more than 21.7% of China's total integrated circuit imports.

According to data from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea and the Korea International Trade Association, China was the second-largest destination for the Republic of Korea's semiconductor exports, accounting for 33.3% of the Republic of Korea's total semiconductor exports in 2024. Malaysia and Viet Nam ranked third and fifth, respectively, among China's sources of integrated circuit imports, with their exports of related products to China continuing to expand, reaching USD 22.52 billion and USD 13.87 billion, respectively.

RCEP has not only further concentrated China's sources of integrated circuit imports within the region, but also highlighted the critical role of East and Southeast Asia in China's semiconductor supply chains.

(Ⅱ) China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0

In October 2025, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol (CAFTA 3.0) was officially signed. The agreement represents the highest level of

commitments made by China and ASEAN in their respective free trade practices, establishing a systematic cooperation framework covering both "at-the-border" and "behind-the-border" measures. It marks the expansion of China-ASEAN free trade cooperation from traditional trade and investment liberalization and facilitation to emerging areas such as the digital economy, green economy, standards, supply chain connectivity, competition and consumer protection. The Southeast Asia Public Policy Institute (2026) noted that, amid heightened uncertainty in the US and EU markets, the predictability of demand in the Chinese market has substantially reduced trade risks for ASEAN countries. CAFTA 3.0 will broaden channels for ASEAN enterprises to enter the Chinese market, particularly in services, agriculture and low-carbon manufacturing. According to estimates by the General Administration of Customs of China, the China-ASEAN bilateral trade potential index reached a record high of 173.19 in 2024, an increase of 8.22, while the trade vitality index exceeded 200 for the first time, reaching a record high of 205.32, an increase of 14.3. With the upgrade of CAFTA 3.0, China and ASEAN continue to deepen openness and integration and pursue common development. ①

Taking the digital economy as an example, CAFTA 3.0 establishes a dedicated chapter on the digital economy and promotes trade facilitation measures such as electronic signatures, electronic payments, electronic invoicing and electronic bills of lading. The agreement also addresses cross-border data flows, with the two sides committing to discussions on non-discriminatory treatment of digital products, information and communications technology (ICT) products, and other related areas.

---

① The Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol". See: https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/cms_files/filemanager/policySummary/viewcore_072d185118aa4987a2dce1e6bb204a9e.html. Southeast Asia Public Institute, *Southeast Asia Global Relations Outlook Part 2: U.S. and China*. See: https://seapublicpolicy.org/part-ii-asean-and-global-horizons/#undefined. The General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, "*2024* Report on China-ASEAN Trade Index Analysis". See: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/customs/*302249*/zfxxgk/*2799825*/*302274*/myzs*75*/*3840284*/*3840291*/zgzdogjmyzstb/index.html.

The comprehensive upgrading of digital economy rules responds to the needs of regional digital trade development and regulation and helps address the challenge of fragmented rules. China and ASEAN have a strong foundation for cooperation in digital trade, and bilateral digital trade continues toexpand. ASEAN has become the second-largest export market for China's cross-border e-commerce. The OECD (2026) noted that China is an important destination for ASEAN countries' exports of digital delivery services (DDS), accounting for approximately 7% of their total exports in 2023. CAFTA 3.0 has enhanced the capacity of China and ASEAN to coordinate data regulatory policies, while significantly advancing trade liberalization in areas such as data flows and market access and laying an institutional foundation for the development of bilateral digital trade and cooperation in the digital economy. ①

(Ⅲ) Representative Bilateral Free Trade Agreements across Regions

China is building a globally oriented network of free trade areas, with its trading partners extending well beyond neighboring countries and the Asia-Pacific region. The China-Chile Free Trade Agreement (signed in 2005 and upgraded in 2017) and the China-Peru Free Trade Agreement (signed in 2009 and upgraded in 2024) were the first two bilateral FTAs China signed with countries in Latin America and have significant benchmark value. China has been the largest trading partner, export market and source of imports for both Chile and Peru for more than a decade, while Chile is China's third-largest trading partner in Latin America and Peru the fourth-largest. The two agreements have established a range of mechanisms to promote trade, including tariff reductions, rules of origin and trade facilitation measures, effectively promoting

① The Development Research Center of the State Council and China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, 2025, *Digital Trade Development and Cooperation Report 2025*. See: https://www.caict.ac.cn/xwdt/ynxw/202512/P020251216392641553598.pdf. OECD, 2026, *Digital Trade Review of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*. See: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/digital-trade-review-of-the-association-of-southeast-asian-nations_abd6f44a-en/full-report.html.

exports of specialty agricultural and mineral products from Chile, Peru and other countries to China.

First, FTAs have continued to deepen trade in agricultural and mineral products. Following the upgrade of the China-Chile FTA, approximately 98% of products became subject to reciprocal zero tariffs. China is Chile's largest export market for cherries, while Chile is China's second-largest source of fresh fruit imports. China is the largest importer of Chilean copper ores. According to the World Bank's WITS database, China's imports of Chilean copper ores amounted to USD 21.289 billion in 2024, accounting for 46.3% of Chile's total copper ore exports. Peru is the world's second-largest copper producer, with 12% of the world's copper reserves. Peru has become China's largest supplier of blueberries, with Peruvian blueberries accounting for 89% of China's blueberry import market. ①

Second, FTAs have enhanced trade facilitation. The Chapter on Rules of Origin in the Protocol to Upgrade the China-Peru Free Trade Agreement incorporates provisions on electronic connectivity and removes the limit on the number of products that may be covered by certificates of origin. The Chapter on Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation sets out detailed provisions on responses to requests related to customs declarations, information exchange, customs clearance, express consignment clearance and clearance of perishable goods. The Chapter on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures regulates enforcement at ports of entry through provisions on border measures, enhancing the transparency of the laws and regulations of both parties. ② These arrangements have improved trade facilitation and will help further advance high-level bilateral cooperation.

---

① Source: https://wits.worldbank.org/trade/comtrade/en/country/CHN/year/2024/tradeflow/Imports/partner/ALL/product/260300.

② FTA Net, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "Official from the Department of International Trade of the Ministry of Commerce Interprets the Protocol to Upgrade the China-Peru Free Trade Agreement". See: https://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zhengwugk/202411/56099_1.html.

Ⅱ. Trade Facilitation Measures under the Belt and Road Initiative

Trade facilitation measures are crucial to reducing trade costs. An OECD (2018) study found that each one-day reduction in customs clearance time was associated with an approximately 0.6%-1% increase in trade. Estimates of cross-border trade from the World Bank's *Doing Business* database show that each one-day reduction in a country's customs clearance time increases exports from other countries to that country by approximately 1%-1.5%, with the effect being more pronounced for developing countries, where export growth can reach 2%. The World Bank (2018) noted that the Belt and Road Initiative provided an important opportunity to continue advancing trade facilitation reforms among participating countries, effectively reducing the complexity of policy and regulatory frameworks across countries. The Belt and Road Initiative has enhanced policy transparency and strengthened policy coordination; it has also leveraged information and communications technology (ICT) to streamline processes across trade, customs and logistics, thereby improving cross-border information sharing. ①

(Ⅰ) Mutual Recognition of Customs Controls and Enforcement Cooperation

The Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) system, advocated by the World Customs Organization, aims to minimize customs control risks through cooperation

① OECD, 2018, Trade Facilitation and the Global Economy. See: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2018/05/trade-facilitation-and-the-global-economyg1g7af34/9789264277571-en.pdf. Source: https://subnational.doingbusiness.org/en/data/exploretopics/trading-across-borders/what-measured. M. B. Johns, J. L. Clarke, C. Kerswell and G. McLinden, 2018, "Beyond Infrastructure: Trade Facilitation Priorities for the Belt and Road Initiative", World Bank Trade Post. See: https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/trade/beyond-infrastructure-trade-facilitation-priorities-belt-and-road-initiative.

among customs administrations, the business community, and other government agencies, thereby promoting global supply chain security and trade facilitation, achieving mutual benefits for customs and enterprises, and facilitating smoother trade. AEO Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) refer to institutional arrangements under which customs administrations that have established AEO programmes mutually recognize their respective certified AEO enterprises and provide corresponding trade facilitation measures for customs clearance. They are an effective means of reducing duplicate certification and promoting the security and facilitation of international supply chains. ① The AEO system classifies enterprises according to their credit status and improves customs clearance efficiency through measures such as reduced inspections, priority inspections, faster clearance and simplified procedures, thereby facilitating enterprises' cross-border trade.

As of the end of October 2025, China Customs had signed AEO mutual recognition agreements with 31 economies, covering 57 countries and regions, of which 38 were Belt and Road partner countries. China Customs ranks first globally in the number of AEO mutual recognition agreements signed, the number of countries and regions covered, and the number of countries and regions where mutual recognition has been implemented. An APEC (2020) study noted that, following the implementation of the bilateral AEO MRA between China and the Republic of Korea in 2014, customs clearance times for goods exported by the AEO were significantly reduced in both countries. In China, the average customs clearance time for goods declared by AEOs from the Republic of Korea decreased by 62.1%, from 10 hours and 17 minutes to 3 hours and 54 minutes. In the Republic of Korea, the average customs clearance time for goods declared by AEOs from China decreased by 55.9%, from 5 hours and 10 minutes to 2 hours and 16 minutes. The bilateral AEO MRAs generated substantial

① World Customs Organization, "Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) Programme". See: https://aeo.wcoomd.org/about.

benefits to AEOs in both economies. ①②

(Ⅱ) Cross-Border Logistics and Transport Facilitation Agreements

The Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) is a global customs transit facilitation system for the international cross-border transport of goods, established under a United Nations convention. Compared with traditional road transport, TIR transport features "one declaration, direct transport by one vehicle, and end-to-end transport in one container". Vehicles carrying TIR Carnets can travel between contracting parties without changing vehicles or unloading and reloading cargo throughout the journey, and are exempt from inspections requiring the opening of containers, effectively reducing the time required for transshipment and cargo handling at ports of entry and lowering transport costs for enterprises. ③ China has signed regional transport agreements with Belt and Road countries, including the *Agreement on the Creation of Favorable Conditions for International Road Transport of the SCO Member States*, the *China-ASEAN Maritime Transport Agreement*, and the *Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA)*. It has also established a relatively comprehensive network of bilateral road transport agreements with countries and regions in Central Asia, Russia and along the Northern Eurasian Corridor, as well as in South Asia and West Asia, covering multiple modes of transport, including railways, roads, maritime transport, aviation and postal services.

---

① Source: http://gdfs.customs.gov.cn/nanjing_customs/aeoqyrzscjsfw/nwwd/ 6825490/index.html.

② APEC, 2020, "APEC Customs Time Release Comparison Study — Case Study of AEO MRAs between APEC Member Economies". See: https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/publications/2020/12/apec-customs-time-release-comparison-study/220_cti_sccp_time-release-comparison-study-3.pdf? sfvrsn=5ac7e03_1.

③ The General Administration of Customs, "Interpretation of Policy Measures under the Special Action for Cross-Border Trade Facilitation in 2026 (Ⅲ)". See: http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/2026-04/28/article_2026042810373429747.html.

Taking Kazakhstan as an example, China and Kazakhstan signed an international road transport agreement in 2023. The agreement expanded the scope of bilateral international road transport cooperation to include transport throughout the territory, transit transport and transport to and from third countries, while establishing systematic and institutional arrangements for the entry and exit of transport vehicles and personnel, mutual recognition of documents, reciprocal tax exemptions, visa facilitation, customs clearance facilitation and information sharing. Under the agreement, Kazakh road freight vehicles can travel freely within China and travel directly to seaports along China's southeastern coast. This will significantly reduce the additional costs arising from the repeated loading and unloading currently required for road freight between the two countries in border areas, thereby lowering the prices of imported products and easing the cost pressures on Kazakh exporters. According to data from Kazakhstan's Ministry of Transport, China-Kazakhstan road freight for imports and exports reached 2.8 million tonnes in 2024, while transit freight reached 3.6 million tonnes, representing year-on-year increases of 41% and 68%, respectively. ①②

(Ⅲ) Green Channels for the Inspection and Quarantine of Key Agricultural Products

China has successfully implemented networked verification and paperless processing of certificates with multiple trading partners, including countries along the Belt and Road, BRICS members and ASEAN members. Networked verification enables the automatic cross-checking and cancellation of inspection and quarantine certificate data, as well as rapid verification, thereby effectively preventing fraudulent certificates, smuggling, false or concealed declarations, and sanitary and quarantine

① The Belt and Road Portal, "China-Kazakhstan International Road Transport Agreement Officially Enters into Force". See: https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/0KA7NP1L.html.

② The Times of Central Asia, "Kazakhstan: The Key Link Connecting China and Europe". See: https://timesca.com/kazakhstan-the-key-link-connecting-china-and-europe/.

risks, and enhancing the security of global supply chains. In 2026, Honduran melons officially entered the Chinese market. This was a concrete outcome of the implementation of the Protocol on Phytosanitary Requirements for the Export of Fresh Melons from Honduras to China and marked the addition of another specialty agricultural product to Honduras's exports to China, following bananas, coffee beans, tobacco leaves and whiteleg shrimp. ①

Second, China has established "fast-track review and approval" mechanisms with multiple countries and opened "green channels" for the import of fresh goods, with the aim of improving customs clearance efficiency. Through "process re-engineering" and "credit management", these measures accelerate the turnover of time-sensitive products and international agricultural products. For example, Qinzhou Port has launched dedicated express routes for fruit shipments to Thailand, Viet Nam and other countries and established a "green channel" for imported fruits, enabling imported fresh fruits to clear customs with "zero waiting" and "zero port dwell time". Xiamen Airport Customs has established a dedicated channel for imported fresh products, using an intelligent system to review certificates for fresh products imported through the channel and enabling certificates to be reviewed immediately upon receipt. It has also designated inspection facilities exclusively for fruits imported through the channel, limiting the inspection time for such fresh products to within 30 minutes. In May 2026, China fully implemented zero-tariff measures for the 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations and upgraded the "green channel" for African agricultural and food products exported to China, further expediting quarantine clearance and market access for such products and expanding market access for African exports to China. These cooperation mechanisms together form the institutional foundation for trade facilitation under the Belt and Road Initiative, promoting the transformation of cross-

① The General Administration of Customs, "The First 21 Tonnes of Fresh Honduran Melons Successfully Clear Customs". See: http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/2026-03/30/article_2026033016421080760.html.

border trade towards greater digitalization and efficiency. ①②

Ⅲ. Digital Trade and E-Commerce Agreements

In recent years, China has continued to advance opening-up in the fields of digital trade and e-commerce through e-commerce chapters in free trade agreements, cooperation on regional digital trade rules, and mechanisms such as the "Silk Road E-Commerce", thereby reducing cross-border transaction costs and market access barriers. These forms of cooperation have significantly enhanced the capacity of trading partner countries to export agricultural products, food and consumer goods to China by reducing information search costs, transaction costs and the time costs associated with customs clearance.

(Ⅰ) Paperless Trade and Mutual Recognition of Electronic Documents

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2013) noted that the direct and indirect costs arising from compliance with regulatory procedures and documentary requirements in cross-border trade were as high as 7-10% of the cost of traded goods. ③ The global implementation rate of paperless trade facilitation measures stood at 61%, increasing by approximately 8 percentage points between 2017 and 2019; however, the global average for cross-

① The Belt and Road Portal, "The New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor Helps More ASEAN Fruits Enter the Chinese Market". See: https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/05OM4IUR.html.

② The General Administration of Customs, "The First Cross-Border E-Commerce Air Freight Route among BRICS Cities Surpasses 40,000 Tonnes in Imports and Exports". See: http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/2025-10/21/article_2025121223445059144.html.

③ UNESCAP, 2013, Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade in Asia: Results from an Expert Survey. See: https://repository.unescap.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/61f4247a-4995-4eab-ac37-0c08f431748d/content.

border cooperation measures was only 36% (UNCTAD, 2020).[①]

China has established a digital trade facilitation system centered on the "Single Window", enabling information sharing and single declaration among customs, border inspection, maritime, taxation, and foreign exchange authorities, etc. Through a unified platform, enterprises can complete procedures such as customs declarations, inspection and quarantine declarations, applications for certificates of origin, payment of taxes and fees, and logistics tracking online, substantially reducing the submission of paper documents and duplicate data entry. In terms of mutual recognition of electronic documents, China has taken the lead in promoting the cross-border exchange of electronic certificates of origin (e-COs), electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) and electronic sanitary certificates. For example, China and ASEAN countries have implemented the China-ASEAN electronic networking of certificates of origin, enabling the online issuance, transmission and verification of certificates of origin and reducing the need to mail paper certificates and conduct manual reviews.

(Ⅱ) Bilateral Cooperation Mechanisms under "Silk Road E-Commerce"

"Silk Road E-Commerce" is an important institutionalized platform for digital economy cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. As of 2025, China had established cooperation mechanisms with more than 30 countries across ASEAN, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa. The two sides cooperate in areas such as policy coordination, platform connectivity, logistics and customs clearance, digital payments, talent development, and the digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

In terms of market expansion, "Silk Road E-Commerce" promotes the

---

① UNCTAD, 2020, Paperless Trade Facilitation in 2019: Global and Asia-Pacific State of Play, see: https://unctad.org/news/paperless-trade-facilitation-2019-global-and-asia-pacific-state-play.

development of "National Pavilion" models for the Chinese market. By setting up national pavilions, dedicated sections for specialty products and brand promotion centers on cross-border e-commerce platforms, partner countries can showcase their agricultural products, food and specialty consumer goods in a centralized manner, reducing the information search and marketing costs associated with entering the Chinese market. For example, the pavilions of Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan and Chile have successively been established on major Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms, expanding their presence in the Chinese market through online displays, livestreaming promotion and cross-border retail channels.

In terms of payment system development, the "Silk Road E-Commerce" cooperation mechanism promotes cross-border electronic payments and digital financial cooperation. Through cross-border payment platforms, local-currency settlement arrangements and integration of digital payment interfaces, enterprises in partner countries can conduct cross-border transactions with China more conveniently, reducing foreign exchange conversion costs and payment risks.

In terms of capacity building, China has implemented "Silk Road E-Commerce" capacity-building projects with ASEAN, Central Asian and African countries to jointly establish e-commerce training centers, digital economy innovation centers and cross-border e-commerce training bases. Through online and offline training courses, business matchmaking events and digital entrepreneurship programmes, these initiatives have provided training to large numbers of e-commerce professionals and managers of small and medium-sized enterprises in partner countries, developed talent in e-commerce operations, digital marketing and cross-border logistics, and enhanced their capacity to enter the Chinese market through digital platforms.

Ⅳ. Mutual Recognition of Standards

In recent years, China has continued to advance cooperation on mutual recognition with major trading partners in the areas of standards, metrology, inspection and testing, and conformity assessment and accreditation. Through "bilateral/multilateral Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) for conformity assessment" and the international promotion of Chinese standards, China has gradually established a higher-level framework for mutual recognition of technical rules. At the same time, the promotion of foreign-language versions of Chinese standards has significantly reduced the costs incurred by foreign enterprises in understanding China's technical regulations and helped alleviate information asymmetry. This combination of institutional arrangements has effectively reduced institutional transaction costs, and improved the efficiency of market access for exports from trading partner countries to China.

(Ⅰ) Progress in Bilateral Mutual Recognition of Metrology and Conformity Assessment

In terms of mutual recognition of conformity assessment, China leverages the China National Accreditation Service for Conformity Assessment (CNAS) to participate in international accreditation cooperation and has signed mutual recognition agreements on certification and accreditation with multiple economies, enabling the cross-border mutual recognition of test reports and certification results and promoting an institutional arrangement whereby "one test for a product, recognized in multiple countries". China has also continued to promote cooperation in metrology, testing and certification with the European Union, ASEAN and Belt and Road partner countries. Through bilateral cooperation mechanisms, China has advanced the mutual recognition and acceptance of

inspection and testing results and the alignment of technical rules, reduced duplicate testing and certification procedures, and improved trade facilitation.

(Ⅱ) Promotion and Application of Foreign-Language Versions of Chinese Standards

The Standardization Administration of China (SAC), under the administration of the State Administration for Market Regulation, has continued to promote the development of foreign-language versions of Chinese standards and international standardization cooperation. Foreign-language versions of standards help foreign enterprises understand China's technical requirements and reduce the information costs of entering the Chinese market.

In terms of trade promotion, standards cooperation and certification and accreditation mechanisms mainly promote exports to China by reducing the costs of "duplicate testing", "the time costs associated with certification", and "the costs arising from information asymmetry regarding standards", while the promotion of foreign-language versions of standards lowers the barriers for enterprises to understand and comply with China's technical regulations. Standards cooperation, mutual recognition of certification and accreditation, and mutual recognition of inspection and testing results constitute important institutional support for China's promotion of "soft connectivity" in rules and standards and reduction of technical trade costs.

Ⅴ. Conclusion

China has promoted deeper regional economic cooperation through the conclusion of free trade agreements and developed a new institutional framework for an open economy through trade facilitation measures, the adoption of high - standard

international digital trade rules, and policy coordination and arrangements for mutual recognition of standards. FTAs in force have promoted regional supply chain coordination through tariff reductions and rules of origin, while customs mutual recognition, transport facilitation and green channels for agricultural products under the Belt and Road framework have significantly reduced customs clearance time and transaction costs. Digital trade cooperation and mutual recognition of standards have effectively alleviated information asymmetry and technical barriers. These institutional arrangements have created a favorable environment for partner countries to export to China, significantly reduced the institutional costs of cross-border trade, and promoted the deep integration of China's vast market with global supply chains.

Chapter Ⅸ

Jointly Enhancing Export Capacity to China

Enhancing export capacity is an autonomous development agenda for countries seeking to optimize their economic structures and strengthen trade competitiveness, and its benefits extend well beyond trade with China itself. Improving the capacity to export to China, in turn, represents an important avenue for countries to deepen their economic and trade cooperation with China, achieve trade diversification and promote economic growth. China possesses an enormous market, and its trend of consumption upgrading will continue to unleash substantial import demand. However, many countries have yet to translate this market potential into actual export growth. The constraints include both "hardware" deficiencies, such as port logistics and industrial capacity, and "software" bottlenecks, including trade institutions and talent pools. This chapter proposes areas for joint cooperation between China and other countries from three dimensions: economic infrastructure, industrial development and upgrading, and trade liberalization and facilitation, and discusses the differentiated applicability of these recommendations to different types of economies. It is particularly important to emphasize that enhancing the capacity to export to China is not merely a matter of "adapting to the Chinese market"; countries have full autonomy and choice in this process, and the relevant cooperation will also strengthen their position in global value chains. Countries may incorporate the relevant cooperation directions into their national trade development strategies as an integral part of broader trade diversification.

Ⅰ. Improving Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the physical foundation of export capacity. Long-term tracking by the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index shows a persistent and significant gap in logistics connectivity between high-income and low-income countries, with ports, transshipment hubs and inland checkpoints being the most concentrated sources of delays and uncertainty. The latest data for 2023-2024 further indicate that time losses in cross-border procedures continue to severely constrain supply chain efficiency in developing countries. In addressing these structural bottlenecks, countries may focus on the following five areas in upgrading infrastructure for exports to China. ①②

(Ⅰ) Unblocking the Last Mile of Export Logistics

The last-mile transport link for export goods from the place of origin to the port of departure is often the least efficient and most costly segment of the entire supply chain. Many developing countries face challenges such as port yard congestion, poor sea-rail intermodal connectivity, and the fragmentation of inland collection points. Countries may conduct a systematic diagnostic of their export collection and distribution systems, identify critical bottlenecks, optimize port yard operations, and improve the efficiency of sea-rail and road-rail intermodal connections.

For different types of economies, the priority and focus of this recommendation vary accordingly. For economies with underdeveloped export capacity, such as Kenya and Tanzania, collection and distribution bottlenecks represent the single greatest

---

① World Bank. Connecting to Compete 2023: Trade Logistics in an Uncertain Global Economy - The Logistics Performance Index and its Indicators (English). Washington, D. C. : World Bank Group. http://documents. worldbank. org/curated/en/099042123145531599

② World Bank. Connecting to Compete 2025: The New Logistics Performance Indicators 2. 0 (English). http://documents. worldbank. org/curated/en/099042226142014971

physical obstacle to exports to China—the evacuation capacity of the ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, and the efficiency of inland-to-port transport, directly determine the feasibility of exports, and these areas could be prioritized as infrastructure investment directions. For landlocked countries among resource- and agricultural-exporting economies, such as Kazakhstan, which rely heavily on dry port facilities, efforts may focus on improving cross-border rail intermodal nodes and smoothing rail freight corridors to China via the Khorgos and Alataw Pass gateways. For economies exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, such as Thailand, South Africa and Serbia, targeted improvements should be made according to their respective geographical conditions: Thailand could enhance multimodal transport efficiency in the Mekong River basin and strengthen transport linkages for exports to China via the China-Laos Railway; South Africa could improve rail capacity from inland mining areas to ports to ensure transport capacity for bulk exports to China, including iron ore and agricultural products; and Serbia, as a landlocked country, could develop its role as a node for the China-Europe Railway Express. For economies exporting manufactured goods and services, such as the United Kingdom and Spain, port and logistics systems are already relatively mature, and the priority for such investment is correspondingly lower.

(Ⅱ) Improving Origin Pre-Cooling and Cross-Border Cold Chain Networks

Exports of agricultural products and perishable food are highly dependent on temperature-controlled integrity from farm to port. Research by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicates that approximately 14% of global food is lost between harvest and the retail stage, while in developing countries, over 40% of food loss occurs at the post-harvest and processing stages, with inadequate cold chain infrastructure being a key contributing factor. For countries

where agricultural products represent a significant export category to China, it is recommended to establish a complete cold chain system covering origin pre-cooling, temperature-controlled transport, and port-side cold storage facilities.

This recommendation is particularly urgent for economies that rely heavily on agricultural products. Thailand's tropical fruits, South Africa's fresh fruit and wine, and Serbia's berry products are all highly dependent on cold chain integrity in their exports to China; Kenya's cut flowers and avocados, and Tanzania's cashew nuts and sesame seeds, among other products with export potential, likewise urgently need investment in origin pre-cooling facilities. Among resource- and agricultural-exporting economies, Colombia's coffee and cut flowers, and Pakistan's mangoes and citrus, also have relatively high requirements for cold chain infrastructure. For the United Kingdom and Spain, whose exports are dominated by manufactures and services, the need for cold chain development is comparatively limited, although Spain still has some scope for cold chain upgrading in its exports of Mediterranean specialty agricultural products (such as fresh fruit and olive oil) to China.

(Ⅲ) Upgrading Digital Hardware and Software at Ports

Customs clearance efficiency is a significant component of trade costs. Research by the WTO indicates that delays in transit can account for up to 44% of transport costs, stemming from storage charges, bottlenecks at weighbridges, and inefficient port clearance procedures. The implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) has reduced global trade costs by an average of 1%-4%, generating over USD 230 billion in additional trade, with the most significant gains observed in agriculture. Countries may accelerate the roll-out of digital customs clearance at ports, digitize key documents such as customs declarations, inspection and quarantine certificates, and certificates of origin, and actively interface with the China International Trade Single

Window system (https://www.singlewindow.cn) to enable data interoperability and process coordination. ①

Port digitalization holds positive significance for all types of exporting countries, but its priority varies by stage of development. For economies with underdeveloped export capacity, such as Kenya and Tanzania, the digitalization of clearance procedures is a foundational project for reducing trade costs, and they may prioritize seeking technical assistance from China to facilitate system integration. Resource- and agricultural-exporting economies, including Kazakhstan, Colombia and Pakistan, likewise have considerable scope for improving clearance efficiency. Even for developed economies with relatively sophisticated infrastructure, promoting data interoperability with China's Single Window system can also help enhance clearance efficiency.

(Ⅳ) Leveraging High-Level Exhibitions for Supply-Demand Connectivity

If logistics corridors and port facilities constitute the "hardware" foundation of exports, then high-level exhibitions serve as the market channels connecting supply and demand, and are equally indispensable to export capacity. The China International Import Expo (CIIE) is the world's first national-level import-themed exhibition, providing a high-level platform for enterprises from all countries to showcase their products and engage with the Chinese market. At its eighth edition in 2025, the CIIE attracted 4,108 exhibitors from 138 countries and regions, with intended transaction volumes reaching USD 83.49 billion. The Canton Fair, the China International Supply Chain Expo (CISCE), the China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE), the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS), the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo, and various specialized procurement matchmaking events similarly

① WTO. Trade Facilitation Agreement: Eight Years of Cutting Trade Costs and Boosting Growth for All Members. WTO Blog, February 26, 2025. https://www.wto.org/english/blogs_e/ddg_angela_ellard_e/blog_ae_26feb25_e.htm.

provide channels for exporting enterprises to establish long-term cooperation with Chinese buyers. Governments and business associations of the exporting countries may organize their enterprises to participate deeply in the above-mentioned high-level exhibitions, transforming one-off exhibition traffic into sustained commercial linkages through pre-exhibition matchmaking, in-exhibition negotiations and post-exhibition follow-up.

Exhibition utilization strategies vary by country. The United Kingdom and Spain may focus on participating in the high-end consumer goods and services trade sections of CIIE. Thailand, South Africa and Serbia may organize systematic participation by SMEs, gradually establishing a mechanism for regular industry delegations. For Kenya and Tanzania, the targeted support policies offered by CIIE and the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo can effectively lower the threshold for participation, creating conditions for enterprises from both sides to establish initial business links around quality local products.

(V) Expanding Cross-Border E-Commerce Export Channels to China

Cross-border B2B (Business-to-Business) e-commerce platforms offer low-threshold market access channels for SMEs and open up new pathways for specialty products to enter the Chinese market. Compared with traditional general trade, cross-border e-commerce involves smaller minimum order quantities, lower trial-and-error costs and direct consumer feedback, making it particularly suitable for smaller exporters that have not yet established stable distribution networks in China. Business associations of the exporting countries may systematically identify product categories suited to cross-border e-commerce, guide their enterprises in selecting appropriate clearance models based on product characteristics, and encourage them to build registration and record-filing, trademark protection, and post-sales compliance capacities commensurate with the scale of cross-border e-commerce channels.

The priorities for building cross-border e-commerce channels vary by country. Among economies exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, Thailand, Serbia and South Africa already have the conditions for bonded warehouse operations for their fruit products, wine and daily chemical products, with the emphasis on improving warehousing and delivery lead times and returns processing capabilities. The United Kingdom and Spain, whose high-end consumer goods and health products are subject to listing scope and registration and filing requirements, need to focus on streamlining documentation compliance and label conformity. Among resource- and agricultural-exporting economies, honey from Kazakhstan, coffee from Colombia and home textile products from Pakistan are well suited to cross-border direct-purchase imports for small-batch trial sales, gradually building repurchase data over time. For Kenya and Tanzania, it is advisable to rely on third-party service providers and the support of China's cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zones to complete the foundational capacity-building first.

Ⅱ. Optimizing Industrial Structure

Enhancing export capacity depends not only on the efficiency of moving existing products to market, but also, and more fundamentally, on whether a country can produce goods that are competitive and aligned with the demand of its target market. Industrial upgrading is the fundamental pathway to achieving sustainable export growth.

(Ⅰ) Leveraging Chinese Manufacturing FDI to Drive Trade

Attracting outward foreign direct investment (FDI) from China can bring not only capital and technology, but also enable host countries to re-export processed goods to China or to third-country markets through production bases established locally. As the

World Investment Report 2024 by UNCTAD points out, the construction of such international production networks is profoundly reshaping global trade patterns, thus creating a virtuous cycle of "investment-driven trade".① Countries may introduce targeted facilitation measures for Chinese manufacturing investment in their special economic zone and industrial park policies, while also focusing on enhancing local supply chain participation and technology spillovers, so that "leveraging investment to drive trade" genuinely serves the host country's industrial capacity-building. China and the partner countries may cooperate in park planning, operation management and personnel training, jointly improving the overall governance of these industrial zones.

The focus of implementation for this strategy varies across different types of economies. Economies exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, which already have a certain industrial base, are well suited to host manufacturing relocation from China-Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) has accumulated successful experience in attracting Chinese auto parts companies, South Africa can leverage its automotive industry cluster to attract Chinese supplier firms, and Serbia can utilize the unique advantages of the China-Serbia Free Trade Agreement to host Chinese manufacturing. For economies with underdeveloped export capacity (Kenya and Tanzania), both sides may identify cooperation directions in labor-intensive sectors such as light manufacturing and agricultural processing that align with local employment needs. For developed economies such as the United Kingdom and Spain, the implication of "leveraging investment to drive trade" should shift towards higher-level forms of cooperation, including joint R&D with Chinese enterprises, brand licensing and technology licensing, rather than the traditional manufacturing and sell-back model.

---

① UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2024: Investment Facilitation and Digital Government. Geneva, 2024. https://unctad.org/publication/world-investment-report-2024.

(Ⅱ) Carrying out Adaptive Product Development for C2M

The core of the C2M (Consumer-to-Manufacturer) model lies in leveraging big data resources from Chinese e-commerce platforms to analyze Chinese consumer preferences and demand characteristics, and feeding this intelligence back to guide exporting countries' enterprises in adjusting product design, packaging specifications, and branding strategies. This model can help exporting countries' enterprises shift from a "supply-driven" to a "demand-driven" approach, significantly improving the alignment of export products with the Chinese market. Governments and industry associations of exporting countries may guide their enterprises to systematically access consumer trend data from leading Chinese e-commerce platforms, establish rapid product iteration and flexible production mechanisms tailored to the Chinese market, and translate consumer feedback directly into improvements in product design, packaging specifications and pricing strategies.

The applicability of the C2M model is closely related to each country's manufacturing base and level of digitalization. Thailand, with its relatively mature cross-border e-commerce infrastructure, may pioneer large-scale C2M application in agricultural products and consumer goods, leveraging platforms such as Tmall Global and JD Worldwide to directly engage with Chinese consumers and access demand data. Serbia and South Africa's specialty products also have strong potential for adaptation. High-end consumer goods enterprises in the United Kingdom and Spain may leverage big data to precisely target the consumption upgrading needs of China's middle class and adjust their product marketing strategies accordingly. Among resource- and agricultural-exporting economies, Pakistan's textiles and Colombia's specialty coffee present scope for branding and customized product development. For Kenya and Tanzania, whose e-commerce foundation and manufacturing capacity are currently insufficient to support large-scale C2M operations, they may start with small-scale

pilots in specialty categories such as nuts and coffee to accumulate experience as a medium- to long-term development direction.

(Ⅲ) Promoting the Extension of Primary Resource Exports into Deep Processing

Many developing countries' exports to China remain heavily concentrated in unprocessed or primarily processed commodities and agricultural products, which carry low value added and are vulnerable to fluctuations in international market prices. Promoting the extension of export products from primary forms towards deep processing and refinement is a key pathway to improving export quality and economic returns. While upgrading human capital and introducing processing technologies, countries may also provide tax incentives and export incentives to deep-processing enterprises, encouraging the vertical extension of industrial chains. China and the partner countries may explore cooperation modalities that link technology transfer and cooperation, outward investment, and long-term procurement arrangements (such as long-term offtake agreements and exclusive marketing arrangements), so as to make the upgrade from raw material exports to processed goods exports commercially viable.

This recommendation is most urgent for resource- and agricultural-exporting economies. Kazakhstan may promote the extension from crude oil exports to petrochemical products, Colombia from green coffee bean exports to specialty coffee processing, and Pakistan from raw cotton exports to branded ready-made garments and home textiles. Economies with underdeveloped export capacity can likewise benefit—Kenya moving from bulk tea exports to branded value-added processing, and Tanzania shifting from raw cashew nut exports to shelled cashew processing, are both realistic pathways for value addition. South Africa's mineral processing and Thailand's rubber and cassava refining similarly have clear scope for upgrading. Deep-processed and branded products are better aligned with the demand for high-quality, high-value-

added imported goods under China's consumption upgrading trend, helping these countries move beyond pure price competition and achieve higher premiums in their exports to China. This direction does not apply to the United Kingdom and Spain, whose exports are dominated by manufactured goods.

(Ⅳ) Developing Versatile Trade Professionals with Expertise in Chinese Regulations

Industrial upgrading and the enhancement of resource endowments require matching human capital accumulation. Engaging in trade with China demands not only language proficiency, but also an in-depth understanding of China's business culture, regulatory system, e-commerce ecosystem and consumer behavior. Countries may promote integrated talent development programmes featuring "Chinese language and vocational skills," integrating Chinese language education with professional skills in e-commerce, logistics management and cross-border trade compliance, so as to cultivate practical talent capable of effectively advancing trade with China.

For different types of economies, the focus of talent development varies accordingly. For the United Kingdom and Spain, the priority lies in cultivating high-end professionals who are well versed in both China's business culture and its regulatory system—this is the key to accessing the Chinese market. Thailand, which already has a relatively solid foundation in Chinese language education, may expand on this base by offering vocational training in e-commerce and logistics. For Kazakhstan, Colombia, Pakistan, as well as Kenya and Tanzania, the shortage of talent with Chinese language and China business expertise is a common challenge, and they may make full use of human resource training platforms such as the Confucius Institutes and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to roll out targeted multi-skilled talent development programmes.

Ⅲ. Advancing Trade Openness

Continuously optimizing and coordinating bilateral economic and trade relations with China, and reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, so as to create stable and predictable market access conditions for exporting enterprises, is the key institutional safeguard for enhancing export capacity to China.

(Ⅰ) Accelerating the Negotiation, Signing and Upgrading of Bilateral FTAs

A free trade agreement (FTA) is one of the most effective instruments for raising the level of market access commitments, reducing trade barriers and stabilizing the expectations of trading partners. It is recommended that countries actively pursue bilateral or regional FTA negotiations with China in light of their respective circumstances, so as to create a more stable environment for bilateral trade and investment through such arrangements.

The experience of the China-Serbia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) merits attention. The Agreement formally entered into force on 1 July 2024, with approximately 90% of products on both sides to be gradually tariff-free, of which over 60% of tariff lines enjoyed zero tariff immediately upon the Agreement's entry into force. The institutional arrangement provides a stable framework for China-Serbia economic and trade cooperation. In the trade area, bilateral trade volume between China and Serbia in 2024 grew by over 30% year-on-year, and China became Serbia's largest source of imports and second largest trading partner. In the investment and infrastructure area, a number of major projects have been implemented successively, including the Hungary-Serbia Railway, the Belgrade Danube Bridge, and the E763 motorway, while projects

such as the HBIS Group Smederevo Steel Plant, Zijin Mining's Bor Copper Mine and multiple auto parts manufacturing projects have been established, with bilateral investment cooperation driving a qualitative leap forward in the economic and trade relationship between the two countries. ①②

The pathways for different types of economies to pursue FTAs vary in focus. Thailand may leverage the RCEP framework to further deepen the China-Thailand FTA; the RCEP's rules of origin cumulation and tariff concessions have already demonstrated significant trade-promoting effects, with bilateral trade between China and ASEAN exceeding USD 1 trillion in 2025, up 8% year-on-year. South Africa may promote FTA negotiations between China and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). The post-Brexit United Kingdom needs to independently establish its bilateral trade arrangements with China, while Spain should promote progress on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). For Kenya and Tanzania, in the short term, priority may be given to seeking expansion of China's unilateral preferential tariff arrangements for least developed countries (LDCs), while in the medium to long term, they may promote multilateral trade facilitation within the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). ③

---

① Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, News Office. "China-Serbia Free Trade Agreement to Enter into Force on July 1, 2024." June 28, 2024. https://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/article/chinaserbia/chinaserbiaxwfb/202406/55638_1.html

② Department of Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce; Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation; Economic and Commercial Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Serbia. Guide to Outward Investment and Cooperation: Country (Region) Guide · Serbia (2025 Edition). https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/dl/gbdqzn/upload/saierweiya.pdf

③ Tang Heiwai, Chen Yang. RCEP Trade Tracker 2024: Four Key Insights on Regional Trade Trends. Asia Global Institute, February 19, 2025. https://www.asiaglobalinstitute.hku.hk/news-post/rcep-trade-tracker-2024-four-key-insights-regional-trade-trends; Press Conference of the General Administration of Customs of China on the Import and Export Situation for the Full Year of 2025. http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/xwfb34/302330/hgzs2025nqsjdjckqkxwfbh/index.html

Box 9-1 China-Serbia Free Trade Agreement: Leveraging Expanded Two-Way Opening-Up to Enhance Sustainable Export Capacity

The China-Serbia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a typical example of leveraging institutional arrangements to achieve leapfrog development in bilateral economic and trade relations. Taking wine as an illustration, Serbian wine exports to China have grown rapidly in recent years. The tariff on Serbian wine exports to China has been reduced from 14% (pre-FTA) to 11.2% in the second half of 2024, and to 8.4% in January 2025, and will be fully eliminated by 2028. Such highly predictable market access commitments will undoubtedly significantly enhance the competitiveness of Serbian products in the Chinese market.

The significance of the China-Serbia FTA lies in the fact that it is driving bilateral economic and trade relations from a single dimension of goods exchange towards "deep integration of industrial chains", substantively enhancing Serbia's overall manufacturing and export capacity for the global market. Currently, approximately 2,000 Chinese-invested enterprises are operating in Serbia, creating over 22,000 local jobs. Driven by Chinese-invested projects such as HBIS Serbia and Zijin Mining Group's Bor Copper Mine, foreign-invested metal processing has come to account for about 20% of Serbia's exports. In 2024, Serbia's exports of copper and copper articles surged by over 100% year-on-year. During the same period, Serbia's total goods exports amounted to approximately USD 31.1 billion, with the European Union accounting for about 60% of its foreign trade as its primary market—much of the production capacity in Serbia is oriented towards the EU and other third-country markets. The automotive industry chain is particularly illustrative: Zhenjiang Lianbo Precision, which has put into operation an e-drive component plant in Novi Sad, northern Serbia, directly supplies European vehicle

OEMs; BYD, meanwhile, is considering establishing a second European production base in Serbia, in addition to its plant in Hungary. This shows that China-Serbia cooperation is steadily helping Serbia become embedded in the EU-oriented production network and enhancing its export capacity to the global market.

For other middle-income and mixed economies, the China-Serbia cooperation model offers a path worth considering: locking in market access through pragmatic and efficient opening up, and cultivating sustainable export capacity oriented towards diversified markets with investment as a linking mechanism. This also constitutes a practical example of breaking new ground at the bilateral level and reconfiguring global value chains in the current complex international trade environment.

(Ⅱ) Expanding Cross-Border Settlement in Local Currencies and RMB

Promoting the internationalization of the RMB can effectively reduce exchange rate risks and transaction costs. Countries may sign or expand bilateral local currency swap agreements with China, while also facilitating local currency settlement at the level of financial infrastructure. It should be noted, however, that cross-border currency settlement arrangements involve issues of monetary sovereignty, exchange rate management and financial regulatory systems of the countries concerned, and the pace of advancement should be determined prudently in accordance with each countr's macroeconomic conditions and the maturity of its financial markets.

For different types of economies, the feasibility and priority of local currency settlement vary. The Kazakhstani tenge (KZT) has a geographical proximity advantage for settlement with the RMB; the Thai baht (THB) already has a basis for direct trading with the RMB and could further expand its coverage; the South African rand (ZAR) could deepen local currency settlement arrangements through the BRICS

cooperation framework. London, as one of the world's major offshore RMB centres, already has a solid foundation, with the focus being on expanding actual usage among enterprises. For Kenya and Tanzania, given their relatively low degree of currency internationalization, the priority in the short term is to improve existing settlement efficiency, while pilot RMB settlement in specific trade corridors could be explored over the medium to longer term.

(Ⅲ) Deepening SPS Negotiations and Cooperation on Standardization

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards and technical barriers to trade (TBT) are key institutional thresholds that agricultural and food products face in accessing the Chinese market. Many developing countries have competitive agricultural products that are unable to enter the Chinese market due to outstanding SPS access procedures. Countries may establish regular working groups with China at the ministerial or departmental level to accelerate SPS negotiations and access approvals for agricultural products with export potential. It should be emphasized that the objective of cooperation on standardization is not to lower food safety standards, but to achieve mutual recognition of standards through upgrading testing capabilities and improving quality control systems. As economic and trade cooperation extends to a wider range of sectors, standardization cooperation at the industrial ecosystem level—covering railways, new energy vehicles, digital infrastructure, among others—is becoming increasingly important. China and partner countries may select a number of areas with mature conditions to pilot mutual recognition of standards, and gradually expand the coverage over time.

SPS negotiations are of critical importance to economies exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, as well as resource- and agricultural-exporting economies. A wide range of competitive agricultural products from Thailand, South Africa and Serbia require accelerated access approval processes. Kazakhstan's meat

exports, Colombia's coffee and fruit, and Pakistan's mangoes and citrus face similar access bottlenecks. For Kenya and Tanzania, building inspection and quarantine capacity itself is the key to unlocking agricultural export potential, and they may seek technical assistance from China to establish testing laboratories. For the United Kingdom and Spain, their concerns in the SPS area are primarily focused on mutual recognition of standards and qualification accreditation in high-end food, pharmaceuticals and professional services.

(Ⅳ) Boosting FTA Utilization Through Targeted Training

Signing and upgrading FTAs provides clearer tariff reduction and market access expectations for all parties, and creates a more stable institutional environment for enterprises. However, the signing of an FTA does not automatically translate into the realization of its benefits. International experience shows that many enterprises in developing countries, especially SMEs, are either unaware of or lack the capacity to utilize the preferential provisions of FTAs, resulting in low utilization rates of preferential tariffs. It is recommended that business associations take the lead in establishing dedicated training programmes to systematically guide foreign trade enterprises in mastering rules of origin, tariff concession schedules and certificate application procedures, so as to translate "paper preferences" into "pocket savings".

This recommendation is of particular urgency for economies exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, as well as resource- and agricultural-exporting economies. In Pakistan, Thailand, South Africa and Serbia, there is considerable room for improving the utilization rate of FTA preferential provisions among SMEs. For Kenya and Tanzania, which currently benefit primarily from unilateral preferential arrangements, the focus of training should be on understanding and navigating China's market access rules.

Ⅳ. Conclusion

Enhancing export capacity is the result of synergy among strategic planning and coordination, physical infrastructure, institutional arrangements and soft capabilities. Planning, logistics and customs clearance, industrial upgrading, reciprocal opening up and talent development are interlinked; a shortfall in any one link constrains the realization of benefits and makes it difficult to translate into sustained export growth.

The pathways for enhancing export capacity must be tailored to local conditions: for economies exporting manufactured goods and services, the focus of cooperation typically lies in high-end collaboration and mutual recognition of standards; for economies exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, the emphasis is on undertaking industrial relocation and accelerating market access for agricultural products; for resource- and agricultural-exporting economies, the priority is on promoting deep processing and local-currency settlement; and for economies with underdeveloped export capacity, it is advisable to first strengthen foundational conditions such as logistics and customs clearance.

Progress on all the above fronts requires concerted efforts from both sides: only when partner countries' strategic planning, industrial upgrading and institutional development are combined with China's policies of expanding imports and deepening opening-up, can sustainable trade growth be achieved.

Chapter X

Interim Progress of the "Big Market for All: Export to China" Series of Events

The "Big Market for All: Export to China" series of events translates the policy orientation of expanding imports into trade facilitation arrangements targeted at countries, industries and enterprises. Its annual performance is assessed from three dimensions: channel matching, market access and institutional coordination. The 2026 series of activities was launched in February, with approximately 100 events planned for the year. The initiative has established a working framework comprising domestic and cross-border supply-demand matchmaking, consumer scenarios, digital platforms, thematic country cooperation, and CIIE synergy. Within this framework, the CIIE serves as the hub for centralized exhibition, deal-matching and follow-through conversion. The initiative has achieved interim progress in expanding market information coverage, organizing procurement negotiations and linking with follow-up participation. This chapter analyzes the role of the year-round "Big Market for All: Export to China" activities across trade channels, consumer reach, institutional coordination and the CIIE hub function.

Ⅰ. Enhancing Trade Channels and Improving Supply-Demand Matching Capacity

In terms of trade channels, the primary role of the initiative is to organize

fragmented export supply, import demand and professional services into direct matchmaking scenarios. For foreign enterprises, the initial challenge in entering the Chinese market is often not insufficient production capacity, but rather a lack of clarity regarding buyer demand, access conditions, channel structures and potential partners. For Chinese buyers, identifying reliable suppliers, verifying product suitability and comparing performance capabilities also entail significant costs. Country-specific events can create a broad entry point for enterprises, while regional and sectoral events further narrow the matchmaking scope, and overseas special sessions bring buyer missions forward to the supply locations. These three types of arrangements are interlinked, progressively shifting the activities from general market promotion towards organized supply-demand matching with defined targets, product categories and follow-up contacts.

(I) Country-Specific and Regional Matchmaking to Reduce Market Search Costs

The country-level concentrated promotion expanded the scope of the initiative in identifying enterprises and consolidating demand. The first event in Beijing was attended by over 150 Chinese and foreign guests. In the first quarter alone, more than 600 foreign-invested enterprises participated in the related activities, and governments, associations or enterprises from 85 countries and regions expressed their interest in further engagement. As overseas or thematic events in the United Kingdom, Germany, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Thailand were successively held, country-specific matchmaking expanded from the participation of representative offices in China and representatives of integrated enterprises to the joint involvement of local government departments, business associations, producers and Chinese buyers, bringing the sources of information closer to the actual transacting parties.

The incremental value of regional matchmaking lies in translating the general

"intention to expand exports to China" into specifically identifiable products and procurement requirements. The "Export to China - SCO Choice" event in Shandong attracted over 700 domestic and foreign enterprises from 18 countries, with more than 500 matchmaking requests received. The import demand list issued at the event covered 343 Shandong enterprises and 34 categories of products, with total demand exceeding RMB 150 billion. The event brought together over 500 foreign companies and generated RMB 6.53 billion in intended procurement. ①

(Ⅱ) Sector-Specific Matchmaking and Overseas Special Sessions to Enhance the Efficiency of Supply-Procurement Conversion

Sector-specific matchmaking and overseas special sessions further enhance the relevance between the negotiating parties and the actual product demand. Unlike general product exhibitions, sector-specific thematic events place greater emphasis on organizing both supply and demand sides around specific industrial sectors, and enhance the efficiency of enterprises in finding partners through precise matching of procurement entities and supplying enterprises. The Wuhan food ingredients sector event brought together 60 leading domestic and international food ingredient companies, chain restaurant operators and industry associations, establishing matchmaking with enterprises from Viet Nam, Thailand, Russia, Indonesia and Bangladesh. The Belarus special session, by contrast, brought Chinese buyers to the supply location, with over 40 Chinese enterprises conducting on-site negotiations with more than 200 Belarusian enterprises around agricultural products, food, flax and timber.

Overseas special sessions extend supply-demand matchmaking from in-country buyer invitation to on-site organization in the exporting countries. Events in Belarus,

---

① Dazhong Daily, *The "Export to China - SCO Choice" Import Commodity Procurement Matchmaking Event Held*, Shandong Publicity Network, 1 April 2026, https://www.sdxc.gov.cn/sy/jrywsy/202604/t20260401_17596909.htm.

Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom, Germany and Thailand directly connected local government departments, business associations and producers with Chinese buyers, financial institutions and platform enterprises, and carried out product promotion, procurement negotiations and CIIE promotion in alignment with each country's competitive industries. Overseas special sessions have thus developed a common pathway of "identifying enterprises and products at the supply source—organizing on-site matchmaking with Chinese buyers—linking to subsequent imports and exhibition participation", providing foreign enterprises with an additional direct channel for entering the Chinese market.

Box 10-1 Belarus Overseas Special Session—How Bringing Buyer Missions Forward to the Supply Source Improves Supply-Demand Matching

The Belarus special session was the first overseas event of the 2026 "Export to China" initiative, organized with the focus on bringing Chinese buyers to the supply source to engage directly with producers and exporters. The event was co-hosted by the Ministry of Commerce of China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, and was held in conjunction with local agricultural fairs and other trade and economic events, providing a single time window for product inspection, concentrated negotiations and follow-up contact-building.

The organization of the event reflected a basic workflow of "placing procurement demand upfront, extending targeted invitations to enterprises, and conducting on-site concentrated negotiations." Over 40 Chinese enterprises and more than 200 Belarusian enterprises participated in the matchmaking, with over 500 representatives from the political and business communities of both countries in attendance. Internal reports indicate that business negotiations lasted over three hours. The on-site presence of Chinese buyers enabled Belarusian suppliers to directly understand the

product categories, quality requirements, pricing and delivery terms of concern to Chinese buyers, while also allowing Chinese buyers to compare multiple potential suppliers.

The event yielded notable results. Data show that intended import agreements worth USD 45 million timber order with a Belarusian enterprise.

Post-event survey results showed that the average satisfaction score of domestic participating enterprises was 4.9 out of 5, indicating that targeted invitations and on-site arrangements received high appreciation from participants. This case is one of the new model events under the "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative, in which product category requirements were first articulated by the buyers, followed by the organization of multi-enterprise comparisons and negotiations at the overseas supply location, with follow-up responsibility assigned to each intended project and concrete conversion milestones established.

Ⅱ. Extending Consumer Reach and Enhancing the Marketing Capabilities of Specialty Products in China

Building on the facilitation of import channels, the initiative further connects foreign products with Chinese consumer scenarios. While the "Export to China" activities focus on organizing foreign enterprises and products to enter the Chinese market, the "Shop in China" programme, along with local consumption seasons, commercial districts and e-commerce platforms, takes on the functions of display, trial sales and sales promotion. Offline events create opportunities for concentrated product experience and real-time consumer feedback, while digital platforms extend product visibility and consumer reach. Together, they form a continuum from procurement

matchmaking to market-facing promotion. ①

(I) Offline Consumer Scenarios for Display, Trial Sales and Market Feedback

Offline consumer events have expanded the display scope and on-site transaction opportunities for imported goods. The Hubei Spring Festival International Consumption Season set up an international consumption scenario of over 2,000 square meters, bringing together brands from more than 20 countries and over 130 domestic and foreign enterprises. The Hangzhou "Shop the World in Zhejiang · Consumption Launch" event brought together representatives from UN agencies in China and Chinese and foreign business communities, and guided on-site consumption through vouchers for imported goods. The events generated RMB 32.2 billion in intended import orders and issued over RMB 200 million in vouchers for imported goods: the former reflects the scale of procurement matchmaking, while the latter reflects the intensity of consumer-side traffic generation. Together, the two events expanded the reach of imported goods in the Chinese market across three dimensions: scenario display, procurement negotiation and consumption promotion.

The high volume of foot traffic provides foreign enterprises with a direct window into understanding Chinese consumers. In the first quarter, data show that the consumption promotion events linked to the initiative attracted over 10 million visits. During the on-site display and trial sales of products such as food, daily chemicals, home furnishings and cultural and creative goods, enterprises could collect direct consumer feedback on taste, specifications, labelling, pricing, after-sales service and shelf display, providing a basis for adjusting products and marketing strategies. The

① Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. "The Ministry of Commerce Holds a Regular Press Conference." 9 April 2026. https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfbzt/2026/swbzklxxwfbh2026n4y9r/index.html.

brand awareness, buyer contacts and consumer insights generated through offline events also lay the groundwork for products to enter digital platforms for sustained display and sales.

(Ⅱ) Extending Product Reach and the Localized Marketing Cycle Through Digital Platforms

The digital zones have significantly expanded the sustained display coverage of imported goods. Data show that the Taobao-Tmall platform launched the "Exporting to China · Global Quality Products Zone", covering over 5,000 brands and more than 1 million products from thematic countries. At the launch of the initiative, financial institutions, media and retail platforms also released support measures covering cross-border finance, international communication, and online and offline sales. The zones consolidate the product and brand information generated from individual events into a sustainable digital portal, enabling consumers to repeatedly search, compare and purchase, while also providing foreign enterprises with a channel to observe market feedback such as clicks, inquiries and reviews.

Digital platforms further connect product display, market promotion, order fulfillment and consumer feedback into a routine operational chain. Through preparing Chinese-language product information and compliance labelling, platform onboarding, targeted promotion, warehousing and distribution, and after-sales service, foreign enterprises can translate the attention generated during events into sustained business operations. Platforms, in turn, can leverage data on searches, first-time purchases, repeat purchases and reviews to identify products with market potential. For SMEs that have not yet established extensive offline networks, digital channels also provide an entry point for testing product assortments and marketing content, lowering the channel costs of entering different regional markets in China.

Offline scenarios and digital platforms complement each other, extending the initiative from concentrated showcases to sustained marketing. Offline events facilitate consumers' direct contact with physical products and enable enterprises to observe how different regions and demographic groups perceive the products. Online platforms can continuously display products and compare market responses to different content, pricing and channel strategies. Together, the two types of channels form a marketing continuum of "display and experience-consumer feedback-online operations-sustained sales". As the marketing phase extends, the participation of business associations, financial institutions, platform enterprises and professional service providers becomes more important, thereby pushing the initiative further from market reach towards institutional coordination.

Ⅲ. Deepening Institutional Coordination and Enhancing the Capacity for Sustained Engagement in the Chinese Market

The sustained operation of trade channels and consumer reach relies on the thematic country mechanism and multi-stakeholder services to form a stable foundation. Thematic country arrangements and memoranda of understanding provide an annual agenda for competent authorities, embassies and consulates, and trade promotion agencies on both sides, while local governments, business associations, financial institutions, exhibition organizers and platform enterprises assume specific functions including demand collection, enterprise mobilization, compliance advisory, settlement and financing, and market promotion. The initiative thus operates on two interconnected tiers: intergovernmental mechanisms stabilize cooperation expectations, while various professional entities translate the cooperative arrangements into enterprise-level matchmaking and market services.

(I) Thematic Country Arrangements and Memoranda of Understanding Provide a Stable Framework for Communication

The thematic country mechanism transforms open invitations into relatively stable annual cooperation arrangements. For 2026, the United Kingdom, Spain, Kazakhstan, Kenya and Thailand were designated as annual thematic countries, with matchmaking activities carried out around government communication, special sessions, country pavilions and platform channels. The Ministry of Commerce signed memoranda of understanding on "Export to China" cooperation with the relevant authorities of the United Kingdom and Spain, respectively. The thematic countries and MOUs specify the contact points, priority areas and annual activity milestones for both sides, enabling foreign enterprises to understand in advance the matchmaking windows available in the Chinese market, and facilitating the concentrated collection of demand by Chinese procurement agencies and platforms, thereby enhancing the continuity of country-specific cooperation.

Country-specific sessions further translate intergovernmental cooperation to the industry and enterprise levels. The United Kingdom session brought together over 300 representatives from governments, business associations, financial institutions and platform enterprises of both countries, covering sectors such as automotive, energy and chemicals, instrumentation, sporting events and life sciences. The Germany session organized on-site matchmaking for approximately 80 enterprise representatives. The Thailand session was attended by over 200 representatives from the Chinese and Thai business communities, with discussions held around rubber, fruit and cosmetics. Different country-specific events organized enterprises and procurement demand around their respective competitive industries, enabling thematic country cooperation to operate through multi-level interfaces of "government communication-sectoral promotion-

business negotiation". ①

(Ⅱ) Local Governments, Industries, Enterprises and Service Providers Form Multi-Stakeholder Support

Multi-stakeholder participation extends supply-demand matchmaking to finance, communication, channels and exhibition services. At the launch event, financial institutions, media and retail platforms released support measures covering cross-border finance, international communication and sales channels. At the United Kingdom session, trade promotion agencies, the China-Britain Business Council, ICBC and JD.com issued supporting initiatives. At the Thailand session, banks, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and industry associations for agricultural and food products participated. The presence of professional institutions alongside enterprises within the same event scenarios enables procurement negotiations to connect simultaneously with settlement and financing, brand communication, platform sales and follow-up exhibition participation. ②

The various participants have formed a relatively clear functional division of labor in the initiative. Local commerce departments collect procurement demand and connect with local markets; industry organizations provide product standards and enterprise

---

① The Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, News Office. "The 'Export to China' United Kingdom Special Session Held in London". July 1, 2026. https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/tpjj/art/2026/art_cf1acc35711240cc95c7905afee6ac69.html; Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, News Office. "The 'Export to China' Germany Special Session Held in Berlin". June 12, 2026. https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfb/bldhd/art/2026/art_c7ccfe1415e840a78d636583e7b6feb0.html; Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. "The 9th CIIE Promotion Conference and the 'Export to China' Thailand Special Session Held in Bangkok" China International Import Expo Website, July 10, 2026. https://www.ciie.org/zbh/bqgffb/20260710/62819.html。

② Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, News Office. "The 'Big Market for All: Export to China' 2026 Series of Events Launched." February 4, 2026; Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, News Office. "The 'Export to China' United Kingdom Special Session Held in London." July 1, 2026; Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. "The 9th CIIE Promotion Conference and the 'Export to China' Thailand Special Session Held in Bangkok." China International Import Expo Website, July 10, 2026.

networks; financial institutions provide settlement and financing services; platform enterprises undertake product display and sales; and exhibitions such as the CIIE bring together exhibitors, buyers and professional service resources. This division enables foreign enterprises to access procurement, finance, channels and exhibition resources in a single event, and ensures that their needs regarding market access, logistics, settlement and platform operations are taken up by the corresponding institutions.

Multi-stakeholder coordination also broadens the channels through which different types of enterprises can enter the Chinese market. Participants in the United Kingdom, Germany and Thailand sessions included not only industry enterprises, but also business associations, financial institutions and platform enterprises. Regional, sectoral and overseas sessions provide different entry points for established enterprises, SMEs and exporters with no prior exposure to the Chinese market. Joint promotion, targeted negotiations and professional services reduce the costs for enterprises of finding buyers and channels in a fragmented manner, while the CIIE further consolidates these distributed resources into a national-level import platform, extending institutional coordination towards year-round connectivity.

Ⅳ. Strengthening the Hub Role of the CIIE and Establishing a Year-Round Coordination Mechanism

The CIIE connects country-specific promotion, targeted exhibitor recruitment, procurement matchmaking and local events to the national-level import platform. Overseas sessions and overseas promotion events are responsible for identifying potential exhibitors and products, while the CIIE exhibition period serves as the central hub for display, negotiation and cooperation arrangements, with follow-up conversion sustained through year-round trading platforms and local markets thereafter. By July 2026, sessions in Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom and Thailand had already been held in

conjunction with CIIE promotion events, while roadshows in Xinjiang and other localities further connected overseas exhibitors with domestic buyers. Building on this foundation, the 2026 edition will feature thematic activities during the exhibition period, targeted exhibitor recruitment, project tracking and exhibition-city synergy arrangements, forming a working framework that links the pre-exhibition, during-exhibition and post-exhibition phases.

(I) Pre-Exhibition Targeted Exhibitor Recruitment and Overseas Promotion to Broaden Enterprise Discovery

Overseas events held in conjunction with CIIE promotion have broadened the entry point for identifying enterprises and products before the exhibition. The thematic event in Kazakhstan was co-held with the 9th CIIE promotion conference in Astana, with approximately 60 representatives from Kazakh enterprises and institutions in attendance. The United Kingdom session conducted CIIE overseas promotion alongside China-UK business matchmaking, with over 300 participants. The Thailand session also promoted the 9th CIIE in parallel, with more than 200 representatives from the Chinese and Thai business communities taking part. All three events involved government departments, business associations, financial institutions or industry organizations, enabling CIIE exhibitor recruitment information to reach enterprises with export interest directly, and generating multi-level exhibitor leads by country, sector and enterprise.

Targeted exhibitor recruitment further translates comprehensive promotion into organized outreach focused on priority industries and target enterprises. It involves compiling lists of target enterprises around the competitive export sectors of thematic countries, specifying enterprise types, product areas and cooperation needs, and conducting targeted invitations through overseas exhibition organizers, industry associations, embassies and consulates in China, and trade promotion agencies. While

giving attention to industry leaders, it also reserves entry points for SMEs with specialty products but no established channels in China. This arrangement builds on the enterprise and product leads already generated through overseas sessions and helps improve the alignment between exhibitors and Chinese procurement demand.

(Ⅱ) Thematic Country Showcase During the Exhibition and Follow-Up Tracking of Outcomes to Strengthen Deal Conversion

The enterprise leads generated before the exhibition have begun to translate into formal participation arrangements. The Kazakhstan Trade Policy Development Centre signed a participation contract for the 9th CIIE with the Bureau of International Import Expo, indicating that country-specific promotion and enterprise matchmaking have moved into the phase of organizing participation. Participation arrangements enable enterprises from thematic countries to present their products in a concentrated manner at the CIIE, access buyers, distributors and professional service providers, and extend the enterprise information and cooperation needs formed before the exhibition into on-site negotiations during the event, establishing a clear link between country-specific activities and the national-level import platform.

Thematic country showcases and thematic activities could further increase the concentration of resources during the exhibition period. Proposed arrangements include integrating thematic country elements into relevant CIIE events, organizing thematic days, product presentations, seminars and supply-demand matchmaking, and presenting, alongside the release of the Export-to-China Capacity Development Report, information on China's import demand, market channels and the capabilities required for enterprises to enter the Chinese market; while also providing branding and display platforms to facilitate the identification of thematic country products by buyers and professional visitors. The above arrangements bring country-specific promotion, research findings and business negotiations into a single exhibition-period scenario,

enhancing the visibility and resource-pooling effect of thematic country activities.

A project tracking mechanism could extend negotiations during the exhibition to follow-up procurement and services. Going forward, procurement entities, product categories, project progress and service needs could be recorded by stage—including participation, negotiation, intended contract signing and contract execution—with follow-up support provided by local commerce departments, industry organizations, financial institutions and trading platforms.

(Ⅲ) Post-Exhibition "6+365" and Exhibition-City Synergy to Extend Resource Conversion

Local roadshows and regional exhibitions extend the enterprise and procurement networks of the CIIE to different regions within China. The Kazakhstan special session and CIIE investment promotion roadshow held in Urumqi organized over 30 Kazakh exhibitors to engage with more than 200 procurement enterprises and business associations from Xinjiang and other provinces, while also linking with the China-Eurasia Expo. The "CIIE into Anhui" event, as part of the initiative, attracted 88 Fortune Global 500 and industry-leading enterprises. These two types of events respectively brought overseas exhibitor resources into local procurement networks and brought existing CIIE exhibitor resources to local markets, expanding the regional coverage of CIIE resources.

The "6 + 365" year-round display and trading platforms provide a sustained channel for post-exhibition conversion. Official CIIE materials indicate that these platforms, through a combination of online and offline channels, offer regular display, matchmaking and import transaction services for overseas exhibitors and buyers. Going forward, building on hubs such as the Hongqiao Import Commodity Exhibition and Trading Center, cooperation with Import Trade Promotion and Innovation Demonstration Zones could be strengthened, and thematic country consumer events and local

promotional activities could be used to bring exhibition products into the daily market. In this way, the enterprise and product resources generated during the exhibition period can continue to connect with local channels and consumer scenarios.

The integration of pre-exhibition, during-exhibition and post-exhibition resources forms the basic closed loop of the year-round coordination between the CIIE and the "Export to China" initiative. Overseas promotion and country-specific sessions generate a preliminary list of potential exhibitors and products; targeted exhibitor recruitment refines enterprise and product information; during-exhibition events concentrate display, procurement negotiations and project registration; and post-exhibition follow-up is taken up by local commerce departments, year-round trading platforms and professional institutions for import, warehousing, sales and promotion. Existing overseas promotion events, local roadshows, participation contracts and the "6+365" platforms provide the foundation for this linkage. In 2026, the thematic country showcase and project tracking arrangements will be further strengthened, enabling the CIIE to play its hub role in enterprise discovery, concentrated matchmaking and market absorption throughout the year-round activities.

V. Conclusion

The interim results of the "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative are reflected in four areas: channel matching, consumer reach, institutional coordination and CIIE synergy. The Shandong event was joined by over 700 domestic and foreign enterprises, and it generated more than 500 matchmaking requests and RMB 6.53 billion in intended procurement. The Belarus special session brought together over 40 Chinese enterprises and more than 200 Belarusian enterprises for negotiations, reaching USD 143 million in intended import agreements. In Hubei, an international consumer scenario of over 2,000 square meters was set up; in Hangzhou, RMB 32.2 billion in

intended import orders and over RMB 200 million in consumer vouchers were issued; and the digital zone covered more than 5,000 brands and over 1 million products, expanding the reach of imported goods in the Chinese market. Thematic country arrangements, memoranda of understanding and multi-stakeholder services have enhanced the continuity of the activities, while overseas promotion events, local roadshows, participation arrangements and the "6+365" platforms have linked the series of activities with the pre-exhibition, during-exhibition and post-exhibition phases of the CIIE, advancing the initiative from single-event matchmaking towards year-round coordination.

Part Ⅱ

Jointly Enhancing Capacity to Export to China

China will promote the sharing of itsvast market opportunities by all countries. China's ultimate import volume is the result of the interplay between China's demand and global supply. The world's capacity to export to China directly determines whether countries can turn the opportunities of China's vast market into tangible development dividends. The export to China capacity development can, on the one hand, give full play to the role of China's vast market and meet China's own import demand; on the other hand, it can enable countries to continuously export to China and advance their own economic development.

This report selects 10 trading partners for research each year. After comprehensive consideration, this year's selection primarily incorporates the five annual featured countries of "Big Market for All: Export to China" 2026—the United Kingdom, Spain, Kazakhstan, Kenya and Thailand—while jointly selecting with UNCTAD an additional five countries (Colombia, Pakistan, Serbia, South Africa and Tanzania), forming a special section on 10 countries. These 10 countries, located in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America respectively, include both developing and developed countries, making them moderately representative. For each country, the report first examines its export performance and potential for exporting to China, and then assesses its capacity to export to China from three dimensions: economic infrastructure (transportation and logistics connectivity, stability of energy supply, digital infrastructure and e-commerce), industrial systems (macro factor endowment structure, evolution of the three-sector industrial structure, industrialization and manufacturing bases), and trade policies (trade openness, financial and cross-border investment environment).

The country reports in Part Ⅱ indicate that countries' capacity to export to China varies significantly, with resource endowments and industrial structures being the determining factors. Resource-based countries such as Kazakhstan, South Africa and Serbia have seen rapid growth in exports to China, although their exports are highly concentrated in minerals, metals and energy, leaving limited potential for manufacturing

exports. Developed economies including Spain and the United Kingdom export to China on a relatively large scale, yet their market shares in China remain below the potential implied by their global competitiveness. Developing economies such as Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania have a small and volatile base of exports to China, relying on a few agricultural and primary products. The common bottlenecks constraining countries' export capacity include infrastructure gaps—particularly for landlocked countries and African countries—a weak industrial base, low R&D intensity, insufficient trade facilitation and non-tariff barriers. To enhance their capacity to export to China, these countries need to build on their advantages in resource-based products while strengthening industrial diversification, infrastructure connectivity and alignment of regulatory standards.

Chapter XI

Colombia

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Colombia's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition, and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Colombia's exports to China with both its overall export profile and China's import demand to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has weakened, and which product groups present the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Colombia's total goods exports expanded substantially, rising from about USD 12.7 billion in 2001 to roughly USD 50.1 billion in 2025 (see Figure 11.1). Exports to China grew from a very low base, increasing from about USD 27 million in 2001 to nearly USD 4.9 billion in 2025. China has become a much more important destination for Colombian merchandise exports, rising from 36th place in 2001 to 4th by 2025. This pattern indicates that Colombia's export relationship with China is increasingly important but still volatile and likely exposed to commodity cycles.

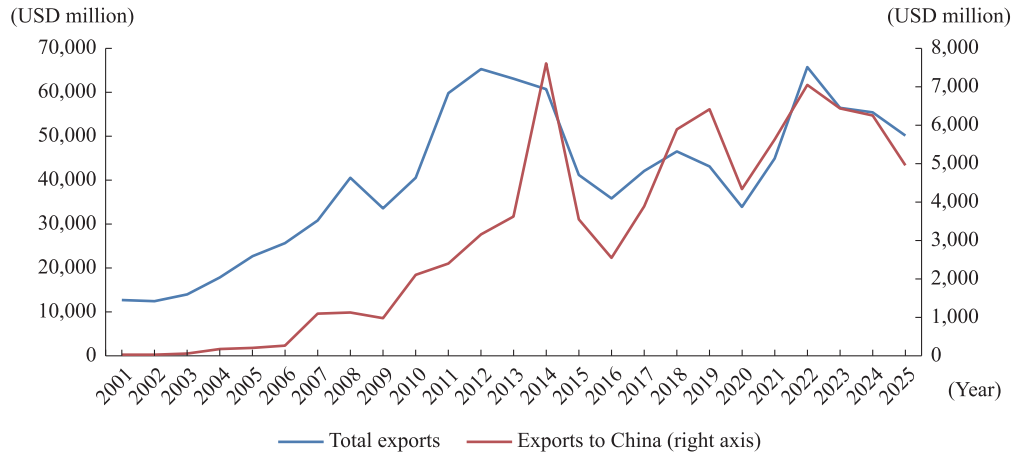


Figure 11.1 Colombia Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

The Trade Intensity and Trade Complementarity Indices reinforce this picture. Colombia's Trade Intensity Index with China has increased markedly since 2001, but remains volatile (see Figure 11.2). The Trade Complementarity Index has also improved, especially in the most recent period, suggesting that Colombia's export basket has become more aligned with China's import demand.

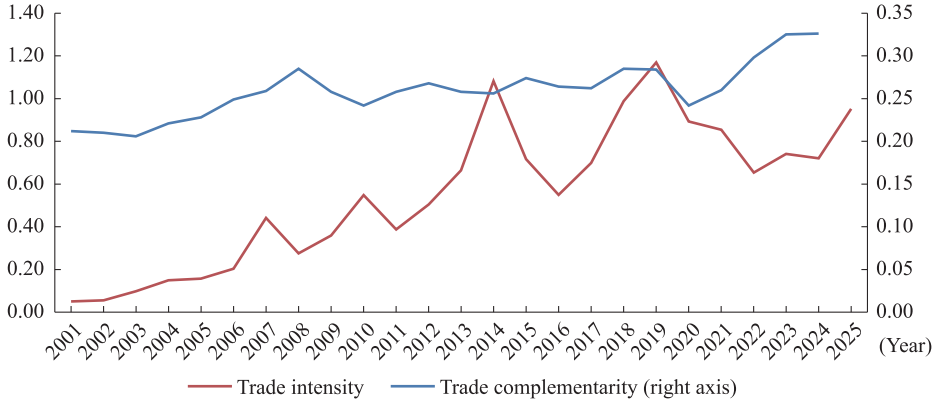


Figure 11.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Colombia Exports and China Imports (index), 2001-2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Colombia's export structure is characterized by a relatively narrow product base. At the global level, concentration increased after the 2000s before easing in the most recent period. Exports to China are even more narrowly based, with concentration reaching very high levels in 2013–2019 before declining somewhat in 2020–2025 (see Table 11.1). Despite this recent easing, Colombia's China-facing export basket remains strongly dependent on a limited number of products, suggesting that bilateral export performance is closely tied to a few key commodities or product lines.

Table 11.1 Colombia Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001–2008	2009–2012	2013–2019	2020–2025
Exports to China	0.32	0.39	0.74	0.55
Overall exports	0.06	0.15	0.17	0.10

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Colombia's total export basket in 2024 was strongly tilted toward primary products (see Table 11.2). Primary goods accounted for 59 percent of total exports, while final goods represented 23 percent and intermediate products 18 percent. Agriculture accounted for 21 percent of total exports, and manufacturing and natural resources for 79 percent. Exports to China were even more concentrated in primary products(see Table 11.2). which accounted for 89 percent of the China-facing basket. Final goods represented only 2 percent of exports to China and intermediates 9 percent, while manufacturing and natural resources accounted for 94 percent the total exports to China. The China-facing export basket is therefore overwhelmingly resource-based, with only a limited role for processed or final manufactured goods.

Table 11.2 Colombia Export Structure, 2024 Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	13	2	7	21
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	10	16	53	79
Overall, by stage of processing	23	18	59	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	2	0	4	6
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	0	9	85	94
Overall, by stage of processing	2	9	89	100

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, Colombia's exports to China are highly concentrated in mineral fuels (see Table 11.3). In 2025, mineral fuels and oils accounted for approximately USD 4 billion, equivalent to 80 percent of total exports to China. Iron and steel followed at USD 291.7 million, or 6 percent, while copper and articles thereof and coffee, tea and spices each accounted for about 4 percent. Ores, slag and ash, meat and edible offal, animal and vegetable fats and oils, knitted apparel, miscellaneous edible preparations, and wood products made up the remaining major export categories, but at considerably lower export values. High concentration is also High concentration is also observed for most products within these sectors.

Table 11.3 Colombia Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
27	Mineral Fuels & Oils	3,978.3	80	0.88	50	33	13	-6
72	Iron & Steel	291.7	6	0.97	117	14	1	-7
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	204.0	4	1.00	23	66	-25	38
09	Coffee, Tea & Spices	182.2	4	0.99	38	28	24	44
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	107.2	2	0.47	—	168	58	8
02	Meat & Edible Offal	100.9	2	1.00	—	—	—	1,389
15	Animal/Vegetable Fats & Oils	16.7	0	1.00	—	82	6	16
61	Apparel, Knitted/Crocheted	13.4	0	0.52	186	-13	34	57
21	Miscellaneous Edible Preparations	9.9	0	0.95	9	148	-3	21
44	Wood & Articles of Wood	8.2	0	0.90	125	-11	12	2

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: — implies that exports to China were marginal during the period.

Recent sectoral dynamics have been uneven. Between 2019 and 2025, the dominant mineral fuels category contracted by 6 percent per year, and iron and steel also declined. By contrast, copper, coffee, ores, meat and edible offal, animal and vegetable fats and oils, knitted apparel, miscellaneous edible preparations, and wood products all expanded, with particularly rapid growth in meat from a small base. Overall, the sectoral pattern points to a narrow and volatile export relationship. Recent gains in smaller product groups show some diversification at the margin, but

Colombia's exports to China remain overwhelmingly dependent on fuels and other resource-based products.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether Colombia's recent export performance in China reflects changes in existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of future potential. Table 11.4 shows that the decline between 2019 and 2025 was driven mainly by the intensive margin: 136 products exported in both years fell from USD 6.4 billion to USD 4.7 billion, reducing exports by about USD 1.65 billion. New products contributed USD 212.8 million across 26 HS 6-digit lines, but this was not enough to offset the decline in existing flows. Discontinued products accounted for a much smaller loss of USD 22.3 million. The near-term challenge is therefore to stabilize and upgrade existing export strengths while expanding into new, less volatile product niches.

Table 11.4 Colombia Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	136	6,385.0	4,735.2	-1,649.8
Discontinued products	89	22.3	0.0	-22.3
New products (extensive margin)	26	0.0	212.8	212.8

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Colombia's revealed comparative advantage (RCA) indicators suggest that its export competitiveness in products of importance for China has improved. At the aggregate level, the China import-weighted RCA rose from 0.6 in 2001-2008 to 1.2

in 2020–2025, while the China import growth–weighted RCA increased from 0.5 to 1.55 over the same period (see Table 11.5). At the sectoral level, comparative advantage is strongest mineral fuels & oils, coffee, tea & spices, animal and vegetable fats and oils, and miscellaneous edible preparations. Iron and steel, copper and articles thereof, ores, slag and ash, meat & edible offal, apparel, and wood & articles of wood remain below unity in the most recent period. Overall, the RCA evidence points to selective competitiveness in fuels and a few agri–food–related products, but weaker competitiveness across a broader range of manufactured and resource–processing sectors.

Table 11.5 Colombia Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage (index)			
	2001–2008	2009–2012	2013–2019	2020–2025
China import–weighted	0.62	0.95	1.11	1.20
China import growth–weighted	0.54	1.24	1.10	1.55
	RCA within top 10 HS 2–digit sectors (China import–weighted)			
	2001–2008	2009–2012	2013–2019	2020–2025
27: Mineral Fuels & Oils	3.1	3.4	4.4	3.8
72: Iron & Steel	1.4	0.9	0.6	0.6
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6
09: Coffee, Tea & Spices	30.5	16.8	19.4	22.6
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3
02: Meat & Edible Offal	0.8	0.7	0.2	0.4
15: Animal/Vegetable Fats & Oils	1.6	0.8	1.8	2.3
61: Apparel, Knitted/Crocheted	1.3	0.5	0.4	0.4
21: Miscellaneous Edible Preparations	3.3	2.4	1.8	2.3
44: Wood & Articles of Wood	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the sector–level evidence, the Annex (Table Ⅰ) identifies more granular HS 4–digit export opportunities for Colombia in China. These opportunities fall

into four groups. Core export products include sectors where Colombia already has a meaningful presence in China and where further growth would mainly involve scaling up existing flows, such as crude petroleum, precious metal ores, ferro-alloys, crude glycerol, copper waste and scrap, and petroleum coke. Underexploited products include areas where Colombia's export capacity and Chinese import demand are sizeable but current penetration remains limited, including coal, coffee, and selected precious or semi-precious stones. Emerging sectors include products where Colombia's export capacity is present but China's share remains low, such as coffee extracts, public transport vehicles, gold, and sugar confectionery. Latent opportunities include products with negligible exports to China despite identifiable Chinese import demand, such as selected fats and oils, motor-vehicle chassis, prepared driers, tanned hides, and carbon products.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Colombia's transport, energy, information and communications and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Colombia's ports handled approximately 5.2 million TEUs in 2024, up 35 percent from 2015, accounting for around 16 percent of South American container traffic. Maritime connectivity links to 56 partner economies, above the regional and world averages of 25.3 and 28.2 respectively, with a Liner Shipping Connectivity Index of 208.26 in 2025, among the highest in the region.[①] Container import dwell time of 7.6 days is broadly in line with Latin American and Caribbean regional and world averages, suggesting average port operation efficiency (see Table 11.6). Direct air connections

① UNCTAD (2026a).

reach 112.5 economies, well above the Latin America and Caribbean average of 63.8. Overall, Colombia's transport and logistics connectivity to both the Pacific and the Caribbean coasts represents a genuine asset, though port and dwell-time performance still have room for improvement.

Table 11.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Colombia

Indicator	Colombia	Latin America and Caribbean average	World average
Container import dwell time (days)	7.6	7.7	7.9
Maritime partner economies	56.0	25.3	28.2
Aviation partner economies	112.5	63.8	91.5

Source: World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2024).

Note: World average is an unweighted UNCTAD calculation.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

In 2023, 30.6 percent of firms in Colombia experienced electrical outages, below both the Latin America and Caribbean average of 55.5 percent and the world average of 46.1 percent. Outages averaged 0.7 per month, Outages averaged 0.7 per month, about half the regional average and less than a quarter of the world average (see Table 11.7). Despite this relatively favourable performance, 36.6 percent of firms identified electricity as a major or very severe constraint, above regional and world averages, suggesting that cost or reliability conditions weigh on firms' competitiveness beyond the frequency of outages alone.

Table 11.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Colombia, 2023

Indicator	Colombia	Latin America and Caribbean	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	30.6	55.5	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	0.7	1.3	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	36.6	33.3	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband penetration stands at 17.2 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2024, below both the Americas average of 27.7 and the world average of 20.1 (see Table 11.8). Mobile infrastructure is comparatively stronger: LTE coverage reaches 100 percent of the population, above the Americas average of 94.3 percent and the world average of 92.7 percent. The gap in fixed connectivity may constrain the digital trade tools and documentation that export-oriented firms increasingly require, even as universal mobile coverage provides a basis for mobile-driven commerce.

Table 11.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Colombia

Indicator	Colombia	The Americas	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	17.2	27.7	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	100.0	94.3	92.7

Note: Data for Colombia is from 2024; the Americas and world averages from 2025.

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/

Internet use expanded from 73 to 79 percent between 2021 and 2024, yet online buying remained stable at around 15 percent of adults (see Table 11.9). Postal parcel and express volumes fell sharply, the decline may reflect data-reporting limitations

of UPU's postal-only scope rather than a real contraction in cross-border trade. Colombia ranks 63rd of 127 in the Network Readiness Index 2025, 7th within the Americas, pointing to moderate digital business readiness and cross-border e-commerce potential that remains largely untapped.

Table 11.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Colombia

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	45,020	8,642
International parcels dispatched (total)	56,531	2,479
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (%, age 15+)	15.1	14.8
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	34.7
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	73.0	79.3

Source: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Colombia's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 37.0 million, about 70 percent of the total (Latin America and the Caribbean average: 67.7 percent), up from 66.7 percent in 2010 (see Figure 11.3).

Gross capital formation was 16.8 percent of GDP in 2024, below the regional (19.2 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages; it averaged 22.3 percent over 2005-2020

before declining after COVID-19 (see Table 11.10). R&D intensity is low: 0.29 percent of GDP in 2020 (latest available), against a regional average of 0.64 percent and a world average of 2.6 percent; it peaked at 0.37 percent in 2015. ①

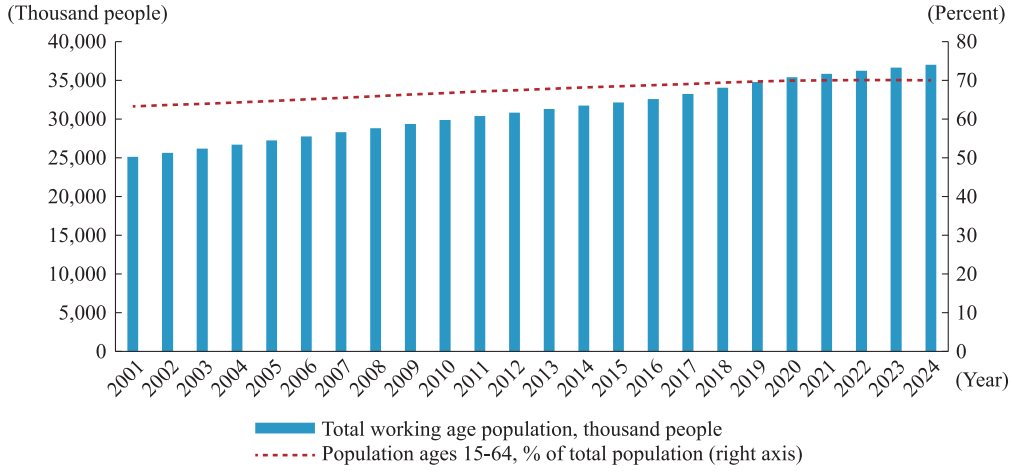


Figure 11.3 Total Working Age Population, Colombia, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Colombia's higher education system has expanded markedly over the past two decades. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education reached 59.3 percent in 2022, above the Latin America and the Caribbean (56.8 percent) and world (43.2 percent) averages (see Figure 11.4). Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates accounted for 23.3 percent of tertiary graduates in 2023, while business, administration and law graduates made up 42.6 percent, indicating a graduate pool weighted towards services and administration rather than technical fields.

Although enrolment in tertiary education is comparatively high, the low R&D intensity and a graduate profile skewed away from STEM may limit Colombia's capacity to move into more technology-intensive exports and to meet the quality and standards requirements of Chinese importers.

① UNESCO.

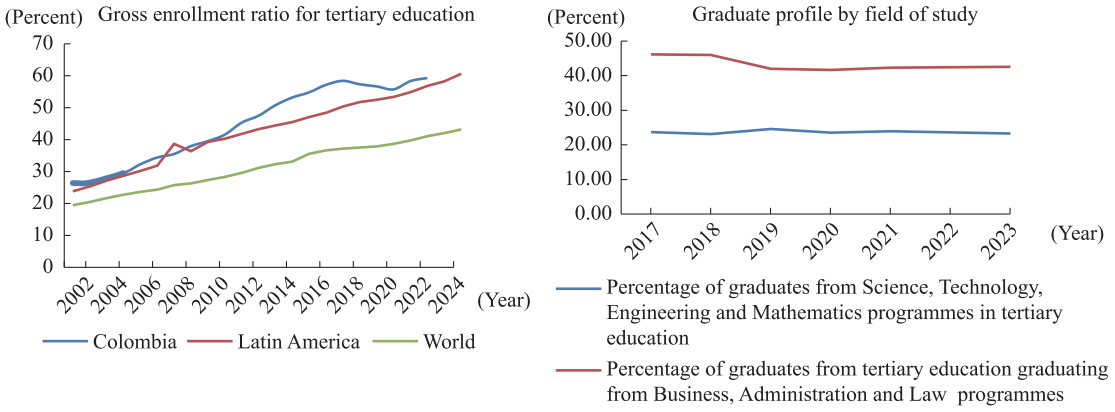


Figure 11.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Colombia (Percentage)

Note: Colombia graduate profile data not available for 2022. Lines connect available data points.

Source: UNESCO.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 9.3 percent of value added, industry for 23.1 percent and services for 58.1 percent of GDP (regional averages: 6.5 percent, 31.3 percent and 67.6 percent, Figure 11.5). Agriculture and services each rose by about 1 percentage point over 2001-2024, while industry fell indicating a long-term decline in industry's weight.

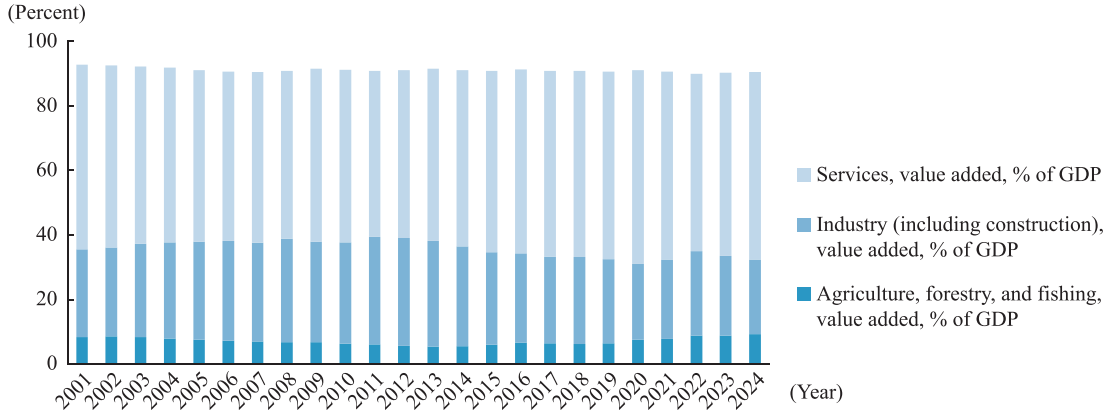


Figure 11.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Colombia, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added declined after its 2005 – 2007 peak to an estimated 10. 1 percent of GDP in 2024, below the regional (17. 6 percent) and world (15 percent) averages. Medium- and high-tech industry stood at 24. 19 percent of manufacturing value added in 2022 (down from a 25 percent peak in 2010), and its share of GDP eased from 3. 1 percent in 2001 to 2. 7 percent in 2022 (see Table 11. 10).

Table 11. 10 Industrial System Indicators, Colombia, 2014-2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15 – 64, % of total population	68. 12	68. 40	68. 70	69. 04	69. 40	69. 69	69. 87	69. 99	70. 04	70. 03	69. 95
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	15. 48	15. 39	15. 38	15. 99	16. 03	15. 18	15. 81	15. 11	14. 64	14. 40	14. 25
Gross capital formation, % GDP	24. 00	23. 77	23. 17	21. 60	21. 20	21. 38	19. 13	18. 92	19. 79	16. 44	16. 82
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	5. 45	5. 98	6. 61	6. 39	6. 23	6. 41	7. 51	7. 77	8. 83	8. 81	9. 28
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	30. 99	28. 59	27. 69	26. 81	26. 90	25. 99	23. 44	24. 56	26. 12	24. 69	23. 06
Services, value added, % of GDP	54. 63	56. 22	56. 90	57. 61	57. 65	58. 14	60. 12	58. 19	54. 91	56. 74	58. 14
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	12. 27	12. 40	12. 30	11. 41	11. 15	10. 93	10. 73	11. 20	11. 15	10. 87	10. 10
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	20. 72	22. 54	23. 33	23. 27	22. 61	23. 93	24. 74	24. 09	24. 19	—	—

Continued

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	2.54	2.79	2.87	2.66	2.52	2.62	2.65	2.70	2.70	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Colombia's structural indicators present a mixed picture for industrial exports to China. The weight of manufacturing in the economy has declined, R&D intensity is low and gross capital formation has fallen. Medium- and high-tech activities have gained share within manufacturing, though their share of GDP remains low and has edged down over the long term. Taken together, these indicators suggest limited structural capacity for expanding manufacturing exports over the medium term.

There is considerable scope for Colombia to scale up its domestic industries and strengthen export capacity. Some of the country's premium products are held back by a limited range of offerings, insufficient production volumes, and underdeveloped industrial and supply chains. Therefore, further efforts are needed to build capacity for standardized, large-scale production; broaden the variety of export products; and invest in cold-chain infrastructure, logistics, processing, and brand development.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews Colombia's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(I) Trade Openness

Colombia's trade openness (trade to GDP ratio) is low for a small economy, at 35.2 percent in 2024, against 50.3 percent for Latin America and 57.2 percent worldwide. ① Its Openness Indicator was 0.69 in 2024 (see Figure 11.6), placing it 68th out of 129 economies. Its rank fell from 58th to 100th by 2010, before catching up with the regional average. Its latest score remains about 8 percent below the world average.

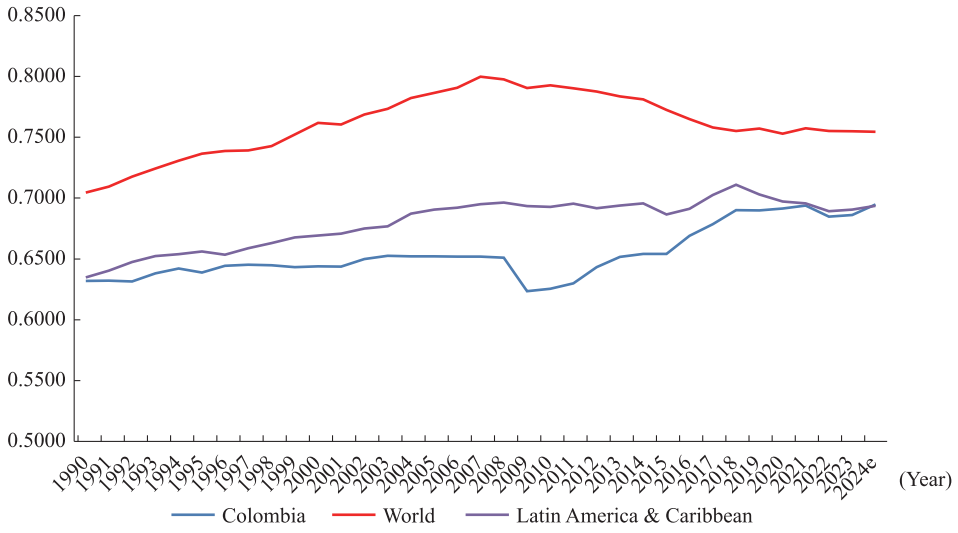


Figure 11.6 Colombia's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

Colombia belongs to 13 overlapping regional, inter-regional and bilateral trade agreements (excluding two partial scope agreements), more than the world average of 12; six are regional or inter-regional and seven are bilateral. It is also a member of the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries and, as a developing

① UNCTAD (2026b).

country, is eligible for non-reciprocal GSP preferences offered by Australia, Japan and New Zealand. ①② Preference utilization is strong: about 90 percent under GSP schemes over 2023-2025, far above the 36 percent a decade ago, and about 93 percent under other preference programmes. ③

Colombia has advanced steadily on trade facilitation, with its overall implementation rate rising from 67.74 percent in 2015 to 83.87 percent in 2025, above the South America average of 80.87 percent (see Table 11.11). Implementation is led by Paperless Trade (92.59 percent) and Formalities (91.67 percent), while Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation and Cross-Border Paperless Trade, both at 66.67 percent, are the least developed dimensions. Operational costs remain a burden, however: border clearance takes 15 days at a cost equal to 29 percent of export value, among the highest in the sample and Colombia scores only 23 out of 50 on border management. ④ Reducing these frictions could strengthen its competitiveness in markets such as China.

Table 11.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Colombia

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	86.67	75.00	33.33	77.78	44.44	67.74
2021	86.67	91.67	66.67	85.19	55.56	79.57
2025	86.67	91.67	66.67	92.59	66.67	83.87

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

① UNCTAD (2024b).

② WTO (n.d.b).

③ 2023-2025 period mainly includes Colombia's preference utilization in the Japanese GSP programme due to eligibility graduation in other main programmes. Earlier periods include Canada, the EU (including the UK), Japan and the USA programme figures.

④ World Bank (2025a).

Colombia's tariff regime has been liberalized since the early 2000s, the simple average falling from around 12 percent to about 6.7 percent in 2025. Trade-weighted averages are slightly higher, indicating that imports are concentrated in higher-tariff lines. Sectoral differences remain pronounced: agricultural tariffs are significantly higher, with a simple average of 14.2 percent, reflecting continued protection of sensitive sectors, while non-agricultural tariffs are relatively low, supporting industrial openness (see Table 11.12).

Table 11.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Colombia, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	6.7	5.7	14.2
Trade weighted av.	6.8	5.4	18.1

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2025).

Compared with other developing countries, Colombia applies similar numbers of technical non-tariff measures (NTMs) per agri-food product as well as per manufacturing product (see Figure 11.7 and Figure 11.8). This points to an appropriate level of regulatory complexity for Colombia's stage of development. In both sectors, the use of non-technical measures and export measures is lower than in most countries, indicating an open and less interventionist trade policy.

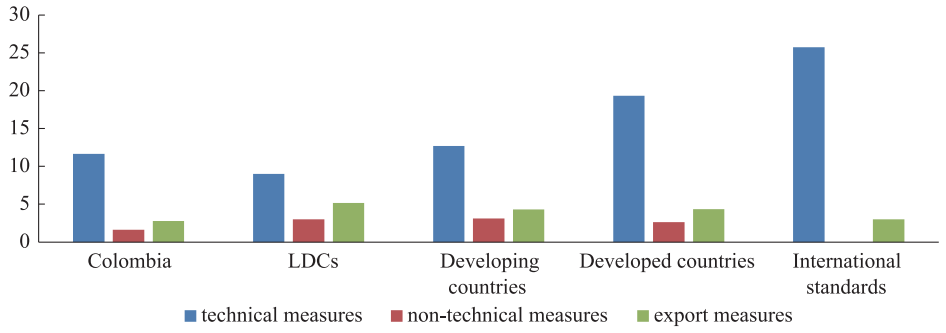


Figure 11.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Colombia

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Colombia data is from 2024.

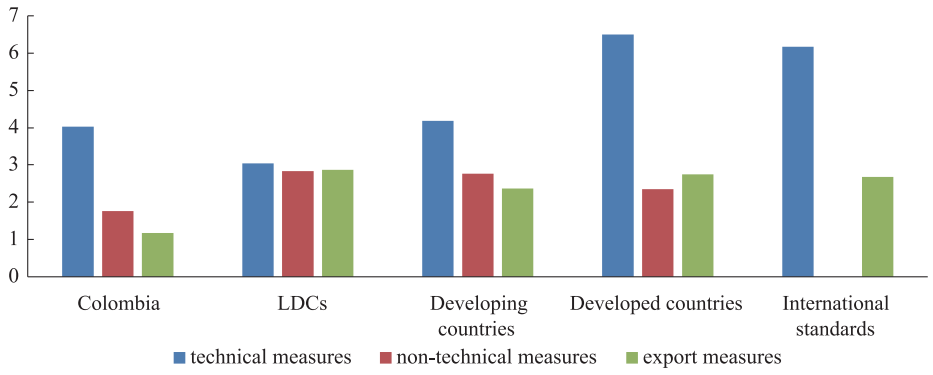


Figure 11.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Colombia

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Colombia data is from 2024.

The regulatory similarity index measures similarity in SPS and TBT measures across countries and against international standards. In the agri-food sector, Colombia exhibits a slightly above average similarity with China and the rest of the world, but the similarity with international standards is rather low. Further regulatory convergence towards key trading partners as well as international standards could further reduce trade costs for Colombian exporters (see Figure 11.9).

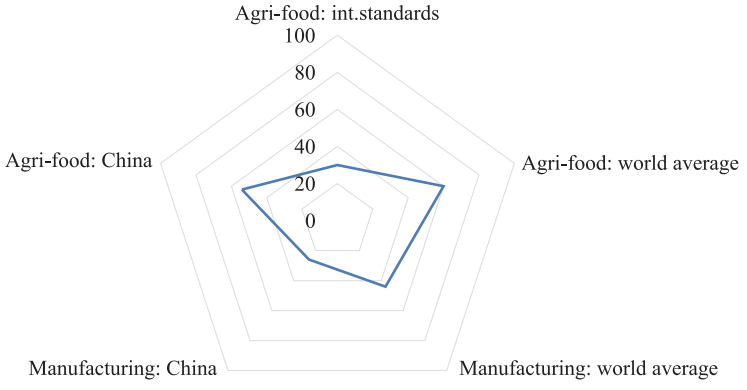


Figure 11.9 Colombia's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Colombia data is from 2024; data for China from 2024.

Colombia actively notifies its SPS and TBT measures to the WTO (see Figure 11.10), signalling strong commitment to regulatory transparency and to the multilateral trading system.

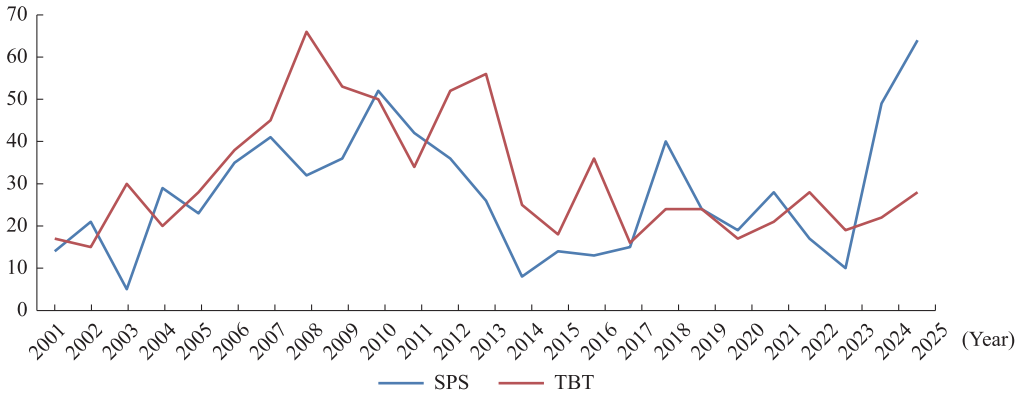


Figure 11.10 Colombia's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

Colombia demonstrates relatively strong SPS capacity. Regulatory quality is solid (55.1), and the country maintains 504 accredited laboratories, ranking 3rd among 27 Latin American and Caribbean countries. QI4SD indicators point to strong accreditation capacity (79.4) and moderate conformity-assessment capacity (29.5). Border implementation is advancing through participation in the ePhyto Hub and partial digitalization of SPS certification.① ISO management-system certification is comparatively well developed, with 6,546 ISO 9001 and 113 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 31st and 45th worldwide respectively.②

Colombia maintains relatively few export restrictions. It bans thermal coal exports to Israel and applies sector-specific levies: a coffee contribution financing the National

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; SPS notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

Coffee Fund, and a 1 percent parafiscal contribution on unset emeralds financing the National Emeralds Fund. An annual export quota on ferrous waste and scrap secures domestic steel supplies. Exports of coal, precious metals and gemstones require licences for traceability and royalty compliance.

Overall, Colombia's liberalized tariffs and limited, transparent non-tariff measures, together with its regulatory proximity to China, provide a supportive basis for expanding exports to the Chinese market.

In October 2023, the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Colombia signed a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a Trade Facilitation Working Group. The Working Group then convened its first meeting in December 2025. In May 2025, the two ministries signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Deepening Bilateral Trade Facilitation Cooperation. China has also actively invited Colombian participation in trade exhibitions across the country. As the Country of Honor at the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE), Colombia showcased products spanning coffee, beef, chocolate, and other sectors, all of which gained greater visibility and expanded sales channels through Chinese platforms. In addition, Colombia's Rural Development Agency (Agencia de Desarrollo Rural, ADR) entered into a strategic partnership with Cotti Coffee.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Over the past two decades, Colombia progressively liberalized its capital account, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) declining from 0.64 in 2001 to approximately 0.50 in recent years, but still above the upper-middle-income-country average level of 0.33.[①] United States dollars remain the principal currency for

① IMF.

the settlement of Colombian exports, as its leading exports are major globally traded commodities like petroleum and coal, though the euro is used in specific sectors.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a significant role in Colombia's economy. FDI inflows moderated to approximately USD 11.4 billion in 2025, down from about USD 14.1 billion in 2024. Nevertheless, the stock of inward FDI increased to USD 286.6 billion, equivalent to 67 percent of GDP, well above the world average of 51 percent. Colombia continues to attract investment into oil and gas, mining, manufacturing, financial services and renewable energy. Colombia remains one of the largest FDI destinations in South America, supported by continued investment in energy transition and infrastructure despite softer regional investment trends. ①

The investment climate also has some shortcomings. First, visa facilitation for travel to Colombia remains inadequate. Chinese tourists and businesses encounter significant hurdles in obtaining Colombian visas, including complex application procedures and low visa approval rates. Streamlining visa and entry services is, therefore, essential to facilitate the movement of people. Second, the security situation poses ongoing challenges. Colombia's complex and difficult security environment complicates business exchanges and enterprise operations, and has to some extent eroded the confidence of Chinese companies in the Colombian market.

V. Conclusion

Colombia's export relationship with China has expanded substantially over the past two decades. Exports rose from about USD 27 million in 2001 to nearly USD 5 billion in 2025, making China Colombia's 4th largest export market, up from 36th place. This expansion reflects a closer connection between Colombia's export strengths

① UNCTAD (2025; 2026d).

and Chinese demand, but the relationship remains highly concentrated. Exports to China are dominated by primary products, especially mineral fuels, which account for the large majority of the total. As a result, Colombia's export performance in China remains closely tied to a small number of commodities and is exposed to shifts in global prices and Chinese demand.

The analysis identifies several factors that support Colombia's ability to export to China. Transport and logistics connectivity is a relative strength, with strong maritime and air links across both coasts helping Colombia reach distant markets, though port efficiency still has room for improvement. Energy supply is relatively reliable, and the country benefits from an open trade and investment environment, liberalized tariffs, moderate non-tariff measures, strong accreditation and SPS capacity, and a sizeable stock of inward foreign direct investment. These factors provide a useful foundation for export growth, particularly in resource-based and selected agri-food sectors. At the same time, Colombia faces important constraints that limit the scope for broader export diversification. Manufacturing's share of GDP has declined, investment has weakened, research and development intensity remains low, and the skills base is more concentrated in services and administration than in technical fields. Border procedures also remain relatively time-consuming and costly. The regulatory alignment is relatively weak with China's regulations on manufacturing products.

Overall, Colombia is increasingly competitive in China for resource-based products, but its export relationship remains narrow and commodity-concentrated. The strongest near-term opportunities are likely to come from scaling established strengths such as crude petroleum, ferro-alloys and precious-metal ores, alongside underexploited areas including products such as coffee. The main challenge is to use these strengths as a platform for broader and less volatile export growth over time.

Looking ahead, three recommendations are offered for advancing China-Colombia bilateral trade. First, leverage China's vast market and free-trade-zone policies.

China has hosted the CIIE for eight consecutive years and launched the "Big Market for All: Export to China" series of events, supporting a growing number of quality products and services from around the world to enter the Chinese market. Colombian coffee, flower, and meat industry associations have recently all called for expanding exports to China. Colombian enterprises are encouraged to study China's import, tariff, and inspection-and-quarantine policies more closely and to make active use of platforms such as the Hainan Free Trade Port for value-added processing, thereby lowering the cost of market entry. Second, expand sales channels in China and strengthen brand building. Colombia can capitalize on exhibition platforms including the CIIE and the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) to promote its signature products such as coffee, meat, fruits, cocoa, and flowers, and to deepen cooperation with Chinese importers, e-commerce platforms, and food-service enterprises. Going forward, more Colombian specialty agricultural products can be encouraged to reach Chinese consumers through e-commerce and brick-and-mortar retail, thereby integrating more fully into the Chinese consumer market and raising brand recognition. Third, deepen technological cooperation with China to upgrade the industrial chain. China possesses extensive experience in agricultural deep processing, e-commerce retailing, smart logistics, and supply-chain management. The two sides can strengthen technological exchanges and industrial cooperation, drawing on China's strengths in live-streaming commerce, digital payments, and smart logistics to enhance the standardization, processing, and supply-chain capabilities of Colombian meat, fruit, and coffee products. Such cooperation would support Colombia's transition from exporting primary agricultural commodities to participating in higher value-added segments of the industrial chain, so as to further translate its advantages in agricultural resources into industrial and export competitiveness.

Chapter XII

Kazakhstan

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Kazakhstan's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Kazakhstan's exports to China with its overall export profile and with China's import demand to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has shifted, and which product groups offer the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Kazakhstan's total goods exports expanded strongly, rising from about USD 9.2 billion in 2001 to roughly USD 78.8 billion in 2025 (see Figure 12.1). Exports to China also grew substantially, increasing from about USD 1.0 billion to USD 19.1 billion over the same period. China has become one of the largest destinations for Kazakhstan's merchandise exports, rising from 4th place in 2001 to 2nd by 2025. This expansion, however, was closely tied to commodity cycles. Kazakhstan's exports expanded rapidly from 2000 through the early 2010s, and

contracted sharply during the commodity-market downturn of the mid-2010s, before they resumed growth after 2020. In 2025, Kazakhstan's exports to China reached a record high, whereas total merchandise exports remained below the previous peak posted in 2023. The close movement between Kazakhstan's overall exports and its exports to China suggests that recent bilateral growth has been driven largely by China's demand for Kazakhstan's resource-based products, rather than by broad-based diversification across the export basket.

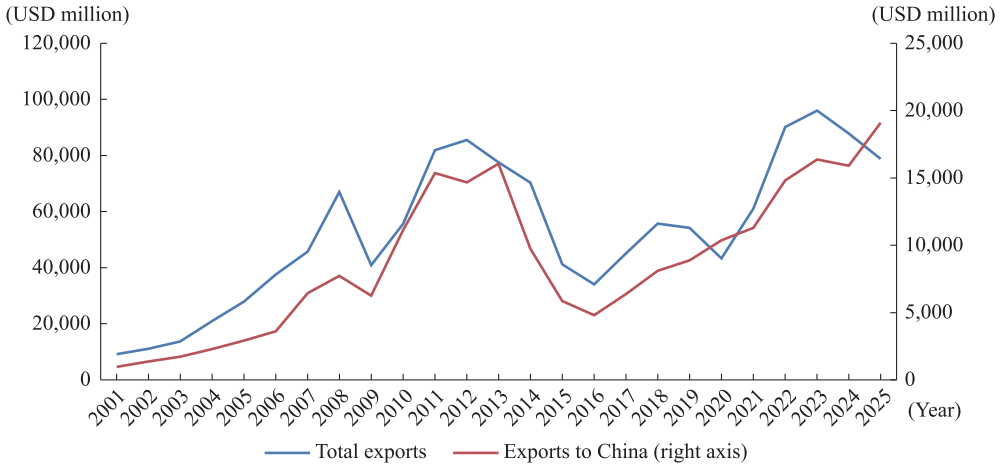


Figure 12.1 Kazakhstan Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

The Trade Intensity Index shows that China has consistently been an above-benchmark destination for Kazakhstan's exports relative to China's share of global imports (see Figure 12.2). The index remained above unity throughout the period, declined from very high levels in the early 2000s to lower levels in 2018, and then rose sharply again in 2025. The Trade Complementarity Index also improved over time, indicating that Kazakhstan's export basket has become more aligned with China's import demand composition. The overall trend is therefore positive: Kazakhstan trades with China more intensively than the global benchmark would imply, and complementarity has strengthened.

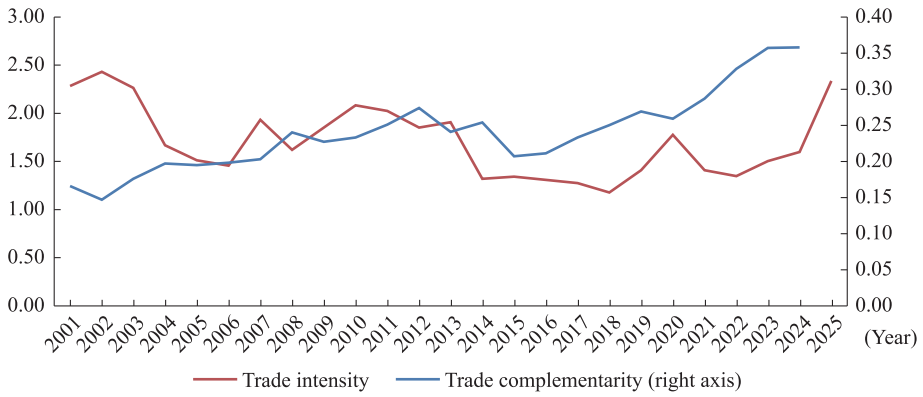


Figure 12.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Kazakhstan Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

A key feature of Kazakhstan's export structure is its high concentration in resource-based products. Unlike many countries, Kazakhstan's overall export basket is more concentrated than its exports to China, largely because global exports are heavily weighted toward mineral fuels. The trade concentration index for overall exports remained high during 2001–2019, before easing to 0.22 in 2020–2025 (see Table 12.1). Kazakhstan exports to China were also concentrated, but have become more diversified, with the index declining from 0.29 in 2009–2012 to 0.14 in 2020–2025. This suggests that Kazakhstan's China-facing export basket remains narrow, but it is distributed across a somewhat broader set of products than its global export portfolio.

Table 12.1 Kazakhstan Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001–2008	2009–2012	2013–2019	2020–2025
Exports to China	0.15	0.29	0.20	0.14
Overall exports	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.22

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Kazakhstan's total export basket in 2024 was dominated by primary products (see Table 12.2). Primary products accounted for 73 percent of total exports, intermediate products for 22 percent, and final goods for only 5 percent. Manufacturing and natural resources represented 94 percent of total exports, while agriculture accounted for 6 percent. Exports to China show a similarly resource-based profile, although with a somewhat higher share of intermediate products. Primary products accounted for 67 percent of exports to China, intermediate products for 30 percent, and final goods for 3 percent. Agriculture represented 7 percent of exports to China, while manufacturing and natural resources accounted for 93 percent. The China-facing basket is therefore highly concentrated in primary and intermediate products, with a limited share of final manufactured goods.

Table 12.2 **Kazakhstan Export Structure, 2024** Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	2	2	2	6
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	3	20	71	94
Overall, by stage of processing	5	22	73	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	0	5	2	7
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	3	25	65	93
Overall, by stage of processing	3	30	67	100

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, Kazakhstan's exports to China are concentrated in a relatively small group of resource-based and industrial-input sectors. In 2025, the 5 largest chapters accounted for almost 80 percent of exports to China (see Table 12.3). Ores, slag and ash was the largest category, with USD 4.9 billion in exports, equivalent to 26 percent of the total. Mineral fuels and oil followed at USD 3.4 billion, or 18 percent, while inorganic chemicals accounted for USD 2.4 billion, or 13 percent. Copper and articles thereof, pearls, precious stones and metals, iron and steel, food industry residues, machinery, zinc, and animal or vegetable fats and oils made up most of the remaining leading sectors.

Table 12.3 Kazakhstan Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	4,930.9	26	0.48	92	9	5	20
27	Mineral Fuels & Oils	3,438.9	18	0.48	72	21	-17	5
28	Inorganic Chemicals	2,439.8	13	0.93	30	78	-5	19
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	2,185.0	11	0.94	28	7	1	4
71	Pearls, Precious Stones & Metals	1,895.6	10	1.00	—	991	24	159
72	Iron & Steel	1318.3	7	0.99	11	-5	3	6
23	Food Industry Residues/Waste	731.7	4	0.92	—	-14	84	71
84	Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	579.4	3	0.99	8	70	-36	380
79	Zinc & Articles	526.8	3	1.00	123	13	19	-3

Continued

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
15	Animal/Vegetable Fats & Oils	224.3	1	0.54	-20	14	229	15

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The table is compiled by HS 2-digit chapters in descending order of export value; "—" indicates that exports to China were marginal during the period and can be ignored.

Recent sectoral dynamics have been generally positive, though uneven across products. Between 2019 and 2025, exports of ores, slag and ash, mineral fuels and oils, inorganic chemicals, copper and articles thereof, pearls, precious stones and metals, iron and steel, food industry residues and waste, machinery, mechanical appliances and parts, and animal and vegetable fats and oils all expanded. Growth was especially rapid in pearls, precious stones and metals, machinery, mechanical appliances and parts, and food industry residues and waste, while ores, slag and ash and inorganic chemicals also recorded strong gains. By contrast, zinc and articles exports declined slightly over the same period. Overall, the sectoral pattern points to a concentrated and resource-intensive export relationship, with recent growth driven mainly by minerals, fuels, metals, chemicals and selected agricultural-input products rather than by broad diversification into final manufactures.

From January to July 2026, China-Kazakhstan trade totaled USD 32.4 billion, up 24% year on year. China's exports amounted to USD 18.3 billion, up 9%, while its imports totaled USD 14.1 billion, up 52%. During the period, China's imports from Kazakhstan of non-resource-based products totaled USD 1.8 billion, up 26%, while imports of agricultural products reached USD 1.2 billion, up 62%.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether Kazakhstan's recent export performance in China reflects the expansion of existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of future potential. Table 12.4 shows that export growth between 2019 and 2025 was driven overwhelmingly by the intensive margin: 135 products exported in both years increased from USD 8.6317 billion to USD 180.942 billion, generating about USD 9.5 billion in additional exports. New products contributed USD 991.1 million across 52 HS 6-digit lines, while discontinued products reduced exports by USD 2.298 million. The near-term opportunity is therefore to consolidate and upgrade existing strengths while gradually widening the range of products exported to China.

Table 12.4 Kazakhstan Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	135	8,631.7	18,094.2	9,462.5
Discontinued products	88	229.8	0.0	-229.8
New products (extensive margin)	52	0.0	991.1	991.1

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Kazakhstan's revealed comparative advantage (RCA) indicators suggest strong export competitiveness in China, but this strength is concentrated in resource-based sectors. At the aggregate level, the China import-weighted RCA rose from 1.4 in 2001-2008 to 2.0 in 2020-2025, while the China import growth-weighted RCA increased from 1.3 to 2.6 over the same period (see Table 12.5). Since values above unity indicate revealed comparative advantage, these results suggest that Kazakhstan is

relatively well positioned both in products that are important in China's import basket and in products linked to faster-growing areas of Chinese demand. At the sectoral level, comparative advantage is strongest in zinc and articles thereof, inorganic chemicals, copper and articles thereof, mineral fuels and oils, ores, slag and ash, iron and steel, and pearls, precious stones and metals. By contrast, food industry residues and waste, machinery, mechanical appliances and parts, and animal and vegetable fats and oils remain below unity. Overall, the RCA evidence points to substantial competitiveness in minerals, fuels, metals and chemical inputs, but more limited competitiveness across a broader range of manufactured goods.

Table 12.5 Kazakhstan Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage RCA (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	1.4	1.5	1.7	2.0
China import growth-weighted	1.3	2.0	1.6	2.6
	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	5.3	3.4	3.4	4.0
27: Mineral Fuels & Oils	4.9	4.1	4.9	4.2
28: Inorganic Chemicals	4.9	5.4	7.5	6.2
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	7.6	4.4	5.5	4.5
71: Pearls, Precious Stones & Metals	0.9	0.5	0.4	2.5
72: Iron & Steel	4.4	2.4	3.1	3.0
23: Food Industry Residues/Waste	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.6
84: Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
79: Zinc & Articles Thereof	17.3	11.6	14.0	10.0
15: Animal/Vegetable Fats & Oils	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.7

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the industry-level analysis, the product-level assessment in the Annex (Table Ⅱ) further evaluates Kazakhstan's export potential in the Chinese market and identifies the major areas in which it can be realized. The results point to opportunities in three types of product. The first comprises staple export products—those in which Kazakhstan already commands a significant position in the Chinese market and whose further growth hinges primarily on scaling up existing trade flows. Examples include bran and residues, radioactive chemical elements, ferroalloys, copper ores and concentrates, refined copper, molybdenum ores, and linseed. The second type covers emerging-industry products—goods for which Kazakhstan possesses strong export capacity but currently holds only a small share of the Chinese market, such as gold and titanium products. The third type consists of potential-opportunity products—items for which Chinese import demand is robust but Kazakhstan's exports to China remain very modest, including hydrogen and rare gases, chromium ores, silver, coal-tar products, recycled fiber pulp, and salt.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Kazakhstan's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Kazakhstan is landlocked, with no direct access to the open ocean, yet it has become a principal land bridge between China and Europe. The country is traversed by the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor) connecting China to European markets. Its railway network is 16,000 km long, the largest in Central Asia, and carries growing volumes of transit freight: In 2024, two-way rail freight

between China and Kazakhstan reached approximately 32 million tonnes, up 13% year on year, while freight on the Middle Corridor rose 62 percent to 4.5 million tonnes, with container traffic up roughly 170 percent to about 56,500 TEU.① Aviation connectivity stands at 78 partner economies,② below the world average, though Almaty and Astana airports provide direct access to key markets including China.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Kazakhstan is a major hydrocarbons producer with an extensive electricity generation base. In 2024, 32.5 percent of surveyed firms reported experiencing electrical outages, above the Europe and Central Asia average of 25.5 percent but below the world average of 46.1 percent (see Table 12.6). Affected firms experienced an average of 0.5 outages per month, in line with the regional average but largely below the global one (3.1). Obtaining an electrical connection takes 15 days on average, well below the regional average of 66 days and the world average of 44.6 days. Overall, electricity supply is not a primary constraint for exporters.

Table 12.6 Stability of Energy Supply in Kazakhstan, 2024

Indicator	Kazakhstan	Europe and Central Asia	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	32.5	25.5	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	0.5	0.5	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	28.8	22.6	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, https://www.enterprisesurveys.org.

① Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), Integrated Annual Report 2024, Astana, 2025, https://www.railways.kz/media/filer_public/1f/ca/1fca13c4-0c96-4543-bc7b-94a19bed8abf/2024_annual_report.pdf.

② World Bank, Logistics Performance Indicators 2.0, Washington, D.C., 2026, https://lpi.worldbank.org/en/indicators/lpi-2-0.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband subscriptions stood at 15.3 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, below the CIS average of 26.7 and the world average of 20.1 (see Table 12.7). Mobile coverage is broadly comparable to regional and world levels: LTE network coverage reached 91.6 percent of the population in 2024, close to the CIS average of 93.4 percent and the world average of 92.7 percent.

Table 12.7 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Kazakhstan

Indicator	Kazakhstan	CIS	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	15.3	26.7	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	91.6	93.4	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub: https://datahub.itu.int/.

Note: Data for Kazakhstan from 2024; CIS and world averages from 2025.

Cross-border parcel and express volumes grew substantially between 2021 and 2024 (Table 12.8). Demand-side e-commerce adoption is strong: 42.8 percent of adults bought online in 2024, above the Europe and Central Asia average of 33.9 percent. Kazakhstan ranks 65th of 127 in the Network Readiness Index 2025; its business digital engagement sub-pillar score of 18.6 (out of 100) indicates scope to grow in cross-border digital trade. High consumer e-commerce adoption and near-universal internet access are concrete assets for reaching the Chinese market, while low fixed broadband penetration constrains higher-bandwidth digital trade infrastructure for exporters.

Table 12.8 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Kazakhstan

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	35,455	60,721
International parcels dispatched (total)	74,952	116,698

Continued

Indicator	2021	2024
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (%, age 15+)	38.1	42.8
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	18.6
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	90.9	93.4

Source: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Kazakhstan's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 12.8 million, about 62 percent of the total (Europe and Central Asia average: 64.5 percent), down from 68.1 percent in 2010 (see Figure 12.3).

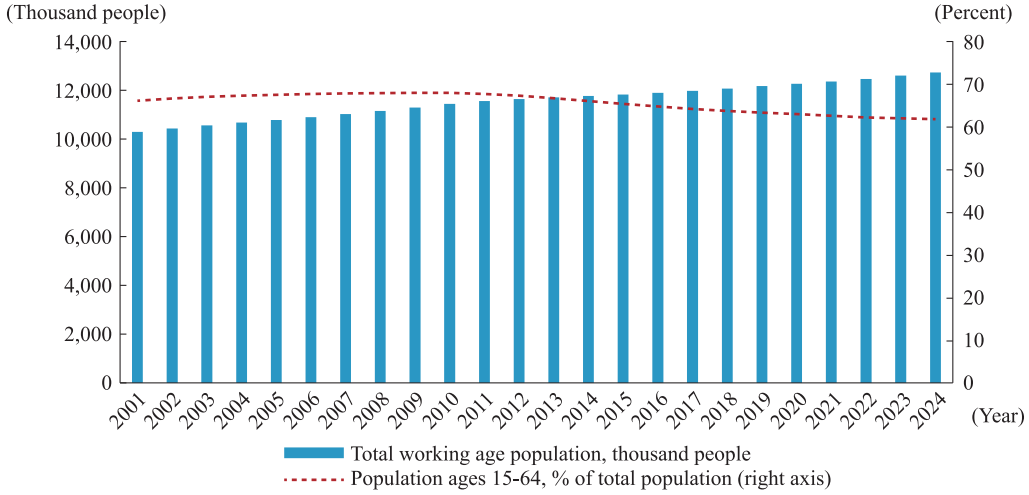


Figure 12.3 Total Working Age Population, Kazakhstan, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Gross capital formation was 27.21 percent of GDP in 2024, above the regional (22.4 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages; over 2001–2024 it ranged from 23 percent (2011) to 35.5 percent (2007) and hovered around 26.7 percent after COVID-19 (see Table 12.9). R&D intensity is very low at 0.16 percent of GDP in 2024, against a regional average of 2.13 percent and a world average of 2.6 percent (2023).①

Kazakhstan's tertiary enrolment is moderate but has eased since 2020. The gross enrolment ratio stood at 52.9 percent in 2025, well below the Europe and Central Asia average (81.5 percent) though above the world average (43.2 percent) (see Figure 12.4). STEM graduates accounted for 25.5 percent of tertiary graduates in 2025, a comparatively favourable share, whereas business, administration and law graduates fell to 12.8 percent, down from around 20 percent in the late 2010s.

The relatively strong STEM orientation supports Kazakhstan's industrial base, but the low R&D intensity and the declining enrolment ratio may constrain its capacity to diversify into more technology-intensive exports to China.

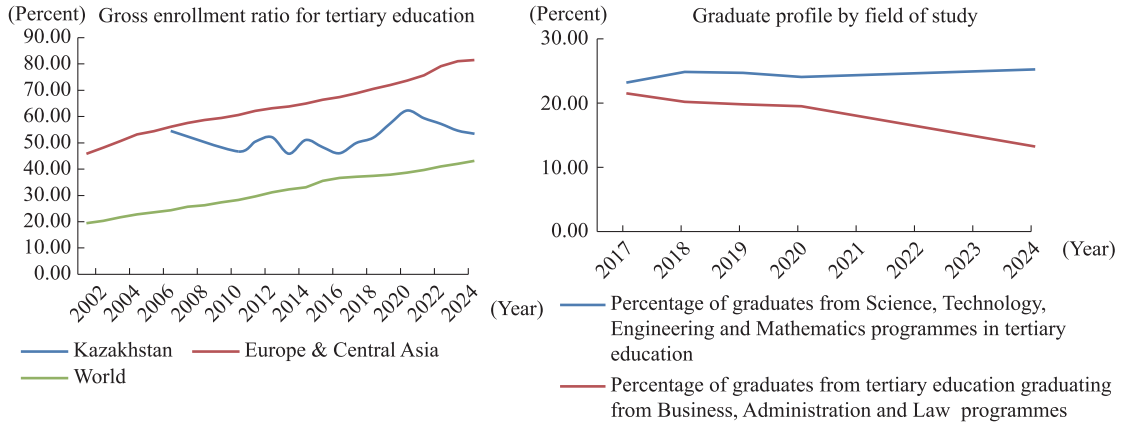


Figure 12.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Kazakhstan (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

Note: Graduate profile data not available for 2001–2005; 2008–2009. Lines connect available data points.

① UNESCO.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 3.9 percent of value added, industry for 32.1 percent and services for 57.9 percent of GDP (regional averages: 1.2 percent, 22.9 percent and 65.4 percent; see Figure 12.5). Agriculture fell from 8.7 percent and industry from 36.1 percent in 2001, while services rose from 49.4 percent, indicating a long-term decline in industry's weight in the Kazakh economy.

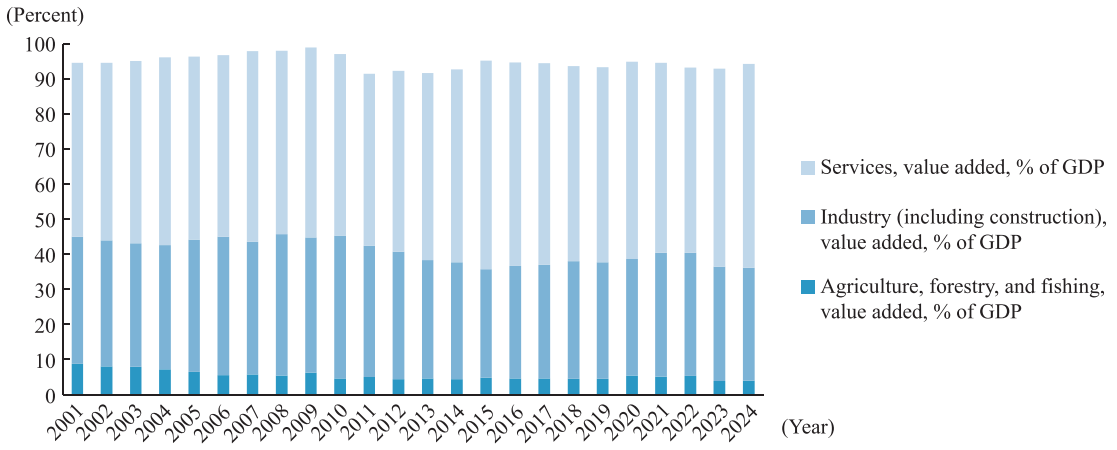


Figure 12.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Kazakhstan, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal (https://data.worldbank.org/).

Notes: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added fell from 16.5 percent of GDP in 2001 to 12.39 percent in 2024, below the regional (13.5 percent) and world (15 percent) averages. Medium- and high-tech industry rose to a 2022 peak of 17.52 percent of manufacturing value added, lifting its estimated share of GDP from 1.0 percent in 2001 (1.42 percent in 2016) to 2.35 percent in 2022 (see Table 12.9).

Table 12.9 Industrial System Indicators, Kazakhstan, 2014–2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15 – 64, % of total population	66.23	65.56	64.92	64.34	63.89	63.51	63.14	62.74	62.39	62.15	61.97
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	21.90	18.01	16.33	15.36	14.32	13.76	13.46	12.83	12.36	12.02	11.65
Gross capital formation, % GDP	25.79	27.91	27.83	26.35	25.26	27.63	28.81	26.53	24.98	28.16	27.21
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	4.33	4.71	4.56	4.52	4.40	4.47	5.39	5.03	5.25	3.83	3.88
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	33.21	30.85	31.98	32.33	33.50	33.03	33.10	35.27	34.98	32.43	32.11
Services, value added, % of GDP	54.84	59.30	57.86	57.30	55.45	55.53	56.10	53.92	52.64	56.34	57.94
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	10.32	10.28	11.33	11.28	11.43	11.47	13.07	13.61	13.42	12.29	12.39
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	16.59	14.18	12.50	13.80	14.13	15.90	16.82	16.89	17.52	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	1.71	1.46	1.42	1.56	1.62	1.82	2.20	2.30	2.35	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Overall, Kazakhstan combines relatively high gross capital formation with a growing medium- and high-tech manufacturing segment. However, a declining working-age share, the long-term erosion of industry and manufacturing and low R&D intensity constrain its capacity to develop more advanced export goods. Its export structure to China is therefore unlikely to change substantially over the medium term.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews Kazakhstan's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(Ⅰ) Trade Openness

Kazakhstan's openness to trade (trade to GDP ratio) is 56.8 percent, on par with the world average of 57.2 percent and slightly below the Europe and Central Asia average of 58.3 percent.① Kazakhstan has steadily raised its Openness Indicator to 0.62 in 2024 (see Figure 12.6), placing it 112th out of 129 economies. Its rank has held broadly constant as openness rose globally, and its score remains about 17 percent below the world average and well short of the Europe and Central Asia average of 0.77.

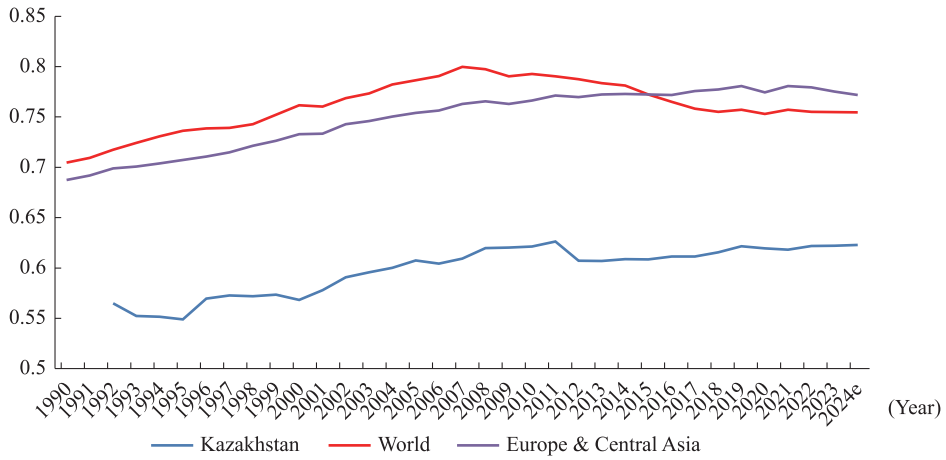


Figure 12.6 Kazakhstan's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

① UNCTAD (2026b).

Kazakhstan belongs to 13 overlapping trade agreements (world average: 12): seven bilateral, six regional or inter-regional; China is not party to any. ① As a developing country, Kazakhstan benefits from non-reciprocal preferences granted by Japan, Norway and Switzerland. ② Among the major generalized system of preferences (GSP) programmes, Kazakhstan is currently eligible only for Japan's; utilization reached about 62 percent over the 2023-2025 period, down from 87 percent a decade ago, when it was eligible for a broader set of schemes including those of Canada, the European Union and the United States. ③

Kazakhstan has advanced substantially on trade facilitation, its overall implementation rate rising from 36.56 percent in 2015 to 76.34 percent in 2025, broadly in line with the North and Central Asia average of 78.7 percent (see Table 12.10). It scores highly on Transparency (93.33) and Formalities (87.50), while Paperless and Cross-Border Paperless Trade (66.67 and 61.11) remain least developed. Operational outcomes lag the regulatory framework, however: despite full marks on border management, exports still take 14 days to clear all border control agencies, at a cost equal to 14 percent of export value. ④ Deeper digitalization would lower these costs for exporters, including those serving China.

Table 12.10 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Kazakhstan

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	66.67	41.67	44.44	29.63	11.11	36.56
2021	86.67	87.50	77.78	66.67	38.89	70.97

① WTO.
② UNCTAD (2024b).
③ UNCTAD (2026b).
④ World Bank (2025a).

Continued

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2025	93.33	87.50	77.78	66.67	61.11	76.34

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0 - 100) is the percentage of trade - facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

Kazakhstan's tariff regime has become more liberal over time, with the simple average declining from around 9 - 10 percent to about 5.5 percent in 2025. As a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Kazakhstan applies the common external tariff. Trade - weighted averages are close to simple averages due to the relatively small dispersion of tariff rates across tariff lines, and agricultural tariffs remain higher than industrial tariffs, though the gap is moderate (see Table 12.11).

Table 12.11 MFN Applied Tariffs, Kazakhstan, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	5.6	5.1	8.7
Trade weighted av.	5.3	4.7	10.8

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2025).

The number of non-tariff measures (NTMs) applied by Kazakhstan per agri-food products (see Figure 12.7) and per manufacturing product (see Figure 12.8) is between the averages of developing and developed countries. This indicates both relatively advanced regulatory capacity and a measured use of NTMs to avoid excessive trade costs. The use of non-technical measures and export measures is low in all sectors, which shows a relatively limited regulatory approach.

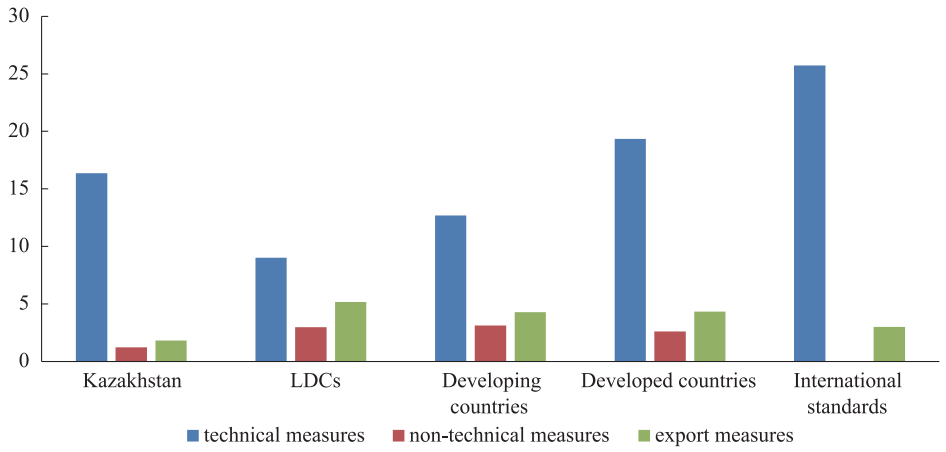


Figure 12.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kazakhstan

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Kazakhstan data is from 2025.

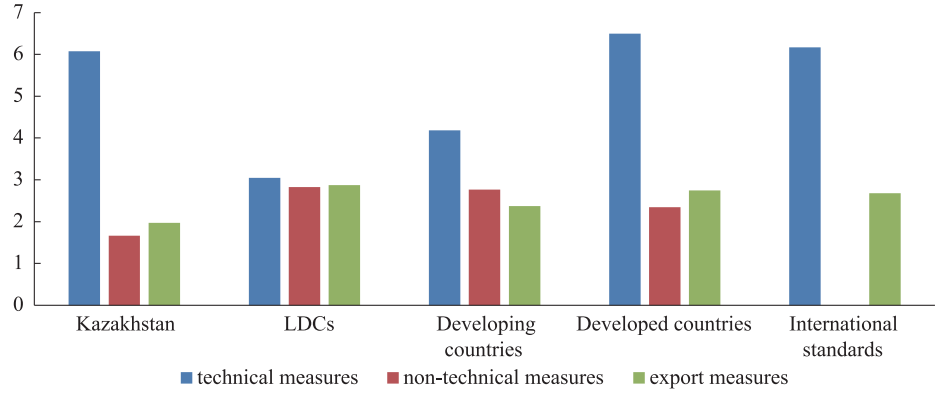


Figure 12.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kazakhstan

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Kazakhstan data is from 2025.

The regulatory similarity index measures the relative similarity or dissimilarity of SPS and TBT between different countries, vis-à-vis international standards and across sectors. Regulatory similarity with international standards is very high, demonstrating a high SPS capacity and respect for the multilateral system. Kazakhstan's regulatory

similarity with China, across both sectors, is also very high, while similarity with the rest of the world is on the lower end of the spectrum(see Figure 12.9).

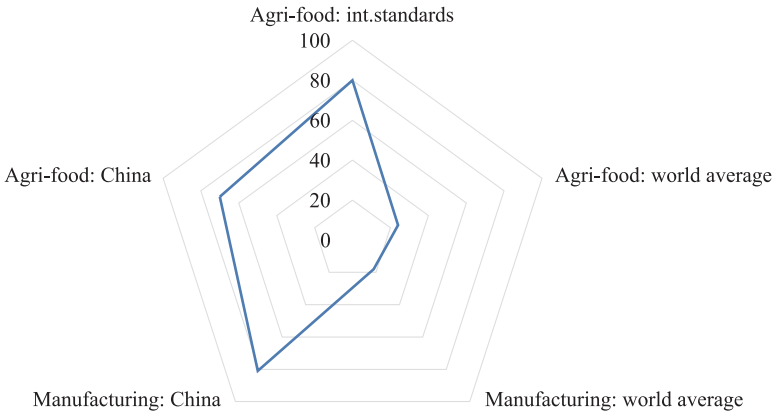


Figure 12.9 Kazakhstan's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Kazakhstan data is from 2025; data for China from 2024.

Since joining the WTO in late 2015, Kazakhstan has submitted rising numbers of SPS notifications (see Figure 12.10), signaling commitment to transparency, though very low TBT notifications raise questions about transparency in the manufactured sector.

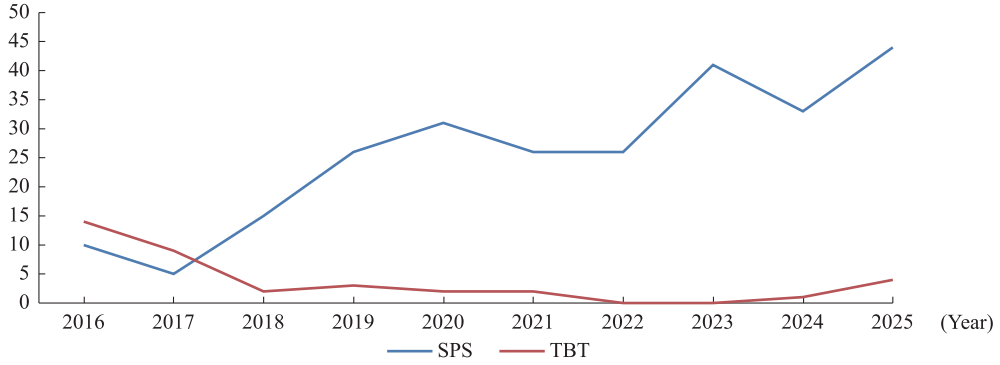


Figure 12.10 Kazakhstan's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2016-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

Kazakhstan's SPS capacity is well developed. It operates 1,153 accredited laboratories (8th of 46 in Europe and Central Asia), and QI4SD indicators show robust accreditation capacity (81.4), though conformity assessment remains limited (10.0). Border implementation is advanced, with full electronic SPS certification and ePhyto Hub participation. ① ISO management-system certification remains modest by global standards, with 625 ISO 9001 and 44 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 81st and 69th worldwide respectively. ②

Kazakhstan maintains export restrictions across a range of products. Under the EAEU framework, some controls, such as export licensing for raw minerals and precious metals, are applied uniformly, while others are unilateral: export duties to non-EAEU members, frequently renewed export bans, and quotas. It levies variable duties and a progressive rent tax on crude oil, its principal export. Recurring bans target petroleum products and liquefied petroleum gas (energy security), industrial sulfur (transit disruptions to key routes), and metal scrap, steel, livestock and timber (domestic value addition); recent measures add export duties on sunflower seeds and a beef quota to stabilize domestic supply.

High regulatory alignment with Chinese and international standards helps keep compliance costs low for Kazakh exporters, supporting their competitiveness in the Chinese market.

Kazakhstan is one of the featured countries of the "Export to China" initiative in 2026. The "Export to China" initiative has played a positive role in boosting bilateral trade and promoting exports of Kazakhstan's non-resource-based products. China currently supports Kazakhstan's active participation in trade fairs such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the China Import and Export Fair (Canton

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; SPS notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

Fair), and leverages the "Export to China" series of activities to promote greater exports of high-quality Kazakh products to the Chinese market.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Kazakhstan's capital account has become less restrictive over the past two decades, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) declining from 0.64 in 2001 to about 0.39 in 2018 before rising to around 0.55 in recent years. Kazakhstan remains more restrictive than the upper-middle-income average (0.33).① The United States dollar (USD) remains the dominant currency for international trade, particularly for commodity exports, while use of the Chinese yuan (CNY) is growing alongside stronger economic ties with China. In January-November 2025, CNY/KZT spot trading on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange more than doubled year on year to about USD 3 billion, although it remained well below USD/KZT trading (USD 60 billion), with RUB/KZT and EUR/KZT reaching USD 18 billion and USD 1.5 billion, respectively.②

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a major pillar of Kazakhstan's economy despite volatile annual flows. Net FDI inflows were negative at approximately -USD 0.9 billion in 2025, compared with a revised positive inflow of about USD 0.2 billion in 2024. Despite the negative net flow, the stock of inward FDI increased to approximately USD 156.4 billion, equivalent to 52 percent of GDP, almost at the same level as the global average (51 percent). Investment is concentrated in oil and gas, mining, transport and logistics. Emerging areas of investor interest include critical minerals and transport corridors, although global uncertainty is weighing on new investment activity.③

---

① IMF.

② Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (2025). KZT = Kazakhstani tenge.

③ UNCTAD (2026d).

V. Conclusion

Kazakhstan's export relationship with China has expanded strongly over the past two decades. Exports rose from about USD 1 billion in 2001 to roughly USD 19 billion in 2025. China moved from Kazakhstan's 4th-largest export market to one of its largest export markets. This growth reflects a strong fit between Kazakhstan's main export strengths and China's demand, especially in resource-based products. Exports to China remain dominated by ores, mineral fuels, chemicals and metals, while final manufactured goods play only a limited role. Kazakhstan's exports to China continue to be dominated by mineral ores, mineral fuels, chemicals, and metals, with finished goods accounting for a relatively small share. The recent uptick in exports has been driven mainly by larger volumes of established product lines rather than by a significant influx of new products into the Chinese market.

Kazakhstan enjoys several structural advantages for exporting to China. The country sits astride a key overland corridor between China and Europe. Although it is landlocked, its access to the Chinese market is steadily improving, thanks to a relatively well-developed rail network and rising transit freight volumes along Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. Kazakhstan also benefits from a relatively reliable electricity supply, high rates of e-commerce adoption, and a regulatory framework closely aligned with Chinese and international standards—factors that help reduce exporters' legal compliance costs. At the same time, notable constraints persist. The manufacturing base continues to erode, R&D intensity remains low, and the working-age share of the population is declining. Export restrictions and a relatively tight financial environment may further limit the room for export expansion.

Overall, Kazakhstan holds certain competitive advantages in the Chinese market, although these are concentrated in a relatively narrow range of resource-based

products. Its strengths in minerals, metals, chemicals, transport connectivity, and regulatory alignment provide a solid foundation for sustained export growth to China. Given its comparatively weak industrial and technological base, however, a major diversification of the export structure is unlikely over the medium term. The greatest scope for future growth may, therefore, come from scaling up existing export products such as copper ores and concentrates, ferroalloys, and molybdenum. Going forward, the two sides will continue to make effective use of mechanisms including the Economic and Trade Cooperation Sub-Committee of the China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee, consolidate the traditional bedrock of trade in energy, minerals, and agricultural products, and cultivate new growth areas such as cross-border e-commerce and digital trade, so as to promote the steady and sound development of bilateral trade.

Chapter XIII

Kenya

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Kenya's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition, and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Kenya's exports to China with both its overall export profile and China's import demand to identify areas where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has strengthened or weakened, and which product groups present the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Kenya's total goods exports increased from roughly USD 1.8 billion in 2001 to about USD 8.6 billion in 2025 (see Figure 13.1). Exports to China grew from around USD 6 million in 2001 to roughly USD 226 million in 2025, after peaking at about USD 269 million in 2022. China has gradually become a more visible destination for Kenyan merchandise exports, rising from 41st in 2001 to 17th in 2025, but the bilateral flow remains small relative to Kenya's total export base. The

trajectory has also been uneven: exports to China rose strongly during the 2010s, accelerated in 2017-2019 and again in 2021-2022, and then moderated in 2023-2025.

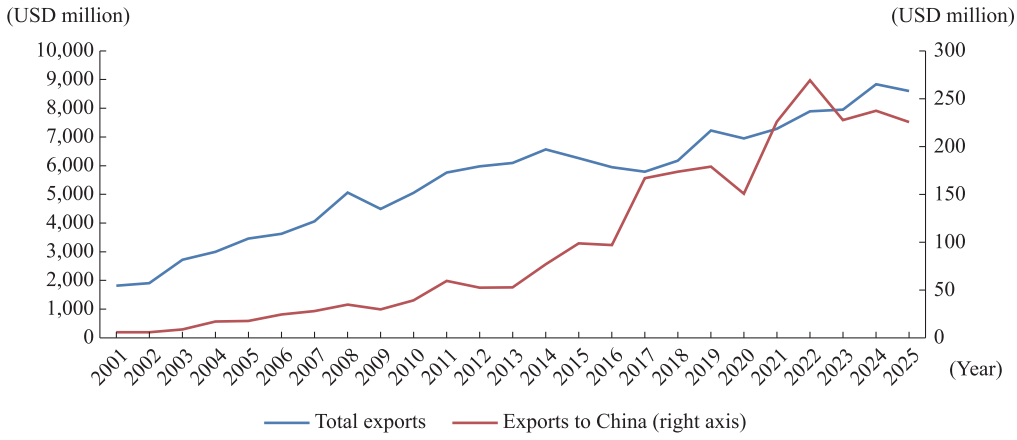


Figure 13.1 Kenya Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

Although Kenya exports substantially more to China than in 2001, the relationship remains low-intensity relative to China's role in global imports. The Trade Intensity Index stayed well below unity throughout the period, but rose from below 0.10 in the early 2000s to about 0.25 in 2025 (see Figure 13.2). The Trade Complementarity Index also remained low, generally around 0.12-0.16, with a temporary spike in 2019. This indicates that Kenya's overall export basket is only weakly aligned with the composition of Chinese import demand. The central message is therefore selective: Kenya has some product-level opportunities in China, but the bilateral export relationship remains narrow and weakly complementary at the aggregate level.

A key feature of Kenya's global export structure is the contrast between a moderately diversified overall export basket and a more concentrated export basket to China. The trade concentration index for exports to China fell from 0.10 in 2001-2008 to 0.08 in 2009-2012, but then rose to 0.18 in 2013-2019 and 0.19 in 2020-2025

(see Table 13.1). By contrast, the index for overall exports remained much lower, at about 0.04–0.05 throughout the period. This confirms that Kenya's exports to China depend on a much narrower set of products than its global export portfolio, and that concentration has increased in the most recent periods.

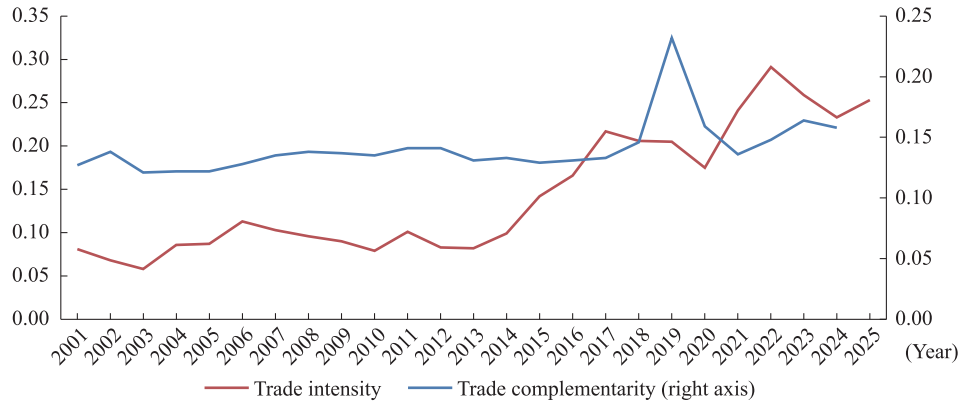


Figure 13.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Kenya Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Table 13.1 Kenya Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.10	0.08	0.18	0.19
Overall exports	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.04

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Kenya's total export basket in 2024 was dominated by final goods, with a sizeable primary-products component (see Table 13.2). Final products accounted for 57 percent of total exports, primary products for 27 percent, and intermediate products for 16 percent. Agriculture represented 52 percent of total exports, while manufacturing and natural resources represented 48

percent. Exports to China show a very different profile. Primary products accounted for 70 percent of Kenya's exports to China, final goods for 26 percent, and intermediate products for only 4 percent. Manufacturing and natural-resource products made up 68 percent of exports to China, driven mostly by primary/resource-based goods, while agriculture accounted for 32 percent. The China-facing basket is therefore far more oriented toward primary commodities and resource-based products than Kenya's overall export structure.

Table 13.2 **Kenya Export Structure, 2024** Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	42	4	6	52
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	15	12	21	48
Overall, by stage of processing	57	16	27	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	23	1	8	32
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	3	3	62	68
Overall, by stage of processing	26	4	70	100

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, Kenya's exports to China are highly concentrated in a small group of sectors. In 2025, the five largest chapters accounted for about 84 percent of total exports to China (see Table 13.3). Copper and articles thereof was the dominant category, with exports of USD 106.5 million, equivalent to 47

percent of the total. Ores, slag and ash followed at USD 25.7 million, or 11 percent, while coffee, tea and spices accounted for USD 24.5 million, also about 11 percent. Edible fruit and nuts, fish and crustaceans, lac, gums and resins, knitted apparel, other vegetable textile fibers, raw hides and skins, and non-knitted apparel made up most of the remaining leading sectors. This composition shows that Kenya's China-facing export basket is centered on copper, minerals, agricultural products, fisheries, natural gums, textiles, and apparel.

Table 13.3 Kenya Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	106.5	47	0.99	24	71	-2	58
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	25.7	11	0.43	74	1	44	-23
09	Coffee, Tea & Spices	24.5	11	0.53	24	14	3	27
08	Edible Fruit & Nuts	19.9	9	0.36	77	-51	18	78
03	Fish & Crustaceans	14.3	6	0.54	-6	49	18	17
13	Lac; Gums, Resins	8.6	4	0.78	5	-14	61	-9
61	Apparel, Knitted/Crocheted	4.5	2	0.21	—	16	95	51
53	Other Vegetable Textile Fibers	3.6	2	1.00	14	13	1	-12
41	Raw Hides & Skins	2.9	1	0.66	135	19	-1	-17
62	Apparel, Not Knitted/Crocheted	2.7	1	0.97	—	132	-13	72

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The table is compiled by HS 2-digit chapters in descending order of export value; "—" indicates that exports to China were marginal during the period.

Recent sectoral dynamics have been uneven. Copper grew very rapidly during 2019-2025 and reinforced its position as the anchor of Kenya's exports to China. Coffee, tea and spices, edible fruit and nuts, fish and crustaceans, knitted apparel, and non-knitted apparel also expanded, with especially strong growth in edible fruit and apparel categories from relatively small bases. By contrast, ores, gums and resins, other vegetable textile fibers, and raw hides and skins declined over the same period. Overall, the sectoral pattern points to selective but still volatile export relationship, with recent growth driven mainly by copper, selected agricultural products, fisheries, and apparel rather than by broad diversification across manufactured goods.

According to statistics from the General Administration of Customs of China, China-Kenya trade totaled USD 7.08 billion from January to July 2026, up 18.5% year on year. China's imports from Kenya totaled USD 120 million, down 19.5% year on year. There remains significant potential to further expand Kenya's exports to the Chinese market.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether Kenya's recent export performance in China reflects expansion of existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of future potential. Table 13.4 shows that export growth between 2019 and 2025 was driven mainly by the intensive margin: 74 products exported in both years increased from about USD 161.2 million to about USD 205 million, generating USD 44 million in additional exports. However, new products contributed almost USD 20 million across 18 HS 6-digit lines, while discontinued products reduced exports by about USD 17.40 million. The near-term opportunity is therefore to consolidate and upgrade existing product strengths while selectively widening the set of products exported to China.

Table 13.4 Kenya Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6 digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	74	161.2	205.3	44.1
Discontinued products	42	17.4	0.0	-17.4
New products (extensive margin)	18	0.0	19.9	19.9

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Kenya's export potential in China remains selective, although aggregate indicators have improved over time. The China import-weighted RCA rose from 0.4 in 2001-2008 to 0.6 in 2020-2025, while the China import growth-weighted RCA increased from 0.3 to 0.9 over the same period (see Table 13.5). This suggests that Kenya's export basket has become somewhat better aligned with China's import demand, including faster-growing segments of that demand. At the sectoral level, comparative advantage is strongest in coffee, tea and spices, edible fruit and nuts, ores, slag and ash, lac, gums and resins, apparel, other vegetable textile fibers, and raw hides and skins. Fish and crustaceans are close to unity, indicating a more moderate competitive position, while copper and articles thereof remains below unity despite being Kenya's leading export category to China by value. Overall, the RCA evidence points to selective opportunities in agricultural products, natural-resource-based inputs, textiles and apparel, but also indicates that Kenya's aggregate export structure remains only partially aligned with China's broader import basket.

Table 13.5 Kenya Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage RCA (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.6
China import growth-weighted	0.3	0.4	0.8	0.9
	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.7
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	0.2	0.1	1.9	2.1
09: Coffee, Tea & Spices	109.5	100.5	92.8	72.4
08: Edible Fruit & Nuts	3.1	2.7	4.1	6.2
03: Fish & Crustaceans	3.9	2.6	1.5	1.0
13: Lac; Gums, Resins	11.7	2.3	2.9	6.8
61: Apparel, Knitted/Crocheted	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.4
53: Other Vegetable Textile Fibers	13.7	20.1	23.9	25.8
41: Raw Hides & Skins	5.8	7.9	8.4	4.7
62: Apparel, Not Knitted/Crocheted	3.3	2.0	2.9	3.3

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the sector-level evidence, the Annex (Table Ⅲ) identifies more granular HS 4-digit export opportunities for Kenya in China. These opportunities fall into four groups: core export products, where Kenya already has a meaningful presence and further growth would mainly involve scaling up existing flows, including niobium, tantalum, vanadium or zirconium ores, titanium ores, nuts, lac and natural gums, raw and tanned hides and skins, and dried or smoked fish; underexploited products, where current exports to China remain below potential despite Chinese demand, such as vegetable saps and extracts; emerging sectors, where Kenya's export capacity exists but the China share remains low, including carbonates, feldspar and fluorspar, coffee, plants used in perfumery or pharmacy, fixed vegetable fats and oils, and seeds for sowing; and latent opportunities, where exports to China are negligible despite measurable Chinese import demand, including knitted men's shirts, unwrought gold,

wigs and other hair products, unwrought tin, and live animals.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Kenya's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Kenya's ports handled approximately 2 million TEUs in 2024, roughly double the amount of a decade ago. The Liner Shipping Connectivity Index rose by 38 percent over the decade to 83.05 in 2025. Maritime connectivity is above the Sub-Saharan African average, with Kenya linking to 23 maritime partner economies compared to a regional average of 20.2 (see Table 13.6). With direct air connections to 113 economies, Kenya stands well above both the Sub-Saharan African and world averages. Kenya has a rail network of approximately 3,523 kilometres. The container import dwell time of 4.8 days is well below the Sub-Saharan African average of 12.5 days and below the world average of 7.9 days,[①] indicating relatively efficient port logistics that reduce per-unit export costs and support delivery reliability for Kenyan exporters. These logistics advantages support Kenya's role as a regional gateway for trade with China.

Table 13.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Kenya

Indicator	Kenya	Sub-Saharan Africa average	World average
Container import dwell time (days)	4.8	12.5	7.9
Maritime partner economies	23.0	20.2	28.2
Aviation partner economies	113.0	69.1	91.5

Source: World Bank (2026a).

Note: World average is an UNCTAD calculation.

① UNCTAD (2026a).

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

In 2025, 74.6 percent of surveyed firms reported experiencing electrical outages, broadly in line with the Sub-Saharan African average (see Table 13.7). The average number of outages per month stands at 2.8, and 17.7 percent of firms identified electricity as a major constraint, lower than both the Sub-Saharan African and world averages. The picture for exporters is mixed. Although a slightly higher share of firms reported experiencing outages than in the region, outages are less frequent, and firms have adapted by equipping themselves with generators, 60.7 percent had one. This may explain why relatively few firms identify electricity as a major or very severe constraint. ①

Table 13.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Kenya, 2025

Indicator	Kenya	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	74.6	71.9	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	2.8	6.7	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	17.7	37.4	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, https://www.enterprisesurveys.org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband subscriptions stood at 3.0 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, above the African average of 1.2 but well below the world average of 20.1 (see Table 13.8). Mobile coverage is considerably more advanced: 97.3 percent of the population was covered by at least an LTE network in 2024, exceeding both the African and world averages, reflecting the maturity of Kenya's mobile infrastructure and the widespread adoption of mobile internet.

① World Bank (2025b).

Table 13.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Kenya

Indicator	Kenya	Africa	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	3.0	1.2	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	97.3	75.2	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub: https://datahub.itu.int/.

Internet access has expanded steadily, with 34.98 percent of the population using the internet in 2024, up from 26.96 percent in 2021 (see Table 13.9). Demand-side e-commerce adoption is a notable relative strength: the share of adults buying online stood at 20.6 percent in 2024, roughly three times the Sub-Saharan African average. Business digital engagement sub-pillar stood at 24.2 (score 0-100) in 2024, above the level of comparable regional economies. Kenya ranks 77th of 127 economies in the Network Readiness Index 2025. Volumes of international express items and parcels dispatched declined between 2021 and 2024, which may partly reflect changes in postal data reporting rather than a sustained contraction in cross-border trade activity.[①] Kenya's strong mobile connectivity and above-average e-commerce adoption represent concrete assets for accessing the Chinese market through cross-border digital channels, although the low fixed-broadband penetration remains a structural constraint for export-oriented firms that require higher-bandwidth digital trade infrastructure.

Table 13.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Kenya

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	5,037	3,265
International parcels dispatched (total)	16,718	4,792
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (%, age 15+)	16.3	20.6

① UPU (2025).

Continued

Indicator	2021	2024
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	24.2
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	26.96	34.98

Source: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Kenya's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 34.0 million, about 60.2 percent of the total (Sub-Saharan Africa average: 56 percent), and gradually rising (see Figure 13.3). Agriculture still employs almost half the workforce (46.5 percent in 2024), though this share is declining.

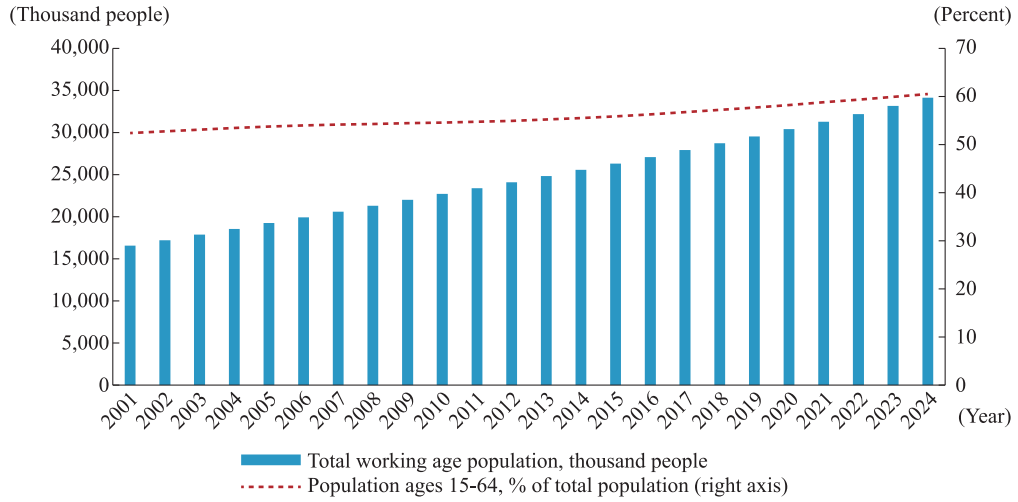


Figure 13.3 Total Working Age Population, Kenya, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Gross capital formation was 16.8 percent of GDP in 2024, below the regional (24.1 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages and among the lowest figures since 2001 (peak: 24.95 percent in 2014). R&D intensity is low but rising, at 0.81 percent of GDP in 2024 (its highest on record), against a world average of 2.6 percent (2023). ①

Kenya's higher education system remains limited in scale. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education was 10.4 percent in 2024, close to the Sub-Saharan Africa average (9.3 percent in 2022) but far below the world average (43.2 percent) (see Figure 13.4). STEM graduates accounted for 20.1 percent of tertiary graduates in 2024, while business, administration and law graduates made up 23.8 percent.

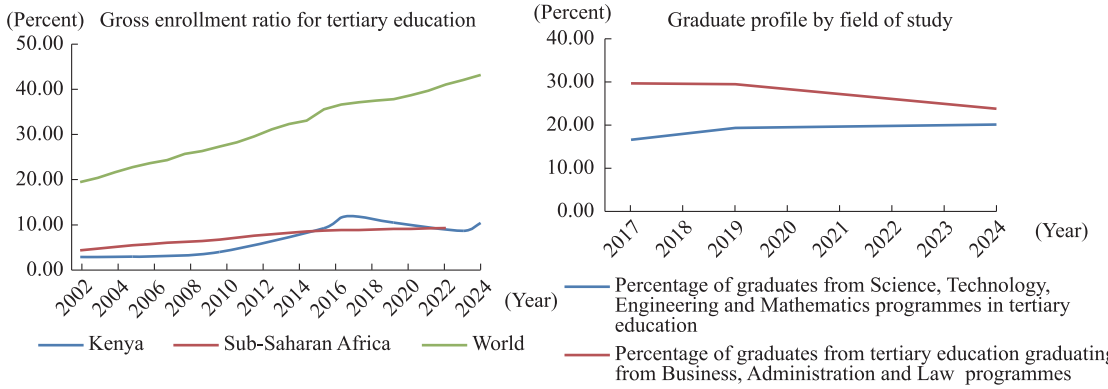


Figure 13.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Kenya (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

Note: Gross enrolment data for Kenya not available for 2003; 2006-2008; 2010-2014; 2018; 2020-2022. Graduate profile data not available for 2018; 2020-2023. Lines connect available data points.

A small tertiary base, combined with limited though rising R&D spending, may constrain Kenya's capacity to export more value-added products and to meet the quality and standards requirements of Chinese importers.

① UNESCO.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 22.5 percent of value added, industry for 16.5 percent and services for 55.3 percent of GDP (regional averages: 18 percent, 25.3 percent and 49.6 percent; Figure 13.5). Over 2006-2024, agriculture rose by 1.9 and services by 4.9 percentage points, while industry fell by 2.9 points (from 19.4 percent to 16.5 percent).

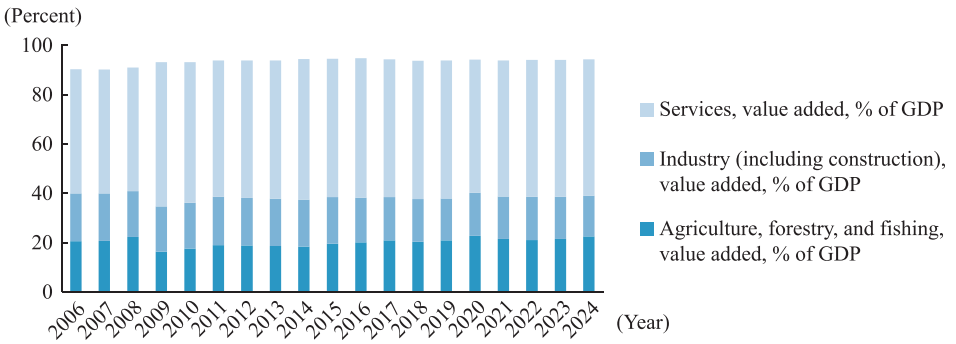


Figure 13.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Kenya, 2006-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Notes: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies. Data before 2006 are not available.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added fell from 9.8 percent of GDP in 2001 to 7.25 percent in 2024, below the regional (10 percent) and world (15 percent) averages. Medium- and high-tech industry rose from 10.8 percent to 15.1 percent of manufacturing value added over 2001-2022, but its estimated share of GDP remained close to 1 percent, peaking near 1.5 percent in the mid-2010s (Table 13.10).

Overall, Kenya's industrial export potential to China appears limited:

manufacturing's role has declined, gross capital formation is low, and R&D is limited. Although medium- and high-tech activities have gained share within manufacturing, their share of GDP remains low and flat. Kenya's medium-term potential therefore looks stronger in agriculture-related exports than in a broad-based expansion of industrial exports to China.

Table 13.10 Industrial System Indicators, Kenya, 2014-2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15-64, % of total population	55.21	55.56	55.98	56.45	56.90	57.38	57.93	58.49	59.06	59.64	60.20
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	53.14	52.51	51.87	51.29	50.40	49.73	51.21	51.24	47.83	47.16	46.50
Gross capital formation, % GDP	24.95	22.10	19.35	20.66	19.38	19.34	19.65	20.39	19.05	16.57	16.78
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	18.35	19.47	20.03	20.89	20.31	20.86	22.70	21.48	21.04	21.45	22.47
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	19.04	18.89	18.16	17.50	17.31	16.93	17.40	17.15	17.53	17.12	16.47
Services, value added, % of GDP	56.95	56.13	56.45	55.85	56.02	55.96	53.98	55.12	55.41	55.47	55.30
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	10.07	9.98	9.32	8.74	8.41	7.90	7.60	7.36	7.74	7.49	7.25
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	13.37	14.88	14.81	14.64	14.60	14.71	15.49	15.05	15.05	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	1.35	1.48	1.38	1.28	1.23	1.16	1.18	1.11	1.17	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Notes: "Medium- and high-tech Industry (including construction), % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Kenya's agricultural products have a relatively low level of standardization. Take avocados as an example. Kenya's avocado industry is predominantly smallholder-based, with smallholders accounting for approximately 70% of avocado production nationwide. Smallholder farmers typically cultivate less than one acre of land per household, with each household managing around 10 to 20 avocado trees. This situation can result in inconsistent cultivation and management practices, unstable control over fruit maturity, significant variations in fruit size, non-standard harvesting and transportation practices, and a higher risk of damage to the fruit. Most of Kenya's tea exports to China are bulk raw materials, while downstream processing activities such as packaging and blending remain relatively underdeveloped, resulting in low value added.

At present, agricultural trade cooperation between Kenya and China is largely characterized by a model in which Kenyan partners handle cultivation, processing and export, while Chinese companies undertake procurement, importation and sales. Links among the production, processing and consumption stages have yet to be fully established, and the sector remains supply-driven, with producers tending to produce what they can and then seek markets for their products.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews Kenya's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(Ⅰ) Trade Openness

Kenya's openness to trade (trade to GDP ratio) is in the lower range of

developing economies, at 37.5 percent in 2024, compared with a world average of 57.2 percent and a Sub-Saharan African average of 56.6 percent.① Its Openness Indicator has remained roughly constant at around 0.65 throughout the period (see Figure 13.6). Reflecting this underperformance, Kenya's rank slipped from 63rd to 102nd of 129 economies over more than three decades. It still exceeds the sub-Saharan African average of 0.63, though the gap relative to the regional average has narrowed, and its latest score remains about 15 percent below the world average.

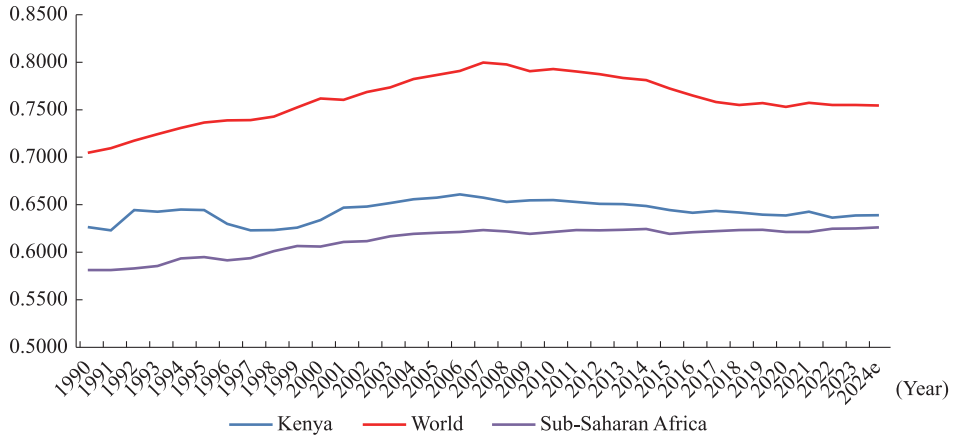


Figure 13.6 Kenya's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

As a party to three overlapping regional trade agreements, Kenya has concluded bilateral trade agreements with the European Union and the United Kingdom, respectively. This figure falls below the global average of 12 agreements per country. As a developing country, it benefits from numerous non-reciprocal (GSP) preferences offered by Australia, Canada, the, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United States and China extended zero-tariff treatment to imports from all 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic

① UNCTAD (2026b).

relations at that time. ①

GSP preferences now play a smaller role as Kenya has transitioned to reciprocal economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with the European Union and the United Kingdom; it still trades under GSP schemes with Canada, Japan and under AGOA with the United States, though the flows to the two former are minor. Kenya's preference utilization rate with the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States reaches about 91 percent for the 2023-2025 period, broadly unchanged from a decade ago. ②

Kenya has recorded a strong and sustained improvement in trade facilitation, with its overall implementation rate rising from 45.2 percent in 2015 to 77.4 percent in 2025, well above the Eastern Africa average of 64.0 percent (see Table 13.11). The country fully implements Transparency and Institutional Arrangement measures and scores highly on Paperless and Cross-Border Paperless Trade, while Formalities, at 50.0 percent, remain the main weakness, pointing to scope for streamlining border procedures. Kenya's advanced digital trade facilitation can support its competitiveness in distant markets, where its exports enjoy zero-tariff access under the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development.

Table 13.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Kenya

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	73.33	33.33	22.22	59.26	27.78	45.16
2021	86.67	41.67	22.22	81.48	61.11	62.37
2025	100	50.00	100	88.89	66.67	77.42

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

① WTO.

② UNCTAD (2026b).

Kenya's tariff regime has remained relatively high but stable since 2001, with the simple average settling at about 15.2 percent in 2025. As a member of the East African Community (EAC), Kenya applies the Common External Tariff, which has reinforced stability and limited large fluctuations. Sectoral differences are significant: agriculture is highly protected, with a simple average of 24.8 percent and a trade-weighted rate of 31.7 percent, while non-agricultural tariffs are lower (see Table 13.12).

Table 13.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Kenya, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	14.8	13.1	25.3
Trade weighted av.	14.0	9.0	34.5

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2025).

Compared with other developing countries, Kenya applies slightly fewer technical non-tariff measures (NTMs) per agri-food and manufacturing product (see Figure 13.7 and Figure 13.8). By contrast, the use of non-technical measures in both sectors is higher. These two observations point to a more protectionist trade and industrial policy. Export measures are above average in agri-food but below average in manufacturing, indicating food-security interventions alongside a pro-export stance in manufacturing.

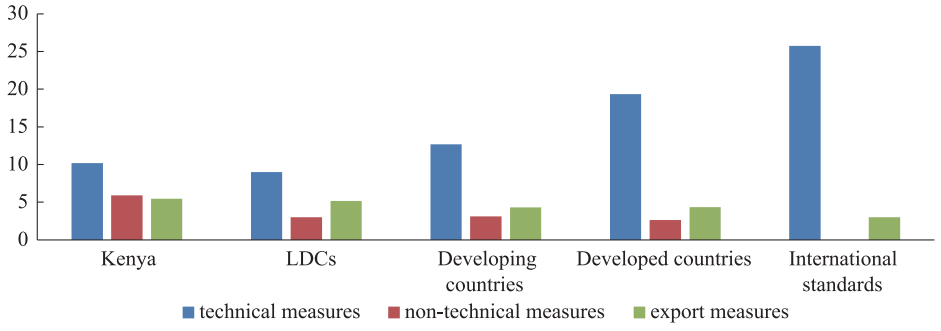


Figure 13.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kenya

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Kenya data is from 2021.

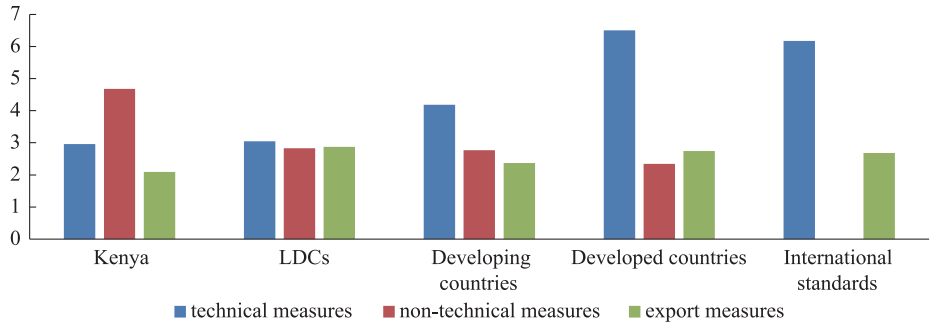


Figure 13.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Kenya

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Kenya data is from 2021.

The regulatory similarity index measures the relative similarity of SPS and TBT between different countries and vis-à-vis international standards. Kenya shows a balanced profile of close-to-average alignment with all reference points: international standards, China and the rest of the world. Further regulatory convergence with international standards and key trading partners has the potential to reduce trade costs (see Figure 13.9).

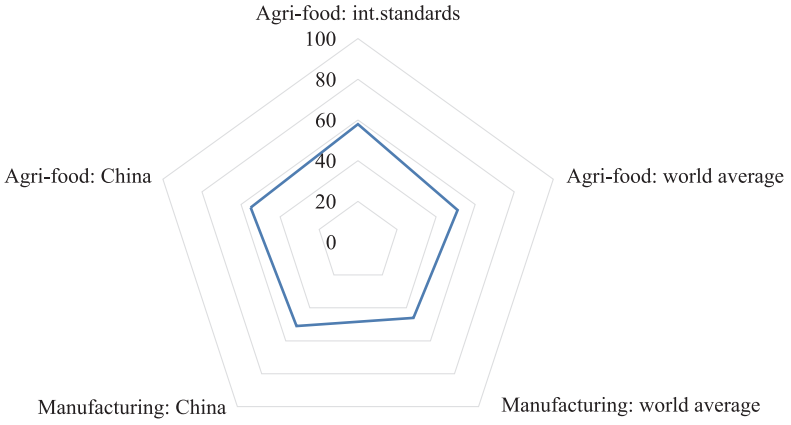


Figure 13.9 Kenya's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Kenya data is from 2021; data for China from 2024.

Kenya has made significant progress in strengthening SPS capacity, particularly in transparency and technical infrastructure. Regulatory quality is moderate (49.6), and the country maintains 229 accredited laboratories, ranking 3rd among 41 African Union countries. QI4SD indicators point to relatively strong accreditation capacity (73.2) but weaker conformity-assessment capacity (21.5). Border implementation is comparatively advanced, with full electronic SPS certification and participation in the ePhyto Hub, and WTO SPS notifications rose sharply from 15 in 2020 to 115 in 2025 (Figure 13.10). ① ISO certification remains modest, at 665 ISO 9001 and 158 ISO 22000 certificates (ranking 79th and 39th worldwide). ②

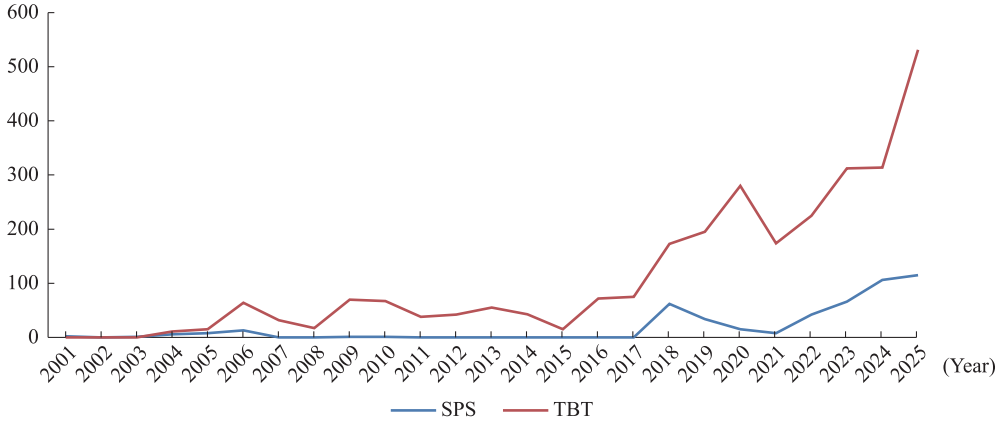


Figure 13.10 Kenya's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

Kenya maintains export restrictions to pursue three policy objectives. First, to retain industrial inputs and promote downstream processing, it applies export levies with registration and approval requirements to bulk tea, scrap metal, raw hides and

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

skins, and molasses; scrap-metal controls also curb infrastructure vandalism, bulk tea carries a statutory value-addition requirement, and raw macadamia nuts are generally banned from export. Second, for food and energy security, it maintains a de facto maize export ban and conditions petroleum re-exports on 60 percent of imported volumes first supplying the domestic market. Third, environmental concerns underpin a de facto charcoal export ban through stringent sourcing requirements. The scrap-metal, hides, and charcoal controls align with East African Community policies on resource conservation and domestic value addition.

In terms of policy implementation, the Chinese Embassy in Kenya, together with Kenya's Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry and Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, jointly organized a seminar entitled "Zero Tariffs, Unlimited Opportunities." Representatives of relevant government departments, industry associations representing major Kenyan products exported to China—including tea, coffee, flowers and avocados—and Chinese enterprises were invited to participate in in-depth discussions on effective ways to promote Kenyan agricultural exports to China.

The Economic and Commercial Office of the Chinese Embassy in Kenya provided on-site guidance at Kenya's Certificate of Origin Office, helping resolve technical issues encountered in the online issuance process. As of early August 2026, the Kenyan side had issued 490 certificates of origin, covering a range of products including coffee, tea, avocados, flowers and macadamia nuts.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Compared with 2001, Kenya's capital account restrictiveness has increased modestly, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) rising from 0.26 to approximately 0.30 in recent years. Despite this increase, Kenya's FARI remains well below the lower-middle-income country average of 0.47. ①

① IMF.

The United States dollar remains the principal currency for the settlement of Kenya's foreign trade transactions. At the same time, Kenya has actively promoted more efficient regional cross-border payments through regional payment infrastructures, including the East African Payment System (EAPS) within the EAC and the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These initiatives aim to facilitate local-currency settlement, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen regional trade integration.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a modest but growing role in Kenya's economy. FDI rose significantly from around USD 2.3 billion in 2024 to approximately USD 3.2 billion in 2025. Kenya launched a strategic plan in 2023 aiming inter alia to enhance the country's attractiveness for foreign investment.[①] The stock of inward FDI was approximately USD 12.1 billion, around 9 percent of GDP. Digital infrastructure, clean energy and regional value chains support investor interest in East Africa.[②]

V. Conclusion

Kenya's export relationship with China has grown over the past two decades, but it remains relatively small and undiversified. Exports rose from about USD 6 million in 2001 to roughly USD 226 million in 2025. China has become a more important destination for Kenyan exports, moving from Kenya's 41st-largest export market in 2001 to its 17th-largest in 2025. However, the export value remains small relative to Kenya's total exports, and the export basket is concentrated in a narrow range of products. Copper is the dominant category, alongside ores, coffee, edible fruit, fish, natural gums, textiles and apparel. Recent growth has come mainly from established export flows, especially copper, with selective gains in agricultural and apparel

① UNCTAD (2024c).
② UNCTAD (2026d).

products.

The analysis identifies several factors that could support stronger exports to China. Kenya benefits from relatively efficient port operations, short container dwell times and strong air connectivity, which reinforce its role as a regional gateway. Strong mobile connectivity and above-average e-commerce adoption also provide useful channels for reaching the Chinese market, Moreover, as of May 1, 2026, Kenyan exports to China are eligible for zero-tariff market access under the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development, a development that is expected to open up new opportunities for Kenyan exporters. At the same time, important constraints remain. Electricity supply is still affected by outages, fixed-broadband penetration is low, import tariffs are relatively high, trade openness is limited, regulatory similarity with China and international standards is only average, and the manufacturing base has weakened over time. Low investment, a small tertiary education base and limited research capacity also restrict Kenya's ability to move into a broader range of higher-value exports.

Kenya is one of the countries selected for the 2026 "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative. Through the joint efforts of China and Kenya, the "Big Market for All: Export to China" series of events will be organized to full effect. First, strengthen external outreach to further raise the profile and visibility of the "Export to China" brand. Second, invite Kenyan enterprises to actively participate in major trade fairs and exhibitions, including the China International Import Expo (CIIE), the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETE) and the China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE), and leverage these national-level platforms to expand their presence in the Chinese market. Third, support trade promotion activities, step up efforts to organize business matchmaking and exchanges, promote information sharing and the matching of supply and demand, and facilitate concrete business cooperation by encouraging enterprises to "bring in" resources and opportunities and "go global".

Overall, Kenya appears to have selective product-level competitiveness. Its strongest prospects are concentrated in agricultural products, natural-resource-based inputs, textiles and apparel, while broader industrial export potential remains limited. The strongest near-term opportunities are likely to come from scaling existing strengths in certain mineral products, agricultural commodities, natural resource-based products, and fishery products, alongside emerging or underexploited products in certain plant-based extracts, chemical products, agricultural products, and apparel. The main challenge is to turn these specific product opportunities into more stable and diversified export growth over time.

Chapter XIV

Pakistan

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Pakistan's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition, and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Pakistan's exports to China with both its overall export profile and China's import demand to identify areas where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has strengthened or weakened, and which product groups present the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Pakistan's total goods exports increased from roughly USD 9.8 billion in 2001 to about USD 30.5 billion in 2025 (see Figure 14.1), after reaching higher levels in 2022–2024. Exports to China grew from less than a billion in 2001 to about USD 3 billion in 2025, with a peak of around USD 3.6 billion in 2021. China therefore remained a material destination for Pakistan's merchandise exports, ranking 2nd in 2025, although the bilateral trend has been volatile. Exports to China rose strongly in the late 2000s and early 2010s, weakened after 2013, recovered

sharply in 2020–2021, and then eased in 2022–2024 before stabilizing in 2025. This pattern points to a China-facing export relationship driven by a small number of commodity, textile, agricultural, and mineral-resource products, rather than a broad-based expansion across Pakistan's full export basket.

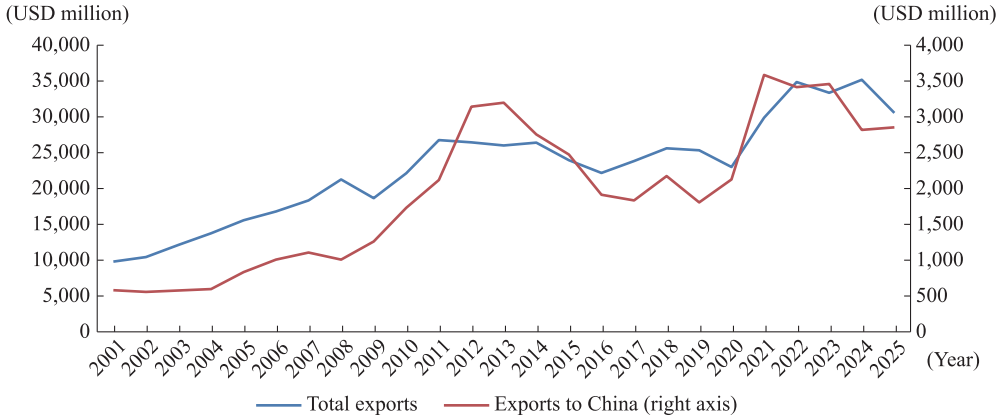


Figure 14.1 Pakistan Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

Although Pakistan exports in 2025 significantly more to China than in 2001, the relationship remains only moderately intensive relative to China's role in global imports. The Trade Intensity Index has fluctuated around the benchmark of one: it exceeded unity in the early 2000s and again in 2012–2013, but remained below unity for most subsequent years and stood at about 0.90 in 2025 (see Figure 14.2). The Trade Complementarity Index is much lower, remaining broadly between 0.10 and 0.15. This indicates that Pakistan trades with China at a reasonable intensity in some years, but its overall export basket is not strongly aligned with the composition of Chinese import demand. The central message is therefore selective: Pakistan has clear product-level strengths in China, but the bilateral export relationship is narrow and only weakly complementary at the aggregate level.

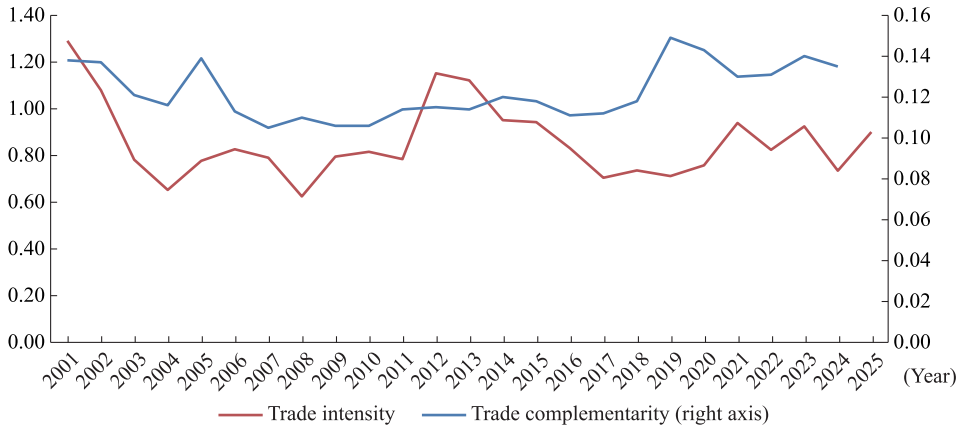


Figure 14.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Pakistan Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Pakistan's global export basket is relatively diversified, while its exports to China are more concentrated in a narrower set of products, although concentration eased in the most recent period (see Table 14.1). This suggests that the bilateral export relationship with China remains dependent on a limited number of product groups, despite some recent diversification.

Table 14.1 Pakistan Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.10	0.10	0.14	0.08
Overall exports	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Pakistan's total export basket in 2024 was dominated by final goods (see Table 14.2). Final products accounted for 65 percent of total exports, intermediate products for 20 percent, and primary products for 15

percent. Agriculture represented 24 percent of total exports, while manufacturing and natural resources represented 76 percent. Exports to China show a different profile. Intermediate products accounted for 48 percent of Pakistan's exports to China, primary products for 36 percent, and final goods for only 16 percent. Manufacturing and natural-resource products made up 81 percent of exports to China, while agriculture accounted for 19 percent. The China-facing basket is therefore much more oriented toward intermediate inputs and primary/resource-based products than Pakistan's overall export structure.

Table 14.2 Pakistan Export Structure, by Broad Sectors and the Stage of Processing

Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	17	3	4	24
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	48	17	11	76
Overall, by stage of processing	65	20	15	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	12	2	5	19
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	4	46	31	81
Overall, by stage of processing	16	48	36	100

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, Pakistan's exports to China are highly concentrated in a small number of sectors. In 2025, the five largest chapters

accounted for more than 80 percent of total exports to China (see Table 14.3). Copper and articles thereof was by far the dominant category, with exports of USD 1.15 billion, equivalent to 40 percent of the total. Cotton followed at USD 484 million, or 17 percent, while ores, slag and ash accounted for USD 370 million, or 13 percent. Fish and crustaceans, oil seeds, cereals, knitted apparel, mineral fuels, food industry residues, and salt, sulfur, earths and stone made up most of the remaining leading sectors.

Table 14.3 Pakistan Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	1,147.5	40	0.44	64	190	15	13
52	Cotton	483.6	17	0.43	4	36	-22	5
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	369.6	13	0.21	70	-8	0	15
03	Fish & Crustaceans	223.4	8	0.16	28	8	18	9
12	Oil Seeds & Oleaginous Fruits	104.6	4	0.94	48	-23	9	66
10	Cereals	62.3	2	0.63	244	392	-2	-20
61	Apparel, Knitted/Crocheted	49.7	2	0.18	-22	91	30	1
27	Mineral Fuels & Oils	49.5	2	0.70	-82	176	-5	481
23	Food Industry Residues/Waste	43.6	2	1.00	86	47	-4	5
25	Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	43.6	2	0.16	56	60	-5	-1

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The table is compiled by HS 2-digit chapters in descending order of export value; "—" indicates that exports to China were marginal during the period.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether Pakistan's recent export performance in China reflects the expansion of existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of future potential. Table 14.4 shows that export growth between 2019 and 2025 was driven overwhelmingly by the intensive margin: 430 products exported in both years increased from USD 1.7506 billion to USD 2.783 billion, generating more than USD 1 billion in additional exports. New products contributed only USD 69.10 million across 40 HS 6-digit lines, while discontinued products reduced exports by USD 54.10 million. The near-term opportunity is therefore to consolidate and upgrade existing product strengths, while gradually broadening the range of products exported to China.

Table 14.4 Pakistan Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	430	1,750.6	2,783.0	1,032.4
Discontinued products	192	54.1	0.0	-54.1
New products (extensive margin)	40	0.0	69.1	69.1

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Pakistan's export potential in China is significant in selected sectors, but remains uneven and constrained by weak aggregate alignment with Chinese import demand. At the aggregate level, the China import-weighted revealed comparative advantage (RCA) fell from 0.9 in 2001-2008 to 0.6 in 2020-2025, and the China import growth-weighted RCA also remained below unity in the latest period (see Table

14.5). This indicates that Pakistan is not broadly specialized in the products that dominate Chinese imports or in the fastest-growing areas of Chinese demand. At the sectoral level, however, comparative advantage is very strong in some selected categories including cotton, cereals, and knitted apparel. Overall, the RCA evidence points to selective export potential concentrated in textiles, agri-food products, copper and resource-based products, rather than broad-based competitiveness across China's import basket.

Table 14.5 Pakistan Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage RCA (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6
China import growth-weighted	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.6
	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	0.6	1.4	1.4	3.1
52: Cotton	42.9	48.3	44.9	37.7
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.7
03: Fish & Crustaceans	1.7	1.8	2.4	2.3
12: Oil Seeds & Oleaginous Fruits	0.6	0.5	0.9	1.6
10: Cereals	12.4	15.1	12.8	12.7
61: Apparel, Knitted/Crocheted	8.4	7.5	8.6	12.1
27: Mineral Fuels & Oils	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.4
23: Food Industry Residues/Waste	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.6
25: Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	2.8	8.3	7.3	5.4

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the sector-level evidence, the Annex (Table Ⅳ) identifies more granular HS 4-digit export opportunities for Pakistan in China. These opportunities fall into four groups: core export products, where Pakistan already has a strong presence and further growth would mainly involve scaling up existing flows, such as refined copper,

unrefined copper, chromium ores, oil seeds, cotton yarn, marble, and zinc ores; underexploited products, where export capacity and Chinese demand are sizeable but current penetration remains limited, including salt and knitted T-shirts; emerging sectors, where Pakistan's export capacity is present or growing but the China share remains low, such as carpets, knitted gloves, spices, knitted outerwear, and lower-cotton-content yarn; and latent opportunities, where exports to China are negligible despite measurable Chinese import demand, including pig iron, fresh or chilled bovine meat, semi-finished iron and steel products, hydrogenated oils, sugars, and tropical fruits.

Pakistan is particularly interested in expanding exports of agricultural and other distinctive products to China. China has promoted Pakistan's competitive products, including Himalayan pink salt and pine nuts, through cross-border e-commerce platforms and domestic trade fairs and exhibitions.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Pakistan's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Pakistan trades through two main ports, Karachi and Port Muhammad Bin Qasim, which handled a record 3.34 million TEUs in 2024. Maritime connectivity is comparatively strong: Pakistan links to 45 maritime partner economies, above both the South Asian average of 36.5 and the world average of 28.2 (see Table 14.6) and its Liner Shipping Connectivity Index rose by about 20 percent over the decade to 150.9 in 2025.[①] Aviation connectivity, at 105.5 partner economies, is above both the

① UNCTAD (2026a).

regional and world averages. The railway network extends to 7,791 km. The main weakness is container import dwell time of 9.3 days, above the South Asian average of 6.4 and the world average of 7.9, which adds to export costs and reduces price competitiveness; even so, Pakistan's strong maritime and air connectivity remains an asset for reaching distant markets such as China.

Table 14.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Pakistan

Indicator	Pakistan	South Asia	World average
Container import dwell time (days)	9.3	6.4	7.9
Maritime partner economies	45	36.5	28.2
Aviation partner economies	105.5	90.9	91.5

Source: World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2024).

Note: World average is an unweighted UNCTAD calculation.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Electricity reliability remains a constraint for firms. In 2022, 50.7 percent of firms reported experiencing electrical outages, above the world average of 46.1 percent, reflecting persistent load-shedding linked to circular debt and fuel-supply shortages (see Table 14.7).① Obtaining an electrical connection takes 20 days on average, well below the world average of 44.6 days. At the same time, solar power is expanding rapidly: distributed solar's share of electricity generation rose from about 10 percent in 2023 to 28 percent in 2025, much of it distributed rooftop capacity that firms and households install to bypass the grid.② For exporters still dependent on grid supply, however, reliability remains poor, raising production costs and complicating efforts to meet importers' delivery and quality requirements.

① ADB (2023).

② Ember (2025).

Table 14.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Pakistan, 2022

Indicator	Pakistan	South Asia	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	50.7	48.5	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	22	7.1	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	24.2	10.2	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband subscriptions stood at just 1.5 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, far below the world and Asia & Pacific averages. LTE coverage reached 81 percent of the population, below the world average of 92.7 but above the Asia & Pacific one (64.1) (see Table 14.8).

Table 14.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Pakistan

Indicator	Pakistan	Asia & Pacific	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	1.5	17.5	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	81	64.1	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/.

Note: Data for Pakistan and Asia & Pacific is from 2024, world average from 2025.

Internet use rose to 57.3 percent of the population in 2024, but demand-side e-commerce adoption is very low: only 3.9 percent of adults bought online in 2024, against a South Asian average of 13.8 percent, reflecting limited card penetration and a cash-on-delivery culture (see Table 14.9). Pakistan ranks 95th of 127 economies in the Network Readiness Index 2025, with a business digital engagement sub-pillar score of 24.0. Low fixed-broadband penetration and weak online-payment adoption are structural constraints on reaching the Chinese market through cross-border digital channels.

Table 14.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Pakistan

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	26,092	—
International parcels dispatched (total)	8,858	—
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (%, age 15+)	0.6	3.9
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	24.0
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	—	57.3

Sources: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Note: Postal statistics for Pakistan are available only through 2021; internet-use data for 2021 are not available.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Pakistan's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 148.3 million, about 59 percent of the total (South Asia average: 67.9 percent), up from 53.6 percent in 2001 (see Figure 14.3). Agriculture still accounts for 36.5 percent of employment.

Gross capital formation was 13.2 percent of GDP in 2024, well below the South Asia (32.5 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages, on a downward trend since 2001 (16 percent; 2006-2009 peak of 17.9 percent). R&D intensity is very low at 0.16 percent of GDP in 2023 (world average 2.6 percent), down from a 0.52 percent peak in 2007. ①

① UNESCO.

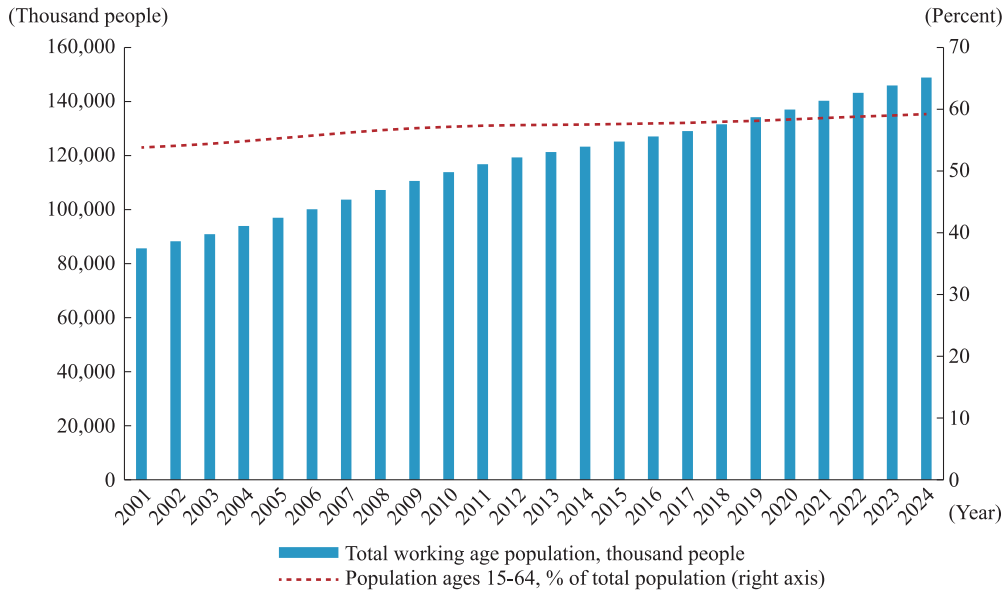


Figure 14.3 Total Working Age Population, Pakistan, 2001–2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Pakistan's tertiary enrolment is low and rising slowly. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education reached 10.9 percent in 2024, well below the South Asia (32.4 percent) and world (43.2 percent) averages (see Figure 14.4).①

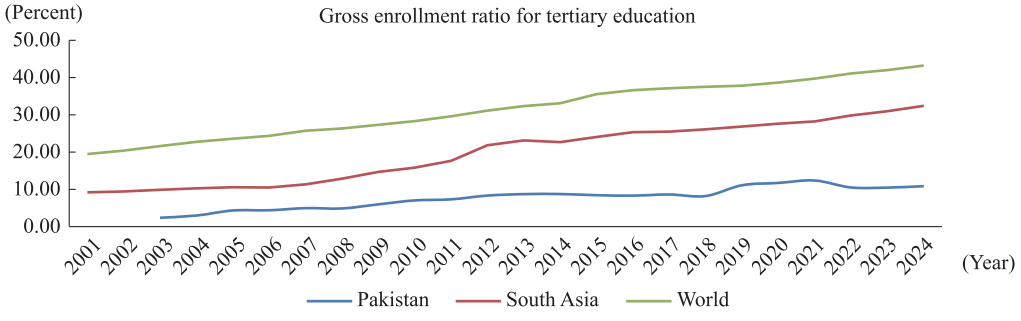


Figure 14.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Pakistan (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

Note: Pakistan graduate profile data not available for 2001–2002.

① Data on STEM and business, administration and law graduates were not available for Pakistan.

A small tertiary base and very low R&D intensity may constrain Pakistan's capacity to move into more technology-intensive exports and to meet the quality and standards requirements of Chinese importers.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 23.7 percent of value added, industry for 20.3 percent and services for 50.7 percent of GDP (South Asia averages: 15.6 percent, 25.4 percent and 50.3 percent; see Figure 14.5). Agriculture (24.1 percent in 2001) and services (53.0 percent) eased slightly, while industry rose from 17.6 percent in 2001, a slight increase in industry's weight.

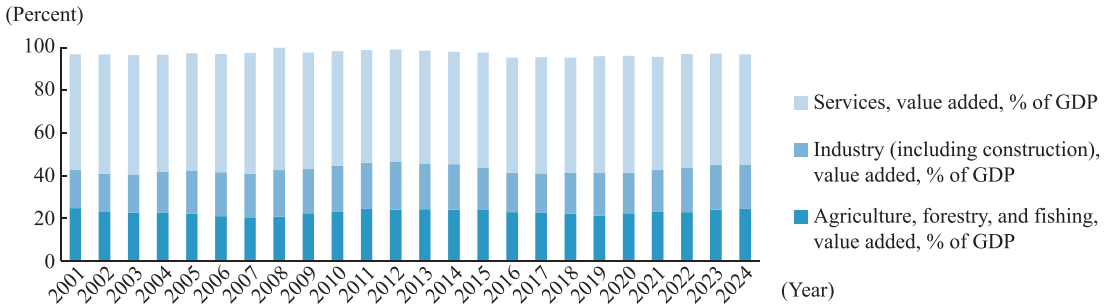


Figure 14.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Pakistan, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Notes: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added rose from 9.5 percent of GDP in 2001 to 13.15 percent in 2024, close to the South Asia average (13.5 percent) but below the world average (15 percent) (see Table 14.10). Medium- and high-tech industry eased from 25.2 percent to 22.9 percent of manufacturing value added over 2001-2022, while its estimated share of GDP grew from 2.4 percent to 3.15 percent.

Overall, Pakistan's medium-term capacity to expand industrial exports to China appears limited. Although industry and manufacturing have gained a little weight and the estimated medium- and high-tech share of GDP rose slightly over 2001-2022, low R&D intensity, falling gross capital formation, and country-specific constraints such as tight regulation, protectionist policies and high electricity costs may significantly limit this potential.

Table 14.10 Industrial System Indicators, Pakistan, 2014-2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15-64, % of total population	57.33	57.42	57.50	57.61	57.77	57.93	58.12	58.36	58.58	58.77	59.03
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	42.23	41.01	42.27	39.87	37.42	38.31	38.31	37.10	36.73	36.77	36.54
Gross capital formation, % GDP	14.91	15.81	15.94	16.33	17.07	15.50	14.82	14.53	15.56	13.97	13.17
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	23.49	23.26	22.33	21.96	21.65	20.68	21.85	22.66	22.33	23.43	23.74
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	20.87	19.60	18.15	18.10	18.59	19.56	18.59	18.90	20.41	20.72	20.25
Services, value added, % of GDP	51.56	52.69	52.75	53.25	52.93	53.62	53.68	52.03	52.23	50.97	50.73
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	13.41	12.30	11.21	11.30	11.60	12.59	11.42	11.93	13.76	13.65	13.15
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	22.77	22.77	22.90	22.90	22.90	22.90	22.90	22.90	22.90	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	3.05	2.80	2.57	2.59	2.66	2.88	2.61	2.73	3.15	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry (including construction), % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

This section reviews Pakistan's trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(Ⅰ) Trade Openness

Pakistan's openness to trade (trade to GDP ratio) is low by global standards, at 28.2 percent in 2024, against world and South Asian averages of 57.2 and 44 percent. ① Its Openness Indicator was 0.61 in 2024 (see Figure 14.6), 120th of 129 economies. The index improved through the 1990s and early 2000s but has since stagnated, with Pakistan's rank falling from 102nd to 120th. Its score still trails the South Asian average of 0.64 and is about 19 percent below the world average.

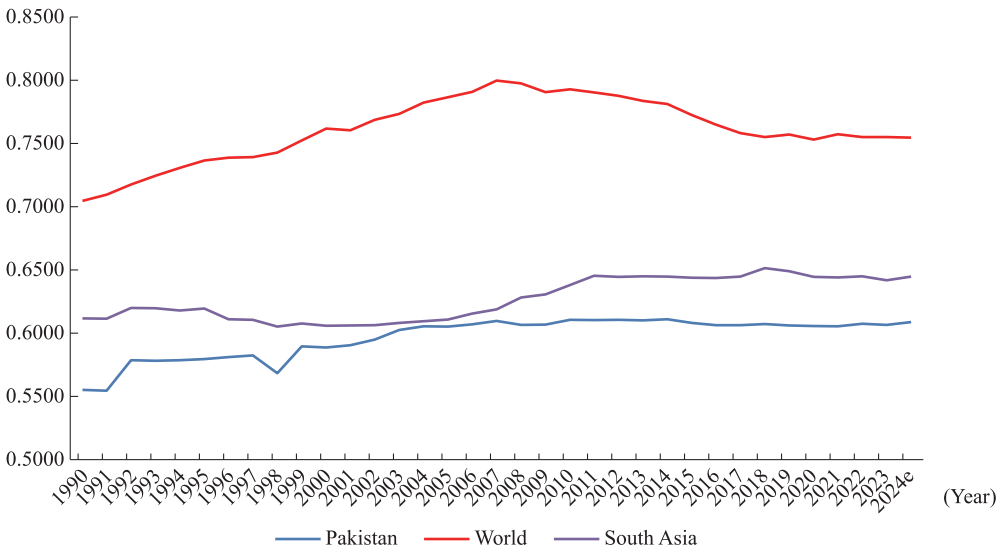


Figure 14.6 Pakistan's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

① UNCTAD (2026b).

Pakistan belongs to four regional and bilateral trade agreements (excluding six partial-scope agreements), below the world average of 12. Only the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) is regional; the rest are bilateral, including a free trade agreement with China. Pakistan is also a member of the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries and, as a developing country, is eligible for non-reciprocal preferences offered by Australia, Canada, the Eurasian Economic Union, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. ①

Pakistan's preference utilization in the main generalized system of preferences (GSP) programmes reached about 92 percent over 2023-2025, up from 85 percent a decade ago, and around 85 percent in other preference schemes. ②③

Pakistan has advanced steadily on trade facilitation, nearly doubling its overall implementation rate from 38.7 percent in 2015 to 74.2 percent in 2025 (see Table 14.11). Paperless Trade leads (88.89 percent), while Formalities (66.67 percent) and Cross-Border Paperless Trade (55.56 percent) lag. Operational frictions are still material, however: exports take 19 days to clear all border control agencies at a cost equal to 17 percent of export value and Pakistan scores 27 out of 50 on border management. ④ Reducing these frictions would strengthen its competitiveness in demanding markets such as China.

Table 14.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Pakistan

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score

① WTO.

② 2023-2025 period mainly includes Pakistan's preference utilization in the Canada, the EU, Japanese and the UK GSP programmes due to the US programme termination. Earlier periods include Canada, the EU (including the UK), Japan and the USA programme figures.

③ UNCTAD (2026b)

④ World Bank (2025a).

Continued

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	53.33	41.67	55.56	40.74	11.11	38.71
2021	66.67	62.50	77.78	59.26	22.22	55.91
2025	80.00	66.67	77.78	88.89	55.56	74.19

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

Pakistan's tariffs have fallen steadily since 2001, when the average exceeded 20 percent; by 2025 the simple average was about 9.5 percent. The trade-weighted average is lower still at 6.7 percent, implying lower tariffs on key imports. Sectoral differences are modest, with somewhat higher simple-average tariffs on agriculture (see Table 14.12).

Table 14.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Pakistan, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	10.3	9.9	13.0
Trade weighted av.	7.3	7.7	5.4

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2026).

According to 2019 data, Pakistan's use of non-tariff measures (NTMs) is very low in both agri-food and manufacturing (Figure 14.7 and Figure 14.8). Low WTO notification activity (see Figure 14.10), especially in SPS and agri-food, corroborates this. Limited use of technical measures indicates weak regulatory and technical capacity, while negligible non-technical and export measures signal an open economy. ①

① It should be noted that the situation may have substantially evolved since 2019, although the low notification rate to the WTO does not hint to large changes.

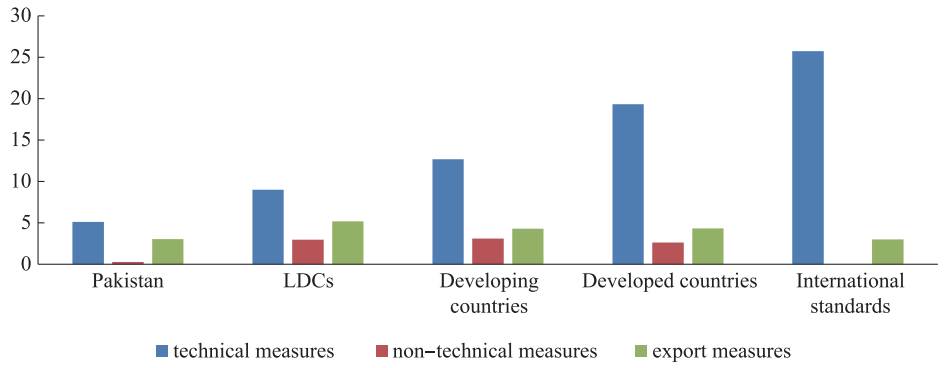


Figure 14.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Pakistan

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Pakistan data is from 2019.

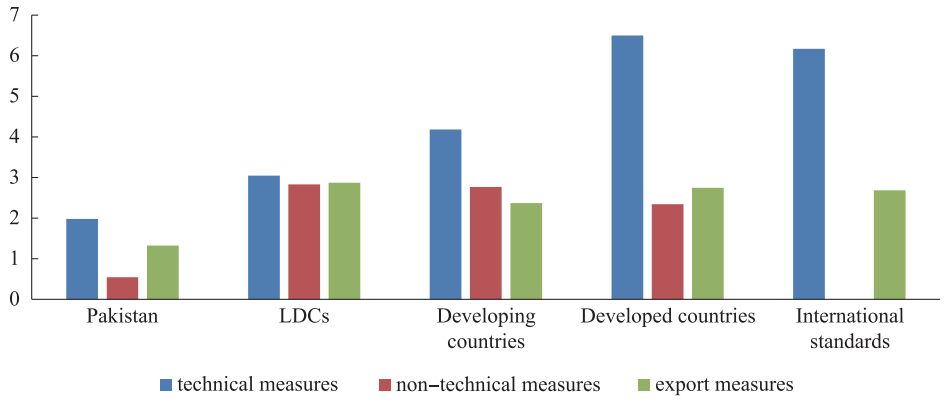


Figure 14.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Pakistan

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Pakistan data is from 2019.

The regulatory similarity index (see Figure 14.9) measures how closely a country's SPS and TBT measures align with those of others and with international standards. Pakistan's structure resembles the rest of the world and, in manufacturing only, China, giving a common basis for trade without excessive NTM costs. In agri-food, however, similarity to international standards and China is very low, again

pointing to limited SPS capacity.

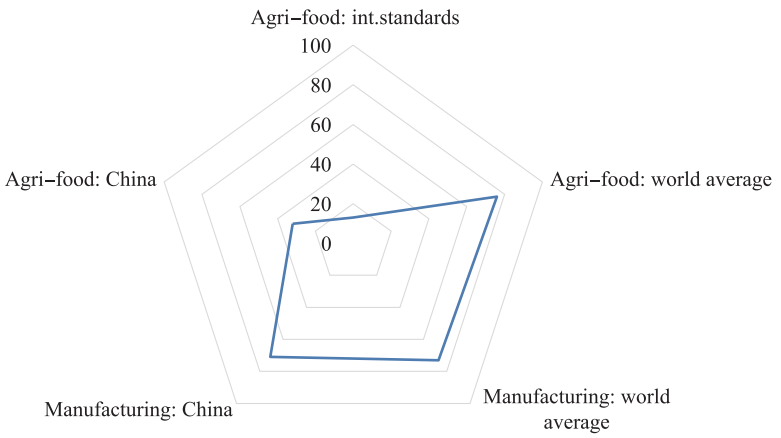


Figure 14.9 Pakistan's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Pakistan data is from 2019; data for China from 2024.

Pakistan's SPS capacity combines developing institutional quality with relatively strong technical infrastructure, but weak use of international transparency mechanisms. It has submitted no SPS or TBT notifications to the WTO in the last three years, none for SPS since 2001, and only intermittent TBT notifications (see Figure 14.10). Regulatory quality is moderate (42.4), and the country maintains 242 accredited laboratories, ranking 2nd among six South Asian countries. QI4SD indicators show solid accreditation capacity (75.3) but limited conformity-assessment capacity (10.1). Border implementation is advanced, with full electronic SPS certification and ePhyto Hub participation. ① Pakistan's ISO certification infrastructure is relatively mature within the South Asian region. The country holds a total of 3,484 ISO 9001 certificates and 396 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 43rd and 23rd worldwide, respectively. ②

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

Overall, the technical base is in place, but limited notification activity points to a transparency gap that stronger engagement with multilateral mechanisms would help close.

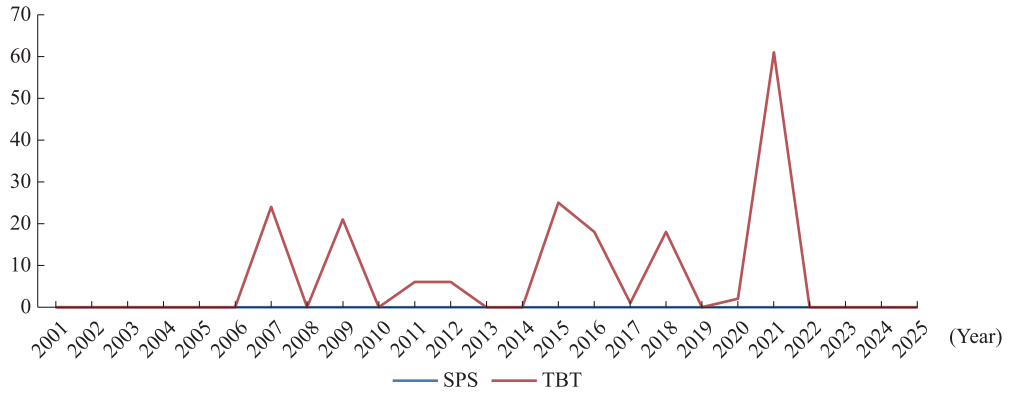


Figure 14.10 Pakistan's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

Pakistan maintains several export restrictions. Destination-specific measures prohibit exports to Israel and India, except therapeutic products to India, while essential and high-value industrial commodities exported to Afghanistan face special foreign-exchange and export-incentive arrangements against banking-channel disruption and smuggling. Food-security and price-stabilization goals underpin export prohibitions on sugar, wheat, wheat flour and pulses, subject to limited exceptions. To promote domestic value addition, raw-cotton exporters must register and lodge security deposits tied to export deadlines; live livestock faces export prohibition with limited exceptions, and raw and wet-blue hides and skins carry a 10 percent export regulatory duty. Finally, for religious reasons, wild boars, their meat and skins, and alcoholic beverages may be exported only through non-Muslim exporters.

Low alignment with Chinese and international standards in agri-food can raise compliance costs for Pakistani exporters, though closer similarity with China in

manufacturing is more supportive of trade in that sector.

To expand Pakistan's exports to China, China has implemented the relevant tariff reduction arrangements under the Phase II Protocol of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement; conducted dedicated studies to support Pakistan in enhancing its export capacity and shared the findings with the Pakistani side for reference; established a Pakistan National Pavilion on JD.com; actively invited Pakistani enterprises to participate in major trade fairs and exhibitions held in China, including the China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the South and Southeast Asia Commodity Expo and Investment Fair (SSACEIF); and provided assistance with business matchmaking activities organized in China by the Embassy of Pakistan in China.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Over the past two decades, Pakistan's capital-account restrictiveness has fluctuated over the pas two decades but been broadly stable since 2019. The Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) rose from about 0.65 to 0.70 and has stayed above the low-income-country average of 0.46. ①

Pakistan conducts the majority of its international trade in United States dollars, which remain the dominant currency for settling cross-border trade transactions. Other currencies, notably the euro and the Chinese yuan (CNY), are also used in trade with key partners, with the role of the latter increasing in recent years. The share of Pakistan-China trade settled in Chinese yuan rose from approximately 2 percent in 2018 to around 14 percent in 2023, reflecting the growing use of the renminbi in bilateral trade. ②

Foreign direct investment (FDI) remains relatively limited compared with the size of Pakistan's economy. FDI inflows moderated to approximately USD 1.9 billion in

① IMF.

② Federation of Pakistan, Chambers of Commerce and Industry (2025).

2025. At the same time, the stock of inward FDI increased to USD 36.4 billion, equivalent to 9 percent of GDP, considerably below the world average.[①] Foreign investment has been concentrated primarily in the energy and financial sectors, with China's mainland, Hong Kong SAR of China and the United Kingdom among the principal source economies.[②]

V. Conclusion

Pakistan's export relationship with China has grown over the past two decades, but it remains relatively undiversified and volatile. Exports increased from less than USD 1 billion in 2001 to about USD 3 billion in 2025. China has consistently been an important market for Pakistani exports, moving from Pakistan's 4th-largest export destination in 2001 to its 2nd-largest by 2025. Even so, the export basket remains concentrated on a limited number of products, mainly intermediate inputs and primary or resource-based goods such as copper, cotton and ores. Recent growth has come mostly from established export products rather than from the emergence of many new product lines, suggesting that the relationship is still built around a few core products rather than a broad and diversified export base.

The analysis identifies several factors that support Pakistan's ability to export to China. Maritime and air connectivity are comparatively strong, helping Pakistan reach distant markets, including China. The bilateral trade agreement with China also provides a useful framework for trade expansion, while improvements in trade facilitation could help reduce some border-related costs. Pakistan also has established some export strengths in textiles, cotton and selected resource-based products, which remain relevant for the Chinese market. These advantages provide a basis for further

① UNCTAD (2026d).
② World Bank (2025d).

export growth, particularly in product areas where Pakistan already has production capacity and experience.

At the same time, several constraints limit the scope for stronger and more diversified export growth. Long container dwell times add to export costs, while electricity reliability remains a challenge despite the rapid expansion of distributed solar capacity. Digital infrastructure is also limited, with low fixed-broadband penetration and weak online-payment adoption reducing the potential to use cross-border digital channels to reach Chinese buyers. Broader industrial constraints are also important: investment levels, research and development activity, and the tertiary education base remain low, limiting Pakistan's medium-term capacity to expand into more technology-intensive exports. Regulatory alignment with China is uneven, with some progress in manufacturing but weaker alignment and capacity in agri-food and SPS-related areas.

Overall, Pakistan has clear but selective strengths in the Chinese market rather than broad-based competitiveness. Its export relationship with China remains concentrated in some agri-food and mineral-resource products, and future growth will depend on whether these established areas can be scaled while gradually widening the export base. The strongest near-term opportunities are likely to come from expanding existing strengths such as copper, chromium ores, oil seeds and cotton yarn, alongside selected underexploited and emerging categories including salt, knitted garments and carpets. However, broader and more stable export growth will require progress in easing infrastructure bottlenecks, strengthening industrial capacity and further reducing trade-related costs.

It is recommended that more dedicated product promotion events be organized under the "Export to China" initiative for countries such as Pakistan that have a strong foundation for cooperation with China but relatively limited industrial capacity.

Chapter XV

Serbia

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Serbia's export performance and export potential to China by examining the evolution of bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Serbia's exports to China with its overall export profile and with China's import demand in order to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where it remains concentrated, and which product groups offer the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Serbia's goods exports have expanded substantially, rising from roughly USD 6 billion in 2006 to more than USD 37 billion in 2025 (see Figure 15.1). Exports to China grew from a very low base but at a much faster pace in percentage terms, increasing from about USD 7 million in 2006 to nearly USD 2.5 billion in 2025, with the strongest acceleration occurring after 2020. As a result, China has moved from being a marginal export destination for Serbia, ranking 43rd in 2006, to becoming its 2nd largest goods export market in 2025, after Germany. This recent

pattern points to a China-specific export surge rather than a broad and balanced reorientation of Serbia's overall export base.

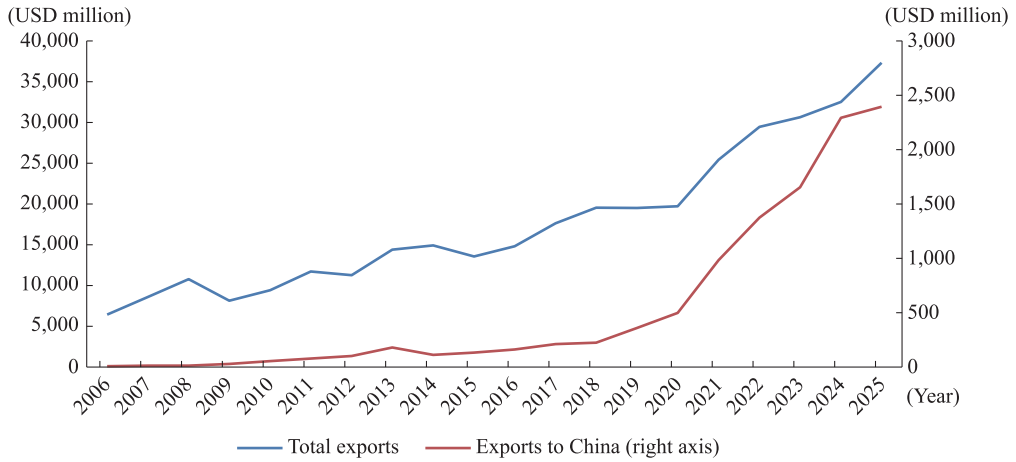


Figure 15.1 Serbia Total Exports and Exports to China, 2006-2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

Note: Serbia trade data is only available from 2006.

Although Serbia's exports to China in 2025 are much larger than they were in 2006, the quality of the bilateral fit remains uneven. The Trade Intensity Index rose sharply after 2019 and reached its highest level in 2025, and China has become an important destination for Serbia's exports (see Figure 15.2). By contrast, the Trade Complementarity Index remains modest and broadly stable, suggesting that Serbia's overall export basket is only partly aligned with the composition of China's import demand. The central message is therefore mixed: Serbia is trading much more intensively with China, but this reflects rapid expansion in a narrow set of products rather than broad-based structural complementarity.

Serbia's overall export basket is relatively diversified, but its exports to China tend to be concentrated in fewer products. The trade concentration index for exports to China increased from 0.20 in 2006-2008 to 0.39 in 2020-2025, while the concentration index for overall exports remained close to 0.01 throughout the period (see Table 15.1). This confirms that Chinese demand is concentrated in a much

narrower subset of Serbia's export products than Serbia sells to the world.

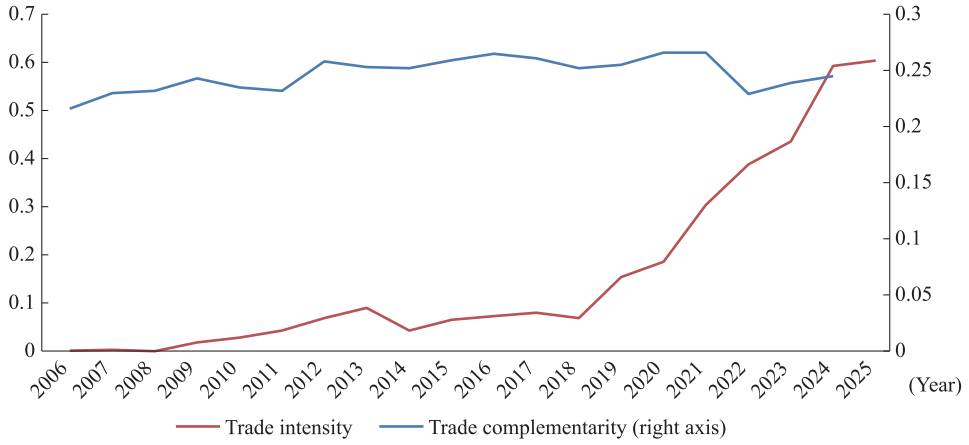


Figure 15.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Serbia's Exports and China's Imports, 2006–2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Table 15.1 Serbia Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2006-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.20	0.21	0.27	0.39
Overall exports	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Serbia's global export structure is mainly oriented towards intermediates. In 2024, intermediate goods accounted for 49 percent of total exports, final goods for 35 percent and primary products for 16 percent (see Table 15.2). Agriculture represented 17 percent of total exports, while manufacturing and natural resources accounted for 83 percent. Serbia's exports to China show a different structure. Manufacturing and natural-resource products accounted for 99 percent of exports to China, with primary products representing 49 percent and intermediate goods 47 percent. Final goods accounted for only 4 percent, and

agriculture for just 1 percent. This indicates that China absorbs a narrow, resource- and intermediate-oriented subset of Serbia's export basket rather than the broader mix of products Serbia exports globally.

Table 15.2 **Serbia Export Structure, 2024** Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	12	2	3	17
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	23	47	13	83
Overall, by stage of processing	35	49	16	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	4	47	48	99
Overall, by stage of processing	4	47	49	100

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the HS 2-digit level, Serbia's exports to China tend to be concentrated in a very small number of sectors. In 2025, ores, slag and ash accounted for 68 percent of exports to China, while copper and articles thereof accounted for a further 21 percent (see Table 15.3). Together, these two sectors represented almost 90 percent of Serbia's exports to China. Electrical machinery & equipment, wood & articles of wood, machinery, inorganic chemicals and other sectors accounted for much smaller shares. Concentration within the leading sectors is also high, particularly for ores and copper, indicating that Serbia's exports to China are dominated by a very limited number of products.

In terms of dynamics, Serbia's export performance to China has been generally positive, but with some fluctuation. Exports of ores, slag and ash grew rapidly during 2019-2025, after declining in the previous period. copper and articles thereof exports also expanded, while electrical machinery & equipment, wood & articles of wood, machinery, mechanical appliances and parts, rubber & articles and miscellaneous chemicals recorded positive growth. Some smaller sectors, including inorganic chemicals and salt, sulfur, earths and stone, expanded very rapidly from low bases. Overall, Serbia's recent export growth to China has been driven mainly by the scaling up of resource-based sectors and selected industrial inputs rather than by broad-based growth across the export basket.

Table 15.3 Serbia Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period		
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	1623	68	0.94	85	-12	92
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	495.4	21	1.00	167	18	
85	Electrical Machinery & Equipment	89.4	4	0.12	6	58	14
44	Wood & Articles of Wood	52.8	2	0.36	26	63	8
84	Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	27.1	1	0.11	7	35	10
28	Inorganic Chemicals	24.9	1	1.00	—	-1	156
25	Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	16.1	1	0.86	—	55	76

Continued

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period		
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
87	Vehicles (Not Railway/ Tramway)	12.3	1	0.43	60	135	2
40	Rubber & Articles	11	0	0.34	45	13	19
38	Miscellaneous Chemical Products	10.4	0	1.00	-88	194	76

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The table is compiled by HS 2-digit chapters in descending order of export value; "—" indicates that exports to China were marginal during the period.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether recent Serbian export growth in China comes from existing or new products helps identify the source of future potential: deepening established flows or expanding into new niches. Table 15.4 shows that the growth of Serbia´s exports to China between 2019 and 2025 was driven overwhelmingly by the intensive margin. Products exported in both 2019 and 2025 rose by more than USD 2.0 billion, from USD 315.4 million to USD 2.3467 billion. Products that were exported in 2019 but not in 2025 accounted for about USD 44.30 million, while 47 new HS 6-digit exports of the products added about USD 44 million. New entries therefore almost fully offset the loss from discontinued products, but represented less than 2 percent of Serbia's exports to China in 2025 and did not drive the overall increase. The near-term challenge is to sustain and upgrade existing strengths while developing new product niches that reduce concentration.

Table 15.4 Serbia Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margins

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	269	315.4	2,346.7	2,031.3
Discontinued products	102	44.3	0.0	-44.3
New products (extensive margin)	47	0.0	44.1	44.1

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Serbia's export potential in China is significant but concentrated in a few sectors. At the aggregate level, the China import-weighted revealed comparative advantage (RCA) remains below unity, although it increased 2020-2025, indicating that Serbia is not broadly competitive across the products that dominate China's import demand (see Table 15.5). The China import growth-weighted RCA is also below unity, but has increased recently, suggesting that Serbia is positioned in some faster-growing areas of Chinese demand. At the sectoral level, Serbia shows relatively strong comparative advantage in rubber & articles of thereof , copper and articles thereof, ores, slag and ash and wood & articles of wood. Electrical Machinery & Equipment is close to parity, while machinery, inorganic chemicals, vehicles and miscellaneous chemical products remain below unity. This indicates that Serbia's opportunity in China is selective and concentrated in resource-based, metal-related and input-oriented sectors, rather than broad-based across the export basket.

Table 15.5 Serbia Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage RCA (index)			
	2006-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.8
China import growth-weighted	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.8

Continued

	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2006-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	0.6	0.7	0.6	2.8
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	4.9	4.4	3.5	3.1
85: Electrical Machinery & Equipment	0.4	0.7	0.8	1.0
44: Wood & Articles of Wood	2.4	2.7	2.1	1.7
84: Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6
28: Inorganic Chemicals	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.5
25: Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	1.5	0.8	0.8	0.5
87: Vehicles (Not Railway/ Tramway)	0.2	0.4	1.2	0.5
40: Rubber & Articles Thereof	3.7	3.1	3.7	4.2
38: Miscellaneous Chemical Products	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on this sector-level evidence, the product-level analysis in the Annex (Table Ⅴ) provides a more granular assessment of where Serbia's selective export potential in China is most likely to materialize. The analysis identifies HS 4-digit sectors with higher export opportunities based on revealed comparative advantage, Serbia's recent export performance, Chinese import demand and market size. The products with higher potential are grouped into four categories. Core export products include sectors where Serbia already has a strong presence in China and where further expansion would mainly involve scaling up established flows, such as copper ores and concentrates, refined copper, precious-metal ores and wood veneers. Underexploited products refer to sectors where Serbia has export capacity and China represents a sizeable market, but current exports to China remain below potential, including electric motors, signalling equipment and vulcanised rubber articles. Emerging sectors capture

products where Serbia's export capacity is growing but its presence in China remains limited, including frozen fruits and nuts, lead ores, electric lamps, aluminum articles, food preparations and glass smallware. Finally, latent opportunities identify products where bilateral exports to China remain small, including selected wood products, dried fruits, weighing machines, leather articles and sunflower seeds.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Serbia's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Serbia is landlocked but lies on the principal overland route linking the Greek port of Thessaloniki with Salzburg in Austria,[①] while the Danube provides inland-waterway access toward the Black Sea and the Rhine. Its railway network extends to about 3,357 km[②] and is being modernised. The Serbian section of the Belgrade-Budapest railway, rebuilt by Chinese contractors and opened in October 2025,[③] forms the northern leg of a planned corridor through Belgrade and Skopje toward the deep-sea port of Piraeus in Greece, providing Serbian exporters with a faster rail link to the relevant maritime gateways. Aviation connectivity, at 97 partner economies, is below the Europe and Central Asia average of 113 but above the world average of 91.5.[④] Serbia's reach to export markets is therefore dependent on the efficiency of border crossings and neighbouring ports rather than direct maritime links, making transit and customs

① UNECE.
② UIC (2025).
③ Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of Serbia (2025).
④ World Bank (2026a).

performance the decisive factor for its export logistics.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Serbia has an extensive lignite and hydropower generation base. ① In 2024, 32.6 percent of firms reported experiencing electrical outages, below the world average of 46.1 percent (see Table 15.6). The principal friction is the time required to obtain an electrical connection, averaging 191 days, far above the world average of 44.6, which can delay new investment and capacity expansion by export-oriented firms and could indicate an inefficient public service. ② Only 12.6 percent of firms identify electricity as a major or very severe constraint, less than half the world average of 27.7 percent, confirming that supply reliability itself is not a binding constraint. Reliable supply is therefore not the main constraint for Serbian exporters, but the outage rate remains above the regional average, and the waiting time for a connection is a more prominent issue, capable of delaying the capacity expansion needed to serve distant markets.

Table 15.6 Stability of Energy Supply in Serbia, 2024

Indicator	Serbia	Europe and Central Asia	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	32.6	25.5	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	0.5	0.5	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	12.6	22.6	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www. enterprisesurveys. org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Serbia's subscriptions reached 33.4 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, below the Europe and Central Asia average of 37.2 but well above the world average of 20.1 (see

① IEA.

② World Bank (2025b).

Table 15.7). LTE coverage is near-universal at 98.8 percent of the population.

Table 15.7 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Serbia

Indicator	Serbia	Europe	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	33.4	37.2	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	98.8	99.5	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/

Note: Data for Serbia from 2024; Europe and world averages from 2025.

Serbia's e-commerce penetration is relatively high overall 34.5 percent of adults bought online in 2024, above the regional average of 33.9 percent, although cross-border express and parcel volumes declined between 2021 and 2024 (see Table 15.8). Serbia ranks 47th of 127 economies in the Network Readiness Index 2025, with a business digital engagement sub-pillar score of a relatively low 30.1. Mature digital platforms and e-commerce ecosystems are an important foundation for engaging in international trade; scaling cross-border digital trade toward distant markets such as China would require deeper business digital engagement.

Table 15.8 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Serbia

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	25,356	16,939
International parcels dispatched (total)	97,166	58,349
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (%, age 15+)	33.5	34.5
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	30.1
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	81.2	87.7

Sources: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Serbia's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 4.15 million, about 63 percent of the total (Europe and Central Asia average: 64.5 percent), down from 68.1 percent in 2012 (see Figure 15.3).



Figure 15.3 Total Working Age Population, Serbia, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Gross capital formation was 25 percent of GDP in 2024 (see Table 15.9), above the Europe and Central Asia average (22.4 percent) and close to the world average (26.3 percent); it fell sharply in the 2008-2009 global financial crisis but has since recovered.

Table 15.9 Industrial System Indicators, Serbia, 2014–2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15–64, % of total population	67.29	66.77	66.28	65.80	65.25	64.68	64.17	63.80	63.57	63.31	63.00
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	25.86	25.32	24.46	22.84	21.28	20.90	19.64	19.15	18.73	18.45	18.57
Gross capital formation, % GDP	16.48	18.51	18.17	19.72	22.50	24.93	24.10	24.95	26.38	24.62	25.03
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	6.12	5.61	5.71	5.06	5.20	4.76	5.05	5.16	5.34	3.79	3.17
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	26.55	26.64	26.53	26.60	25.81	25.53	24.28	24.38	25.22	23.78	23.07
Services, value added, % of GDP	51.94	51.82	51.33	52.05	52.55	53.19	54.53	54.26	54.27	57.79	58.78
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	18.22	17.81	17.75	17.70	16.91	15.70	14.85	14.47	14.84	13.29	12.69
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	25.92	25.74	25.41	25.75	24.65	25.06	25.37	26.84	26.84	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	4.72	4.58	4.51	4.56	4.17	3.93	3.77	3.88	3.98	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry (including construction), % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

R&D intensity was 0.94 percent of GDP in 2024, rising slowly over 2001–2024 but still well below the regional (2.13 percent) and world (2.6 percent) averages (2023).[①]

Serbia's tertiary enrolment is relatively high. The gross enrolment ratio was 70.6

① UNESCO.

percent in 2024, below the Europe and Central Asia average (81.5 percent) but well above the world average (43.2 percent) (see Figure 15.4). STEM graduates accounted for a comparatively strong 33.8 percent of tertiary graduates in 2024, while business, administration and law graduates made up 19.1 percent.

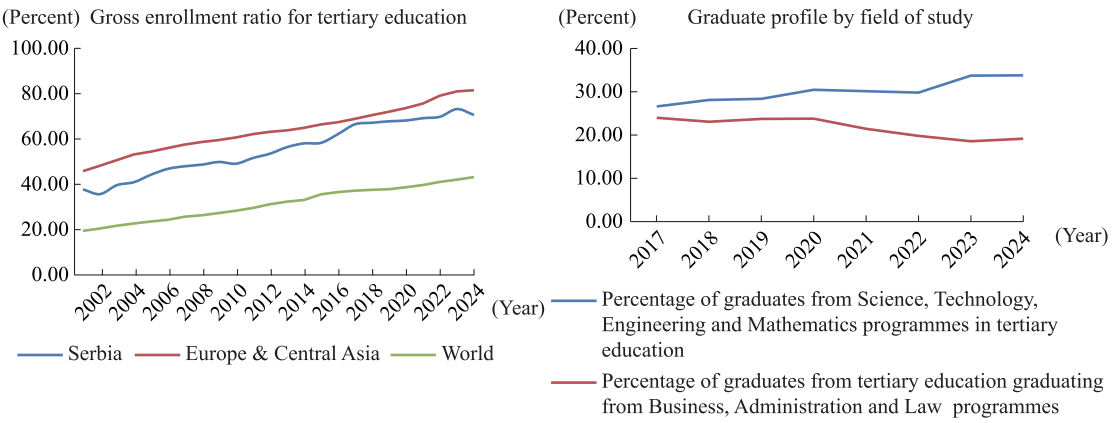


Figure 15.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Serbia (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

The strong STEM orientation and diversified manufacturing base are assets, but relatively low R&D intensity and a shrinking working-age population may limit Serbia's capacity to expand more technology-intensive exports to China.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2001-2024, the share of agriculture in Serbia's value added fell from 12.8 per cent to 3.2 per cent, that of industry from 32.5 per cent to 23.1 per cent, and that of services rose from 42.1 per cent to 58.8 per cent, indicating a long-term decline in industry's weight in the Serbian economy.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added fell from 25.8 percent of GDP in 2001 to 12.69

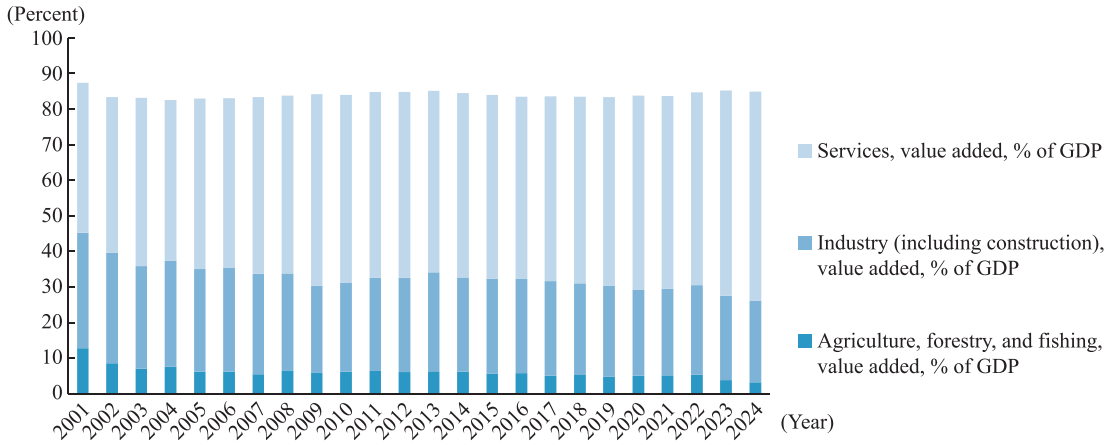


Figure 15.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Serbia, 2001–2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

percent in 2024, below the regional (13.5 percent) and world (15 percent) averages. Medium- and high-tech industry rose from 24.4 percent to 26.84 percent of manufacturing value added over 2001–2022, but its estimated share of GDP dropped from 6.3 percent to 3.98 percent (see Table 15.9).

Overall, Serbia is a service-driven economy with a declining weight of industry and manufacturing. Despite higher gross capital formation, the shares of industry, manufacturing and the estimated medium- and high-tech segment in GDP have fallen over the long term. Combined with relatively low R&D intensity and a shrinking working-age population, these indicators suggest Serbia may face constraints in expanding industrial exports to China over the medium term.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews

Serbia's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(I) Trade Openness

Serbia is a relatively open economy, with a trade to GDP ratio of 112.4 percent in 2024, almost double the world average of 57.2 percent.[①] In addition, Serbia is awaiting accession to the European Union and the WTO, and is currently incorporating the two accession protocols into its implementation process.

Serbia belongs to nine overlapping regional and bilateral trade agreements (excluding one partial scope agreement), mostly with economies in the wider Eurasian region, below the world average of 12; five are bilateral, including a free trade agreement with China. The Serbia-China FTA, in force since 1 July 2024, removed tariffs on over 60 percent of tariff lines immediately and phases out roughly 90 percent, greatly reducing the cost of exporting Serbian goods to the Chinese market. As a developing economy, Serbia is eligible for non-reciprocal preferences granted by Australia and Japan.[②] Serbia is also a member of a plurilateral agreement (Protocol on Trade Negotiations).

Serbia's trade-facilitation implementation rate rose from 36.56 percent in 2015 to 81.72 percent in 2025, above the South-Eastern Europe average of 76.8 percent (see Table 15.10). It fully implements Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation (100 percent) and scores highly on Formalities (95.83 percent); Paperless Trade (74.07 percent) and Cross-Border Paperless Trade (61.11 percent) remain least developed. Exports are cleared by all agencies in 2 days, at 9 percent of export value and a mid-range border-management score of 29 out of 50.[③] Further progress on paperless

① The World Openness Report does not cover Serbia.

② WTO.

③ World Bank (2025a).

measures would lower documentation costs for exporters serving China.

Table 15.10 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Serbia

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	86.67	41.67	22.22	33.33	0.00	36.56
2021	86.67	83.33	77.78	66.67	44.44	70.97
2025	86.67	95.83	100	74.07	61.11	81.72

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented; The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

Serbia's tariff regime has been remarkably stable since the early 2000s, with the simple average close to 7 to 7.5 percent and standing at 7.3 percent in 2025. Serbia's agricultural sector has long benefited from a high level of tariff protection. Its simple average tariff rate is significantly higher than its trade-weighted average tariff rate, an indication that high duties have been applied to selected agricultural tariff lines, thereby dampening import volumes in the corresponding categories. By and large, Serbia maintains low tariff levels for industrial products while extending stronger tariff protection to agriculture, yielding a stable and predictable tariff structure.

Table 15.11 MFN Applied Tariffs, Serbia, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	7.3	6.2	13.9
Trade weighted av.	6.7	5.2	19.8

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2026).

For both agri-food (see Figure 15.6) and manufacturing (see Figure 15.7), Serbia applies more non-tariff measures (NTMs) than the averages for developed and

developing countries. This extensive use of technical measures signals an advanced regulatory system but adds complexity and raises trade costs. The intensity of Serbia's non-technical non-tariff measures is broadly comparable to the average for developed economies. By contrast, the intensity of its export measures exceeds the averages for both developed and developing countries, particularly in the agri-food sector, a pattern that may give rise to export barriers.

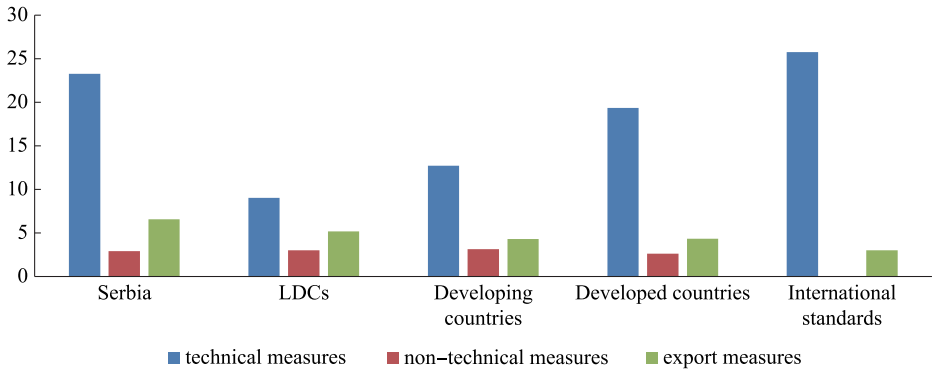


Figure 15.6 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Serbia

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Serbia data is from 2024.

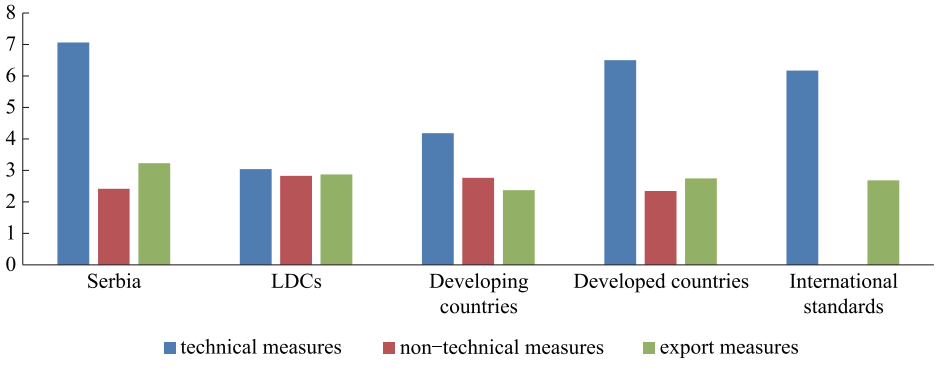


Figure 15.7 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Serbia

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Serbia data is from 2024.

The regulatory similarity index measures the relative similarity or dissimilarity of SPS and TBT between different countries, vis-à-vis international standards and across sectors. Serbia's regulatory consistency with agri-food international standards is very high, indicating a relatively high SPS regulatory capacity. indicating a high SPS regulatory capacity. Furthermore, the regulatory similarity with China, in agri-food and manufacturing, is particularly high. This helps reduce bilateral trade costs and boost export growth to China. Regulatory similarity with the rest of the world, however, is very low(see Figure 15.8).

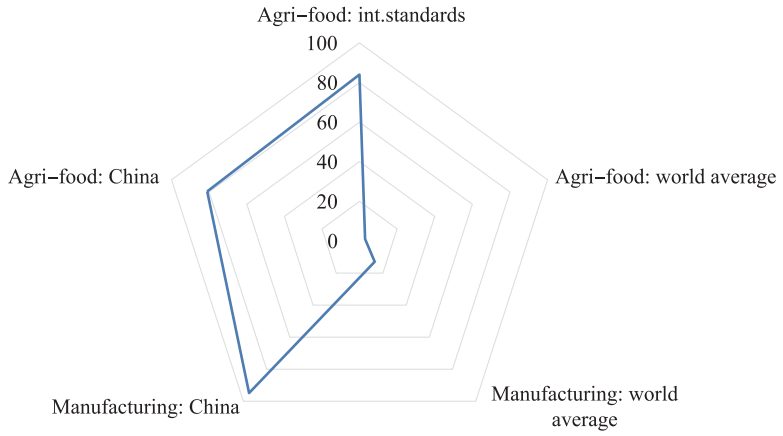


Figure 15.8 Serbia's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Serbia data is from 2024; data for China from 2024.

Serbia demonstrates solid SPS institutional and technical capacity. Regulatory quality is relatively strong (56.1), and the country operates 436 accredited laboratories, ranking 18th among 46 countries in Europe and Central Asia. QI4SD indicators show high accreditation capacity (89.7) alongside moderate conformity-assessment capacity (26.4). Border implementation is progressing through partial digitalization of SPS certification and testing-stage participation in the ePhyto Hub. As Serbia is not a WTO member, it does not submit SPS or TBT notifications, which limits

transparency through multilateral channels. ① ISO management-system certification is comparatively well developed, with 3,770 ISO 9001 and 206 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 42nd and 34th worldwide respectively. ②

Serbia maintains export restriction on CITES-listed species and hazardous chemicals, and its regime is progressively harmonized with the European Union acquis (a European Union-equivalent dual-use list), though licensing and enforcement differ. Serbia retains distinctive measures: suspended export approvals for arms and military equipment, and export licences for specified gold, silver and platinum-group metal products that preserve the National Bank's priority purchasing right and promote domestic value addition. Ferrous and non-ferrous scrap classified as waste falls under the Basel Convention and national permit requirements supporting domestic steel and metals supplies.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

In recent years Serbia has progressively liberalized its capital account, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) declining from 0.74 in 2001 to about 0.40 in 2024, although it remains above the upper-middle-income average (0.33). Reflecting Serbia's deep economic integration with the European Union, the euro plays a dominant role in the country's international trade settlement: in 2025, the euro accounted for 82% of the total value of Serbia's export invoicing, while the share of the US dollar climbed from 9% in 2016 to 16%. Ongoing alignment of Serbia's payment infrastructure and financial regulations with European Union standards has further improved cross-border payments and financial integration. ③

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a key driver of Serbia's economic

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

③ IMF.

development. FDI inflows declined to approximately USD 3.9 billion in 2025. Nevertheless, the stock of inward FDI increased to USD 74.0 billion, equivalent to 80 percent of GDP, substantially above the global average. Investment is concentrated in automotive manufacturing, electronics, business services, mining and logistics. The *World Investment Report* 2025 highlights Serbia as one of the leading FDI recipients in the Western Balkans, supported by export-oriented manufacturing and ongoing nearshoring investment into Europe. China has become one of Serbia's fastest-growing sources of foreign investment, its inward FDI stock roughly tripling between 2020 and 2024, about 9 percent of the total and the third-largest single-country holding. ①

V. Conclusion

Serbia's export relationship with China has expanded rapidly, especially since 2020. Exports rose from about USD 7 million in 2006 to nearly USD 2.5 billion in 2025. China moved from Serbia's 43rd-largest export market to its 4th. This growth has been highly concentrated in a narrow set of products, indicating that the alignment between Serbia's export structure and China's import demand needs to be improved. Exports to China are dominated by resource-based and intermediate goods, with ores and copper together accounting for close to 90 percent of the total. The recent growth is primarily attributable to the expansion of the products that Serbia was already exporting to China rather than to the introduction of many new product lines.

The analysis identifies several factors that support Serbia's export growth to China. Serbia has a relatively open trade regime, and the Serbia-China free trade agreement, in force since 2024, provides preferential access to the Chinese market. Regulatory similarity with China is also high, which can help reduce trade costs for

① UNCTAD (2025) and (2026d).

exporters. Although Serbia is landlocked, the Chinese-rebuilt Belgrade-Budapest railway, opened in 2025, strengthens its connection to broader trade corridors and potential maritime gateways. Border clearance is rapid, electricity supply is reliable, and digital connectivity and e-commerce adoption are solid. China has also become one of Serbia's fastest-growing sources of foreign direct investment.

At the same time, Serbia faces important constraints. Its export relationship with China remains narrowly based, and the country's broader industrial and technological base has weakened over time. Manufacturing's share of GDP and the medium- and high-technology segment have declined, research and development intensity remains relatively low, and the working-age population is shrinking. Overall, Serbia has developed into a very active exporter to China, albeit one limited to a narrow product mix, whose competitiveness is concentrated in value chains relating to minerals, metals and industrial inputs, rather than being spread across a broader range of products. The strongest near-term opportunities appear to be in established strengths such as copper ores and refined copper exports. The main challenge bilateral export relations is to use the current momentum, supported by the trade agreement and growing Chinese investment, to gradually broaden the export base beyond these dominant resource-related products.

Chapter XVI

South Africa

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses South Africa's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition and revealed comparative advantage. It compares South Africa's exports to China with its overall export profile and with China's import demand to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has shifted, and which product groups offer the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, South Africa's total goods exports expanded substantially, rising from about USD 33 billion in 2001 to roughly USD 116 billion in 2025 (see Figure 16.1). Exports to China also grew, increasing from around USD 1 billion in 2001 to more than USD 30 billion in 2025. China has become a far more important market for South African merchandise exports, rising from 9th place in 2001 to the largest export destination by 2025. The expansion was particularly rapid from the late 2000s to the early 2010s, when overall exports and exports to China surged alongside strong demand for minerals and metals. Exports to China peaked in 2013,

declined during the mid-2010s, recovered in 2021-2022, and then stabilized at around USD 30 billion in the most recent years.

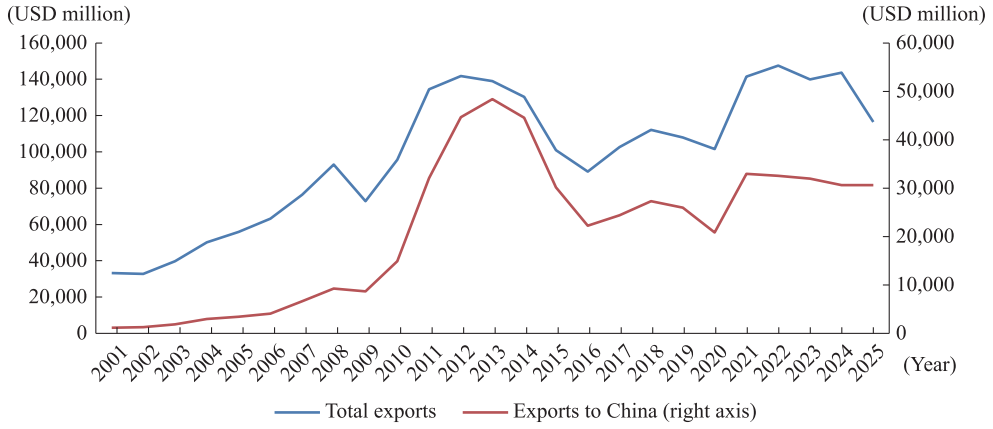


Figure 16.1 South Africa Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025

Source: Based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

The Trade Intensity Index confirms that China has become a very important export destination for South Africa relative to China's share of global imports. The index rose above unity after the mid-2000s, peaked in the early 2010s, declined after 2014, and then recovered sharply in 2025 (see Figure 16.2). The Trade Complementarity Index is more stable, remaining around 0.26-0.34 for most of the period, which indicates a moderate but persistent alignment between South Africa's export basket and China's import demand. Overall, the bilateral relationship is intensive, but its complementarity is driven mainly by a limited set of primary and resource-based products rather than by broad-based export alignment.

A key feature of South Africa's export structure is the contrast between a relatively diversified global export basket and a more concentrated export basket to China. The trade concentration index for exports to China rose from 0.07 in 2001-2008 to 0.21 in 2009-2012 and 0.19 in 2013-2019, before easing to 0.11 in 2020-2025 (Table 16.1). Overall, South Africa's exports to China depend on a narrower set of products than its global export portfolio, even though concentration has declined in the most recent period.

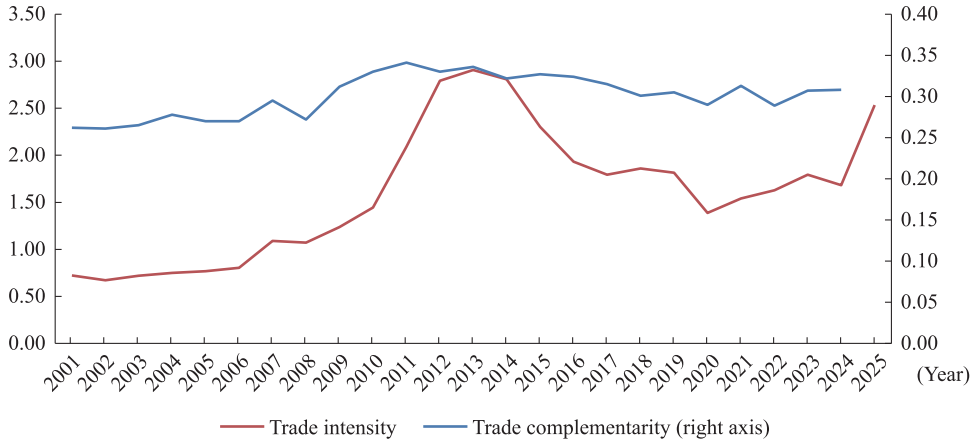


Figure 16.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between South Africa Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Table 16.1 South Africa Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.07	0.21	0.19	0.11
Overall exports	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, South Africa's total export basket in 2024 was strongly oriented toward primary products (see Table 16.2). Primary products accounted for 49 percent of total exports, while intermediate products represented 26 percent and final goods 25 percent. Agriculture accounted for 10 percent of total exports, with manufacturing and natural resources making up the remaining 90 percent. Exports to China show a more pronounced resource-based profile. Primary products accounted for 86 percent of exports to China, intermediate products for 12 percent, and final goods for only 2 percent. Agriculture represented just 2 percent of exports to China, while manufacturing and natural resources accounted for 98 percent. The China

-facing export basket is therefore overwhelmingly concentrated in primary and resource-based products, rather than in the more balanced mix of primary, intermediate and final goods seen in South Africa's global exports.

Table 16.2 South Africa Export Structure, by Broad Sectors and the Stage of Processing

Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	7	1	2	10
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	18	25	47	90
Overall, by stage of processing	25	26	49	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	2	0	0	2
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	0	12	86	98
Overall, by stage of processing	2	12	86	100

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, South Africa's exports to China are highly concentrated in two sectors (see Table 16.3). In 2025, pearls, precious stones and metals, and ores, slag and ash together accounted for about 87 percent of total exports to China. Pearls, precious stones and metals was the largest category, with exports of USD 13.7987 billion, equivalent to 45 percent of the total, followed closely by ores, slag and ash at USD 12.7706 billion, or 42 percent. Copperand Articles Thereof, iron and steel, edible fruit and nuts, nickel & articles, Pulp of Wood/

Cellulosic Material, wool, salt and earths, and miscellaneous chemical products made up most of the remaining leading sectors, but at much lower export values.

Table 16.3 South Africa Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
71	Pearls, Precious Stones & Metals	13,797.8	45	0.48	43	21	19	1
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	12,770.6	42	0.31	47	17	4	5
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	1,010.4	3	0.40	18	18	6	15
72	Iron & Steel	896.0	3	0.99	38	0	8	-9
08	Edible Fruit & Nuts	484.2	2	0.27	43	91	26	6
75	Nickel & Articles	345.7	1	1.00	63	-8	7	20
47	Pulp of Wood/ Cellulosic Material	296.6	1	0.91	15	45	8	0
51	Wool, Fine/ Coarse Animal Hair	209.7	1	0.73	22	23	0	2
25	Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	147.2	0	0.65	2	-2	6	29
38	Miscellaneous Chemical Products	133.5	0	0.39	21	-1	5	7

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNComtrade and China National Statistics.

Recent sectoral dynamics have been uneven, though generally positive across most leading categories. Between 2019 and 2025, exports of copper and articles thereof, nickel & articles, Salt, sulfur, earths& stone, miscellaneous chemical products, edible fruit and nuts, ores, slag and ash. pearls, precious stones and metals also continued to grow, albeit at a slower pace, reinforcing its position as South Africa's largest export

category to China. By contrast, iron and steel contracted over the same period, while pulp of wood/cellulosic material remained broadly flat. Overall, the sectoral pattern points to a highly concentrated and resource-intensive export relationship, with recent growth driven mainly by minerals, metals, and selected agricultural or natural-resource-based products.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether South Africa's recent export performance in China reflects the expansion of existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of future potential. Table 16.4 shows that export growth between 2019 and 2025 was driven overwhelmingly by the intensive margin: 609 products exported in both years increased from USD 25.4877 billion to USD 30.3055 billion, generating about USD 4.8 billion in additional exports. New products contributed USD 294.6 million across 54 HS 6-digit lines, while discontinued products reduced exports by USD 459.6 million. The near-term opportunity is therefore to consolidate and upgrade existing product strengths while gradually widening the range of products exported to China.

Table 16.4 South Africa Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	609	25,487.7	30,305.5	4,817.7
Discontinued products	416	459.6	0.0	-459.6
New products (extensive margin)	54	0.0	294.6	294.6

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

South Africa's export potential in China is strong at the aggregate level but

remains concentrated in a limited number of sectors. The China import-weighted revealed comparative advantage (RCA) rose from 1.1 in 2001-2008 to 2.0 in 2020-2025, while the China import growth-weighted RCA increased from 1.2 to 2.6 over the same period (see Table 16.5). This indicates that South Africa occupies an important position in China's imports and aligns relatively well with China's import demand. At the sectoral level, comparative advantage is strongest in pearls, precious stones and metals, ores, slag and ash; iron and steel, edible fruit and nuts, nickel & articles thereof, pulp of wood/cellulosic material, wool, fine/coarse animal hair, and salt, sulfur, earths and stone. Copper and miscellaneous chemical products are closer to, or below, unity. Overall, the RCA evidence points to substantial export competitiveness in sectors that are the core of South Africa's exports to China, but more limited competitiveness across a broader range of manufactured goods.

Table 16.5 South Africa Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage RCA (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	1.1	2.0	2.0	2.0
China import growth-weighted	1.2	3.0	2.4	2.6
	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
71: Pearls, Precious Stones & Metals	11.3	7.1	7.1	8.2
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	9.1	8.1	8.6	8.2
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.9
72: Iron & Steel	3.6	2.7	2.6	2.1
08: Edible Fruit & Nuts	5.6	4.5	4.9	5.2
75: Nickel & Articles Thereof	2.2	1.9	2.5	2.6
47: Pulp of Wood/Cellulosic Material	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.7
51: Wool, Fine/Coarse Animal Hair	3.1	3.7	4.7	5.5
25: Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.9
38: Miscellaneous Chemical Products	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.8

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on this sector-level evidence, the product-level analysis in the Annex (Table Ⅵ) provides a more granular assessment of where South Africa's export potential in China is most likely to materialize. The analysis identifies opportunities in four groups. Core export products include sectors where South Africa already has a strong presence in China and further growth would mainly involve scaling up established trade flows, such as iron ores, gold, chromium ores, ferro-alloys, chemical wood pulp and manganese ores. Underexploited products include areas where South Africa has export capacity and China represents a sizeable market, but current penetration remains more limited, such as titanium ores and sulphates. Emerging sectors include products where export capacity is significant but China's share remains relatively low, such as wine, phosphates, feldspar and fluorspar, precious metal ores, apples and manganese articles. Latent opportunities include products where bilateral exports to China remain negligible or very small despite sizeable Chinese import demand, such as coal, selected hides and skins, safety fuses and fish and marine mammal fats and oils.

Some of South Africa's competitive products have yet to gain wider recognition in the Chinese market. The South African Agricultural Industry Association and the South African Grain Association have noted that, in addition to traditional competitive products such as minerals, wine and citrus, South Africa also has strong potential to supply quality wheat, soybeans and corn. However, Chinese importers, buyers and consumers have limited awareness of these products, leaving considerable scope to further strengthen the matching of supply and demand.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how South Africa's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(I) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

South Africa is the most industrialised economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its ports handled around 4.3 million TEUs, with Durban the largest, accounting for nearly half of its national container volumes. Connectivity is strong by regional standards: South Africa links to 42 maritime partner economies and 140.5 aviation partner economies, both well above the Sub-Saharan African averages of 20.2 and 69.1 respectively (see Table 16.6). Its Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI) of 106.2 in 2025 is, however, lower than the figure from ten years ago, showing a decline of 18.7 percent.[①] Container import dwell time, at 3.1 days, is well below the regional average of 12.5 and the world average of 7.9. The railway network, at about 20,953 km, is the largest in the region. South Africa's very good logistics connectivity is a meaningful asset for exporters: strong maritime and aviation reach lowers market access costs. However, the decline in the LSCI, which has been ongoing since 2015, could indicate a deterioration in global freight transport links.

Table 16.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in South Africa

Indicator	South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa average	World average
Container import dwell time (days)	3.1	12.5	7.9
Maritime partner economies	42.0	20.2	28.2
Aviation partner economies	140.5	69.1	91.5

Source: World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2026a).

Note: World average is UNCTAD calculation.

For products such as citrus and stone fruit that are highly time-sensitive and require cold-chain logistics, port congestion, insufficient rail transport capacity and high logistics costs can erode the price advantage conferred by zero tariffs. For bulk

① UNCTAD (2026a).

commodities such as grain and mineral products, these constraints may affect the reliability of supply and the ability to export at scale.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Electricity reliability is a significant infrastructure constraint. In the 2020 Enterprise Survey, conducted during intensive load-shedding, 92.0 percent of firms reported experiencing electrical outages, roughly double the world average of 46.1 percent (see Table 16.7). By contrast, obtaining an electrical connection is relatively quick, at 11.9 days against a world average of 44.6. The share of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint (19.4 percent) is below both the Sub-Saharan African and world averages, suggesting that many firms have partially offset outage risk through own generation, at additional cost that may reduce price competitiveness.

Table 16.7 Stability of Energy Supply in South Africa, 2020

Indicator	South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	92.0	71.9	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	7.7	6.7	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	19.4	37.4	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband subscriptions stood at 5.3 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, above the African average of 1.2 but well below the world average of 20.1 (see Table 16.8). Mobile coverage is advanced: LTE reaches 99.4 percent of the population and 5G around 50.5 percent.

Table 16.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in South Africa

Indicator	South Africa	Africa	World
Fixed - broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	5.3	1.2	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	99.4	75.2	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/.

e-commerce adoption is the strongest among regional peers: 14.6 percent of adults bought online in 2024, more than double the Sub-Saharan African average of 6.8 percent (see Table 16.9). South Africa ranks 69th of 127 economies in the Network Readiness Index 2025, with a business digital engagement sub-pillar score of 41.6. Advanced mobile infrastructure and relatively mature e-commerce make cross-border digital channels into the Chinese market a realistic option for South African exporters. However, international postal dispatch volumes have declined sharply since 2022, suggesting that the current postal and parcel infrastructure may not yet be positioned to support growth in cross-border e-commerce exports.

Table 16.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in South Africa

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	5,039 *	2,639
International parcels dispatched (total)	16,885 *	6,827
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (%, age 15+)	13.9	14.6
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	41.6
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	75.0	78.4

Sources: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Note: 2022 data. Postal statistics for South Africa are not available for 2021.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines South Africa's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 43.2 million, about 67.4 percent of the total (Sub-Saharan Africa average: 56 percent); it rose after 2001 but has changed little since 2013-2015 (see Figure 16.3).

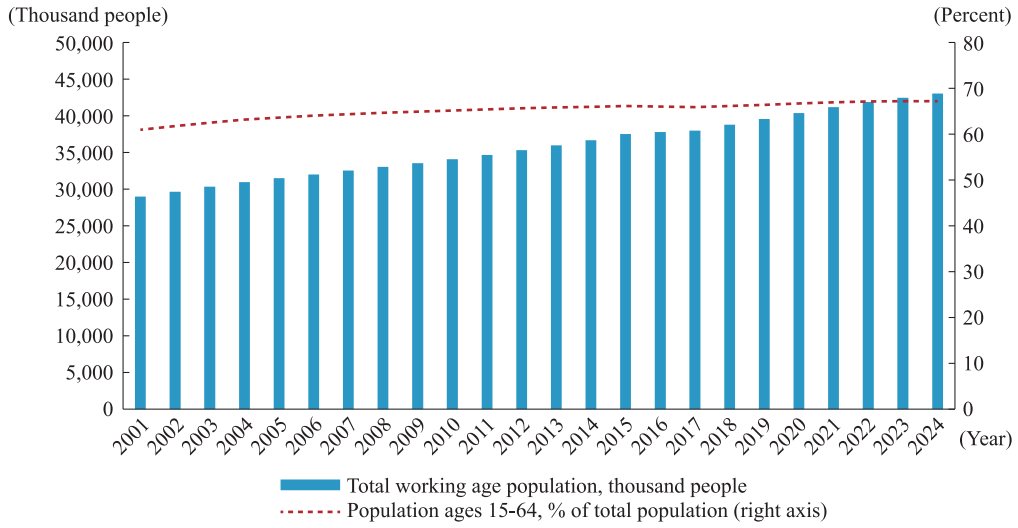


Figure 16.3 Total Working Age Population, South Africa, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Gross capital formation was 14.07 percent of GDP in 2024, well below the Sub-Saharan Africa (24.1 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages and in decline since its 2008 peak of 21.3 percent (see Table 16.10). R&D intensity is low at 0.61

percent of GDP in 2022, on a slightly downward trend since 2001 and far below the world average (2.6 percent).①

Table 16.10 Industrial System Indicators, South Africa, 2014–2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15–64, % of total population	66.16	66.32	66.20	66.11	66.37	66.62	66.89	67.15	67.32	67.40	67.43
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	4.58	5.57	5.52	5.24	5.12	5.25	5.46	5.69	5.54	5.50	5.44
Gross capital formation, % GDP	18.49	18.63	16.96	16.61	16.17	15.82	12.35	12.84	15.67	15.39	14.07
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	2.13	2.23	2.41	2.49	2.26	1.95	2.58	2.46	2.61	2.54	2.81
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	24.31	23.73	23.78	23.61	23.54	23.62	23.34	24.90	24.98	24.56	24.31
Services, value added, % of GDP	64.01	64.10	63.91	64.33	64.25	64.35	64.61	62.74	62.27	62.72	62.99
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	12.48	12.52	12.48	12.51	12.46	12.40	11.73	12.08	12.45	12.98	12.80
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added*	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.43	24.43	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	3.05	3.06	3.05	3.06	3.04	3.03	2.86	2.95	3.04	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

* Medium- and high-tech industry as a share of manufacturing value added is constant (24.43 percent) across 2014–2022 in the source data. The derived "% of GDP" row should be interpreted with caution

① UNESCO (n.d.).

South Africa's tertiary enrolment is modest. The gross enrolment ratio was 23.5 percent in 2023, above the Sub-Saharan Africa average (9.3 percent in 2022) but far below the world average (43.2 percent) (see Figure 16.4). STEM graduates accounted for 17.4 percent of tertiary graduates in 2023, while business, administration and law graduates made up 42.4 percent, a profile weighted towards services and administration.

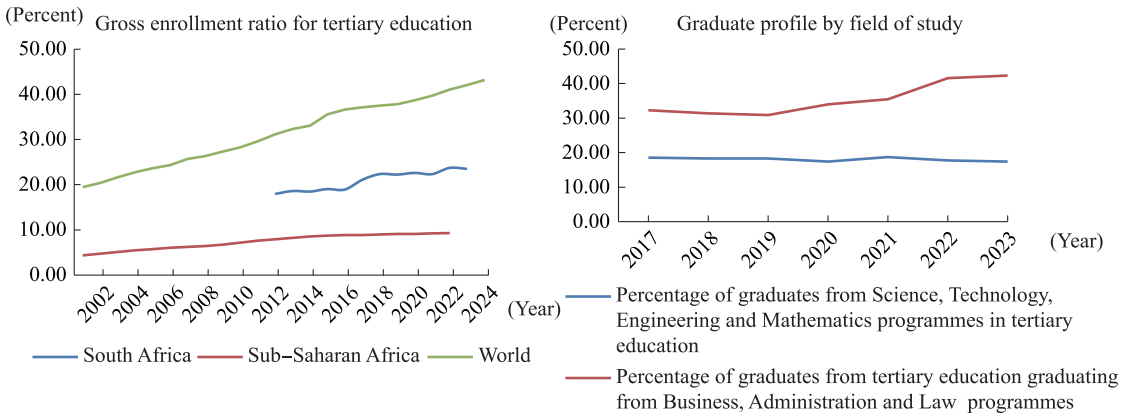


Figure 16.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, South Africa (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

Note: Gross enrolment data for South Africa only available for 2012-2023. Lines connect available data points.

A modest tertiary base, low R&D intensity and a graduate profile skewed away from STEM may constrain South Africa's capacity to move into more technology-intensive exports and to meet the quality and standards requirements of Chinese importers.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 2.8 percent of value added, industry for 24.3 percent and services for 63 percent of GDP (Sub-Saharan Africa averages: 18 percent, 25.3 percent and 49.6 percent; see Figure 16.5). In 2001, industry's share of value

added was 28.5 percent and has remained near 24.2 percent since 2011, From 2001 to 2024, the share of services value added rose from 60.8 per cent to 63.0 percent; agriculture's share has been broadly stable.

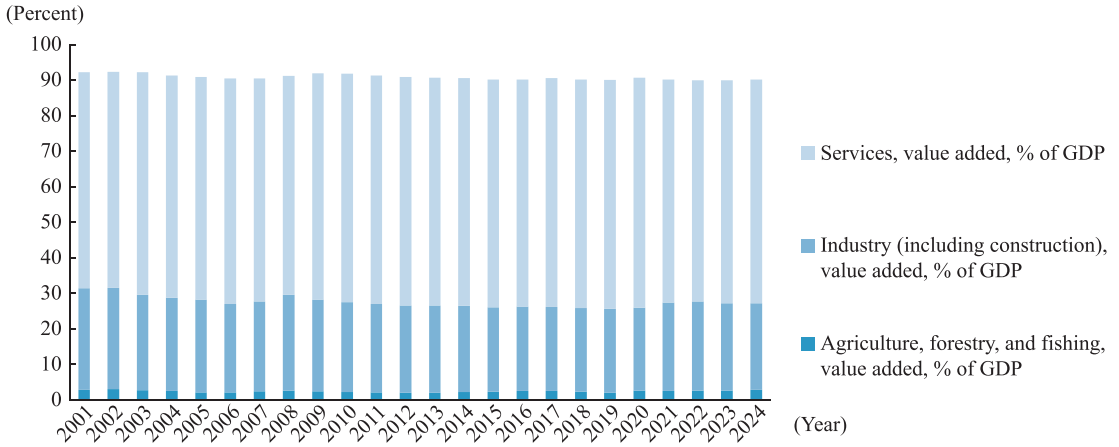


Figure 16.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, South Africa, 2001–2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value-added shares may not sum to 100percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value-added fell from 19 percent of GDP in 2001 to 12.8 percent in 2024, above the Sub-Saharan Africa average (10 percent) but below the world average (15 percent). Medium- and high-tech industry was broadly flat at about 24.4 percent of manufacturing value added in 2022, while its estimated share of GDP declined from 4.7 percent in 2001 to 3.04 percent in 2022 (see Table 16.10).

Overall, South Africa is a service-driven economy with a relatively developed but declining manufacturing base. The long-term fall in industry and manufacturing shares, weak gross capital formation, low R&D intensity, high unemployment may limit its capacity to expand more advanced industrial exports to China, leaving export potential concentrated in resource-based and less complex products.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews South Africa's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(1) Trade openness

South Africa's trade to GDP ratio was 61.5 percent in 2024, slightly above the world (57.2 percent) and Sub-Saharan (56.6 percent) averages.[①] Its Openness Indicator reached 0.65 in 2024 (see Figure 16.6), above the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.63 but about 14 percent below the world average, and the country's rank slipped from 77th in 1990 to 94th of 129 economies.

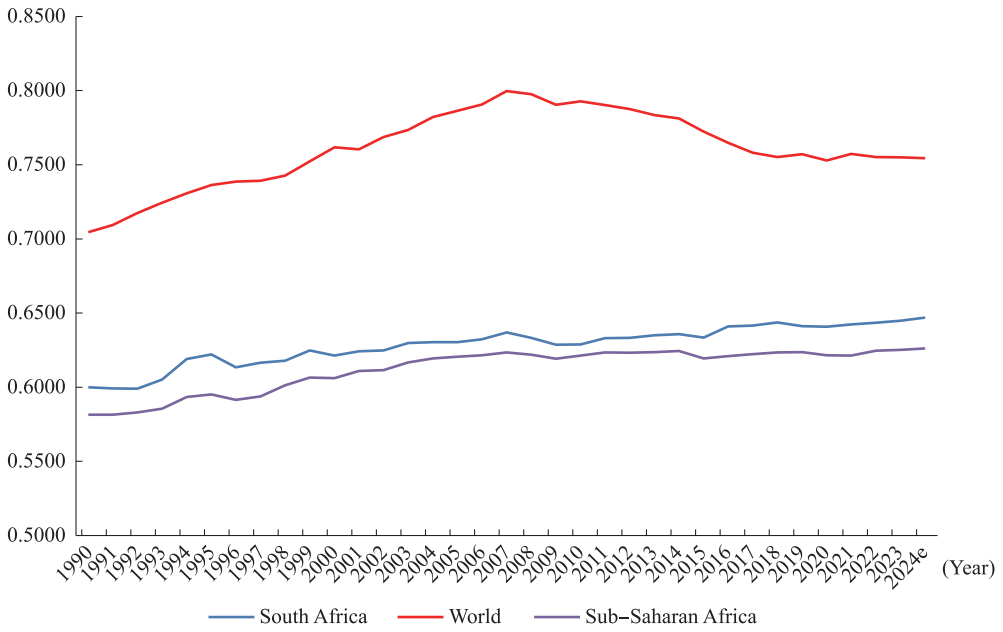


Figure 16.6 South Africa's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

① UNCTAD (2026b).

South Africa belongs to seven overlapping regional and inter-regional trade agreements (excluding one partial scope agreement), below the world average of 12 and has no bilateral agreements. As a developing country it benefits from non-reciprocal preferences granted by Japan (GSP), Norway and the United States (AGOA), and, in 2026, obtained zero-tariff access for its exports to China under the Common Development Economic Partnership Agreement—when China extended zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations.

Preference utilization is high: South Africa uses about 94 percent of Japanese GSP preferences and 78 percent of AGOA preferences over the 2023-2025 period, the former markedly higher than a decade ago and the latter slightly lower. South Africa also holds economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with the European Union and the United Kingdom, under which it utilizes about 90 percent of available preferences. ①

South Africa's trade facilitation implementation reached 66.7 percent in 2025, broadly in line with the Southern Africa average of 67.5 percent (see Table 16.11). Performance is uneven: it fully implements Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation (100 percent) and scores strongly on Transparency (86.67 percent), both above the regional average, while Formalities (70.83 percent), Paperless Trade (59.26 percent) and Cross-Border Paperless Trade (38.9 percent) lag behind. Weak paperless and cross-border paperless implementation raises documentation costs for exporters targeting the now duty-free Chinese market.

① UNCTAD (2026b).

Table 16.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in South Africa

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
South Africa (2025)	86.67	70.83	100	59.26	38.89	66.67

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores. Data only available for 2025.

South Africa's tariff regime has been stable since the early 2000s, with the simple average tariff level lowered to 7.5 per cent in 2025. Operating within the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), tariffs have stayed predictable. Agriculture is more protected than industry, with simple average tariff rates of 8.3 percent and 7.4 percent for agricultural and non-agricultural goods, respectively (see Table 16.12).

Table 16.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, South Africa, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	7.5	7.4	8.3
Trade weighted av.	5.6	5.3	9.6

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO, 2026).

Compared with other developing countries, South Africa applies more non-tariff measures (NTMs) per agri-food product (see Figure 16.7). South Africa's use of technical measures is closer to that of developed countries, reflecting its relatively mature regulatory system; however, its heavy use of non-technical and export measures signals a potential tendency for trade policy to shift towards protectionism.

In manufacturing, the use of technical measures is lower than in other developing countries, but again non-technical measures and export measures are more frequent, implying a heavier use of industrial policy and trade restrictiveness (see Figure 16.8).

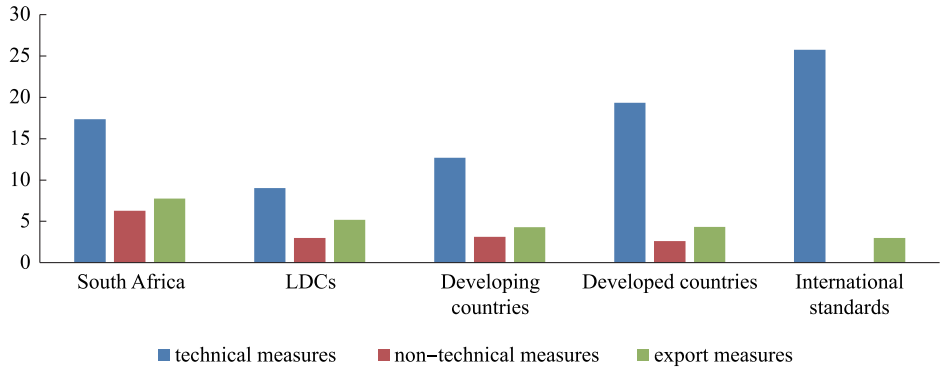


Figure 16.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, South Africa

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: South Africa data is from 2023.

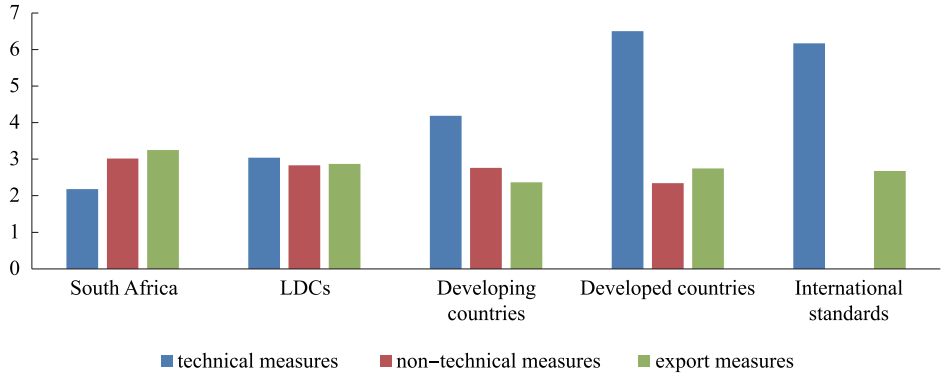


Figure 16.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, South Africa

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: South Africa data is from 2023.

The regulatory similarity index (see Figure 16.9) measures how closely countries' SPS and TBT measures align with each other and with international standards. South Africa's agri-food alignment with international standards is among the best in the world, reflecting high SPS regulatory capacity. Its similarity with China and the rest of the world is slightly above the global average. In manufacturing, however, alignment with China and the rest of the world is low, potentially raising export costs for South African manufacturers.

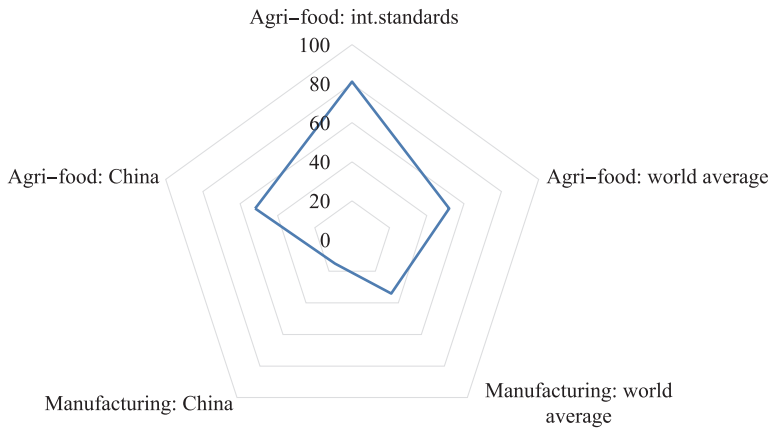


Figure 16.9 South Africa's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: South Africa data is from 2023; data for China from 2024.

Figure 16.10 shows South Africa submits WTO notifications consistently, reflecting respect for transparency and the multilateral system. Its SPS notifications are low for a country of its size and development level, but measures aligned with international standards need not be notified to the WTO; South Africa's high alignment (see Figure 16.9) corroborates this.

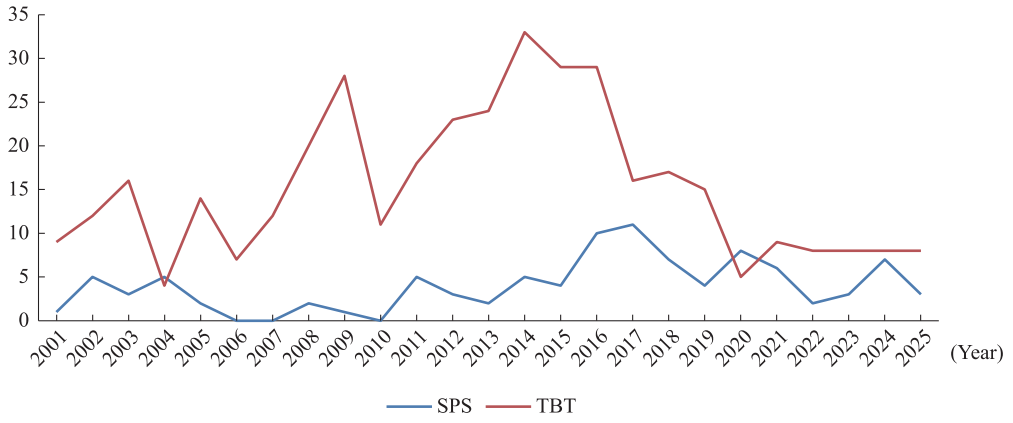


Figure 16.10 South Africa's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

South Africa possesses one of the strongest SPS technical infrastructures on the African continent. Regulatory quality is relatively high (53.9), and the country maintains 1,376 accredited laboratories, the highest number among African Union countries. QI4SD indicators show very strong accreditation capacity (93.8) and conformity-assessment (46.4) capacity, and South Africa joins the ePhyto Hub for cross-border digital exchange of phytosanitary certificates. ① ISO management-system certification is well developed, with 4,399 ISO 9001 and 237 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 40th and 30th worldwide. ②

South Africa maintains export restrictions on natural resources , pursuing three objectives. First, concerns over infrastructure vandalism underpin controls on scrap metal, semi-finished metal products and certain copper products, chiefly through export permits; scrap metal also faces export duties and domestic-offer requirements under the Price Preference System. Second, value-addition goals drive restrictions on selected minerals: unpolished diamonds require export permits, domestic-supply obligations and levies; unwrought gold and platinum-group metals require authorization; and permits, quotas and levies on chrome ore are under development, reflecting South Africa's weight in global chrome markets. Third, it protects genetic resources through authorization requirements on indigenous landrace genetics and strict implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, including discovery-phase permits and community benefit-sharing.

The relatively high regulatory similarity in agri-food helps increase South Africa's exports to China, while low manufacturing alignment with China raises compliance costs for industrial exporters.

Market access constraints and technical barriers to trade facing some of South

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

Africa's products need to be further reduced. The export of beef and other products of animal origin, as well as certain agricultural products, to China remains subject to requirements relating to animal diseases, phytosanitary measures, food safety and enterprise registration.

China has actively promoted its trade preference policies among South African government and business communities, continuing to maximize the benefits of policies such as zero-tariff treatment and the Green Channel 2.0 for African agricultural and food products exported to China, while advancing market access for South Africa's competitive products. In August 2023, fresh avocados from South Africa gained access to the Chinese market. In 2024, the two sides signed protocols on the export of dairy products and wool to China. In 2025, the two sides successively signed phytosanitary protocols for the export of stone fruits, including peaches, nectarines, plums, prunes and apricots, to China, with approved enterprises beginning exports during the 2025/26 season. In April 2026, the two sides signed a supplementary phytosanitary protocol to optimize the cold-treatment requirements for South African citrus exports to China.

South Africa has participated in the CIIE for nine consecutive years; in 2026, an estimated 15 companies will take part in the country exhibition and 30 in the agricultural-processing special exhibition.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Over the past two decades South Africa's capital account restrictiveness has been broadly stable, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) in a narrow range of about 0.55 to 0.61, well above the upper-middle-income average of 0.33. ① South Africa settles most of its international trade in United States dollars, reflecting the dollar's dominant role in pricing commodities such as precious metals, minerals

① IMF.

and energy products; the euro is used with European partners and the rand (ZAR) within SACU and Southern African Development Community. For exporters to China, dollar-denominated settlement and a relatively restrictive capital account shape how sales are priced and earnings repatriated.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) remains an important source of capital for South Africa, although annual inflows have moderated. FDI inflows were negative at approximately -USD 2.3 billion in 2025, while inward FDI stock increased to USD 132.3 billion, equivalent to 32 percent of GDP, below the global average. Investment is concentrated in mining, financial services, manufacturing, renewable energy and telecommunications. South Africa continues to attract investment linked to energy transition, critical minerals and manufacturing despite subdued investment conditions across the continent. ①

V. Conclusion

South Africa's export relationship with China has expanded strongly over the past two decades and. Exports to China increased from around USD 1 billion in 2001 to more than USD 30 billion in 2025. China moved from South Africa's 9th-largest export market to its largest. The relationship remains highly intensive but undiversified, with exports concentrated mainly in primary and resource-based products. Pearls, precious stones and metals, together with ores, slag and ash, account for most exports to China, while copper, iron and steel, fruit, nickel, wood pulp and wool are also exported to China but play smaller roles. Recent growth has come mainly from expanding existing export flows rather than from the emergence of many new products, reinforcing the importance of established minerals and metals value chains.

① UNCTAD (2026d).

The analysis identifies several factors that support South Africa's exports to China. Logistics connectivity is strong by regional standards, with good maritime and aviation links and relatively short container dwell times. South Africa also benefits from advanced mobile infrastructure, relatively mature e-commerce adoption compared with regional peers, strong agri-food regulatory capacity, and as well as the newly granted zero-tariff access to the Chinese market under the Common Development Economic Partnership Agreement. These factors provide a useful platform for export growth, especially in resource-based and selected agri-food products. At the same time, important constraints remain. Electricity reliability is a major challenge, fixed-broadband penetration is low, manufacturing has weakened over time, investment and research capacity are limited, and regulatory alignment with China is weaker in manufacturing than in agri-food. Export restrictions on selected natural-resource products and a relatively restrictive capital-account environment may also limit broader export expansion.

Overall, South Africa is well positioned in the Chinese market, but mainly in a narrow set of resource-based sectors. Its competitiveness is strongest in minerals and metals as well as certain agricultural and forestry products, while broader manufactured export competitiveness remains more limited. The strongest near-term opportunities are likely to come from scaling established exports of certain minerals, metals and metal products, and forestry products, alongside underexploited or emerging exports in certain industrial minerals and chemicals, horticultural products, beverages, and livestock products. The main challenge The main challenge is for South Africa to build on the above advantages to gradually develop an export structure with broader coverage and lower dependence on bulk commodities.

Looing into the future, the following recommendations are proposed to further expand South Africa's exports to China.

First, continue to expand market access and further unlock the benefits of zero-

tariff policies. China should strengthen bilateral cooperation in areas such as food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, standards and certification, with a view to further expanding the range of products eligible for market access.

Second, strengthen supplier-buyer linkages and expand channels for South African exports to China. Efforts should be made to further encourage Chinese local commerce authorities, industry and business associations, and leading enterprises to visit South Africa for economic and trade exchanges and business matchmaking. At the same time, South African enterprises should be encouraged to participate in major trade fairs and exhibitions in China, including the China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair), with a focus on promoting South African agricultural products, food products, processed mineral products and distinctive manufactured goods. This would help South African enterprises better understand market demand, consumer trends, trade rules and other aspects of the Chinese market. The 2026 "Big Market for All: Export to China" export promotion activities and the South Africa-focused session of the "Entering Africa" program of the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo will further provide platforms for South African enterprises to expand trade with China and promote their products in the Chinese market.

Third, support South Africa in enhancing its export competitiveness and translating its resource advantages into industrial strengths. Cooperation along industrial and supply chains should be strengthened in key areas such as agricultural and mineral processing, automobiles and auto parts, new energy, and equipment manufacturing. Chinese and South African enterprises should be encouraged to pursue cooperation in technology, capital, production and markets, thereby strengthening South Africa's local processing and manufacturing capabilities and promoting greater exports of higher-value-added products to China.

Chapter XVII

Spain

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Spain's export performance and export potential to China by examining the evolution of bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Spain's exports to China with its overall export profile and China's import demand to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where it remains below potential, and which product groups offer the strongest opportunities for export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Spain's overall exports have grown substantially, rising from approximately USD 117 billion in 2001 to around USD 445 billion in 2025 (see Figure 17.1). Exports to China have followed a similar upward trajectory, increasing from less than USD 1 billion in 2001 to more than USD 9 billion in 2025. China's importance as a destination for Spanish exports has risen markedly, moving from 24th place in 2001 to 12th place in 2025.

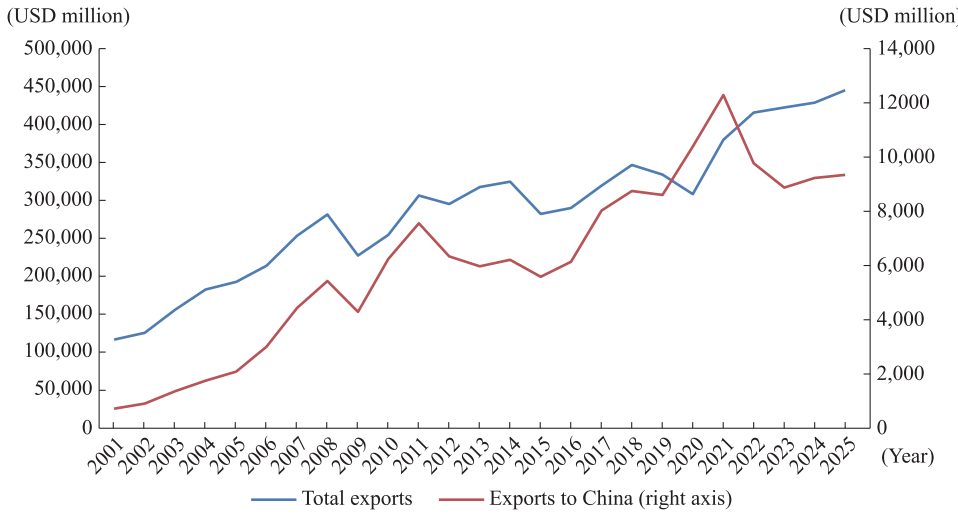


Figure 17.1 Spain Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

During the hyper-globalization period (2001–2008), exports expanded strongly, with exports to China growing even faster. Growth slowed during the Global Financial Crisis and recovery (2008–2012) and remained modest in the post-crisis period (2012–2019). Between 2019 and 2025, amid the pandemic, supply-chain disruptions, inflation, and geopolitical tensions, Spain's total exports continued to grow, while exports to China slowed. This divergence likely reflects sector-specific pressures in Spain's exports to China, including weaker demand for key products, rather than a broad deterioration in Spain's overall export competitiveness.

Although Spain's exports to China have grown considerably since 2001, they remain below the level expected given the size of the two economies in global trade. The Trade Intensity Index has remained below unity on average, despite some volatility, indicating persistent under-trading relative to the benchmark implied by China's share of global imports (see Figure 17.2). Spain's export profile is also only partly aligned with China's import demand, reflected in a modest Trade Complementarity Index. This weak complementarity partly reflects an export basket

better suited to European and other developed-market demand patterns than to China's. In addition, Spain's integration into global value chains remains largely anchored in European markets rather than East Asian production networks, contributing to lower trade intensity with China.

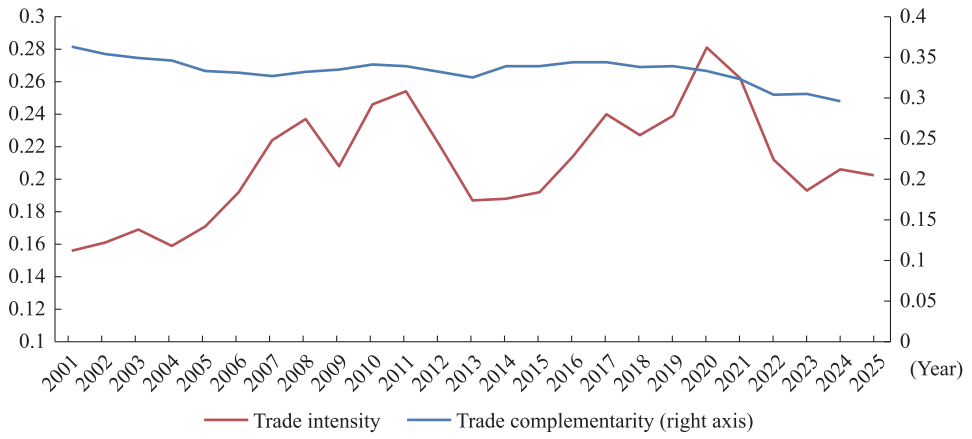


Figure 17.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Spain Exports and China Imports, 2001-2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

A key feature of Spain's export structure is its high degree of diversification. However, while Spain exports a wide range of goods globally, its exports to China are slightly less diversified, as reflected in higher trade concentration (see Table 17.1). This indicates that Chinese demand aligns with only a small subset of Spain's competitive products

Table 17.1 Spain Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.04
Overall exports	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Spain's export basket is mainly composed of final goods, which account for 53 percent of total exports in 2024 (see Table 17.2). Intermediate industrial input is also important, representing 39 percent, while primary products account for only 8 percent. Agriculture makes up about one fifth of Spain's exports and is largely concentrated in final products, rather than raw commodities. Spain's exports to China show a different pattern. Final goods remain the largest category, but their share is lower at 45 percent, while primary products are much more important, accounting for 28 percent of exports to China. This difference is mainly driven by non-agricultural goods, where exports to China are more concentrated in primary products and less in final and intermediate goods. In agriculture, by contrast, Spain's exports to China broadly resemble its global export structure.

Table 17.2 Spain Export Structure, by Broad Sectors and the Stage of Processing

Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	18	2	1	21
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	35	37	7	79
Overall, by stage of processing	53	39	8	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	20	1	1	22
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	25	26	27	78
Overall, by stage of processing	45	27	28	100

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At a more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, Spain's exports to China are relatively concentrated in a limited number of sectors. In 2025, only 10 HS 2-digit chapters accounted for approximately 70 percent of total exports (see Table 17.3). The two largest categories, ores, slag and ash and meat and edible offal, together accounted for around 28 percent of total exports. Other important export categories include Copper and Articles Thereof, pharmaceutical products, and Machinery, mechanical appliances and parts and Electrical Machinery & Equipment, reflecting a mix of resource-based and higher value-added manufacturing to china. Looking at concentration within these sectors, those related to primary products tend to be naturally less diversified, with a limited number of HS 6-digit products accounting for most trade flows. By contrast, Spain's exports to China in most manufacturing sectors tend to be quite diversified, indicating Spain's greater capacity to export many different products within the same industrial category.

Table 17.3 Spain Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	1,358.6	15	0.87	53	7	25	2
02	Meat & Edible Offal	1,168.3	13	0.38	3	431	31	-1
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	841.7	9	0.86	81	2	-18	23
30	Pharmaceutical Products	785.6	8	0.32	44	31	10	5
84	Machinery, mechanical appliances and parts	601.6	6	0.05	29	2	-3	-1

Continued

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
85	Electrical Machinery & Equipment	444.3	5	0.07	17	-4	10	-3
33	Essential Oils & Cosmetics	422.5	5	0.23	30	0	51	3
39	Plastics & Articles	410.5	4	0.16	41	-1	1	-2
15	Animal/Vegetable Fats & Oils	223.7	2	0.32	82	44	7	4
87	Vehicles (Not Railway/Tramway)	217.5	2	0.19	36	35	-4	-8

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

In terms of dynamics, performance has been heterogeneous. Key exports to China grew between 2001 and 2025, but this masks stagnation or decline for many of them since 2019. For example, exports of meat and edible offal declined by around 1 percent per year, electrical machinery and equipment fell by approximately 3 percent, and vehicles by about 8 percent. By contrast, pharmaceutical products and essential oils and cosmetics recorded sustained growth. copper and articles thereof exports also increased significantly, though this expansion was also driven by rising copper prices rather than larger volumes.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether Spain's export growth to China comes from existing or new products helps identify the source of future export potential. Table 17.4 shows that

recent growth has been driven mainly by exports of existing products: 2,102 products generated nearly USD 1 billion in additional exports. New products also contributed significantly, adding almost USD 600 million, although this was partly offset by the exit of 444 products, which reduced exports by about USD 800 million. Overall, Spain's export potential in China appears selective and evolving, depending primarily on sustained competitiveness in existing products, complemented by the capacity to enter new market niches.

Table 17.4 Spain Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	2,102	7,802.7	8,750.4	947.7
Discontinued products	444	799.2	0.0	-799.2
New products (extensive margin)	247	0.0	593.1	593.1

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Spain's export potential in China is significant in selected sectors, but remains uneven and limited by the weak alignment between Spain's overall export structure and China's import demand. At the aggregate level, both the China import-weighted Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) and the China import growth-weighted RCA remain below unity, indicating that Spain is neither strongly competitive in the products that dominate Chinese imports (see Table 17.5), nor in some faster-growing areas of Chinese demand. At the sectoral level, Spain shows relatively strong competitiveness in meat, cosmetics, animal and vegetable fats and oils, and pharmaceutical products, pointing to scope for further expansion. By contrast, machinery and electrical equipment show RCA values below unity, while vehicles remain above unity but have gradually lost relative competitiveness. Overall, the RCA evidence suggests that

stronger in specific consumer-oriented and agri-food-related sectors, but more limited across the broader industrial export basket.

Table 17.5 Spain Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
China import growth-weighted	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6
	RCA within largest 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.3
02: Meat & Edible Offal	1.9	2.5	2.9	3.8
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	0.9	1.4	1.2	1.1
30: Pharmaceutical Products	1.3	1.8	1.4	1.6
84: Machinery, mechanical appliances and parts	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6
85: Electrical Machinery & Equipment	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
33: Essential Oils & Cosmetics	1.8	2.1	2.1	2.4
39: Plastics & Articles Thereof	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2
15: Animal/Vegetable Fats & Oils	3.0	2.4	3.0	2.9
87: Vehicles (Not Railway/Tramway)	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.1

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Going beyond this sector-level evidence, the product-level analysis (Table Ⅶ) provides a more granular assessment of where Spain's selective export potential in China is most likely to materialize. The analysis identifies a number of HS 4-digit sectors with high export opportunities, based on RCA, Spain's recent export performance, Chinese import demand and market size. Products with higher potential are grouped into four categories. Core export products include sectors where Spain already has a strong presence in China and where further expansion would mainly

involve scaling up existing trade flows, such as selected meat products, edible offal, tungsten ores and furskins. Underexploited products refer to sectors where Spain is globally competitive and China represents a sizeable market, but current exports to China remain below potential, including fisheries products, medicaments and cosmetics. Emerging sectors capture products where Spain's export capacity is growing but its presence in China remains limited, such as fruit juices, coffee extracts and selected nickel products. Finally, latent opportunities identify products in which Spain is competitive internationally, but bilateral exports to China are negligible or absent, including fresh fruits, stainless steel products and motor vehicles.

Ⅱ. Economic infrastructure

This section assesses how Spain's transport, energy, information and communication, and digital infrastructure support its capacity to export.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Spain has the largest port capacity in Europe, with 18.1 million TEUs in 2024, representing 15 percent of the continent's total. With a Liner Shipping Connectivity Index of 420, Spain ranks 8th worldwide for maritime connectivity and links to 95 maritime partner economies, far above the European and world averages. Container import dwell time stands at 6.2 days, below the world average, though higher than the European average (see Table 17.6). Spain also has one of the longest rail networks in Europe, at 15,984 km, and direct flights to 152 economies, above regional and world averages. Together, these indicators point to a logistics environment well suited to supporting export growth to China.

Table 17.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Spain

Indicator	Spain	Europe	World
Container import dwell time (days)	6.2	4.8	7.9
Maritime partner economies	95	20.5	22
Aviation partner economies	152	122	92

Source: UNCTAD Data Hub; World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2024).

Note: Regional and world averages are calculated by UNCTAD based on economies with available data; the world average is an unweighted average.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

In 2024, 18.8 percent of firms in Spain reported electrical outages, below the Europe and Central Asia average of 25.5 percent and the world average of 46.1 percent. Spain's firms experience on average just 0.3 outages per month (see Table 17.7). Connecting to the grid takes 58.4 days on average, faster than the regional but longer than the world average. Despite the reliable supply, 47.8 percent of firms identified electricity as a major or very severe constraint, well above regional and world averages, suggesting that cost or connection conditions, rather than outages, weigh on firms' perception and may affect export competitiveness.

Table 17.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Spain, 2024

Indicator	Spain	Europe & Central Asia	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	18.8	25.5	46.1
Average number of electrical outages in a typical month	0.3	0.5	3.1
Days to obtain an electrical connection, upon application	58.4	70.3	44.6
Percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	47.8	22.6	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband access stands at 39.2 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2024, above the European average and nearly double the world figure (see Table 17.8). Mobile coverage is near-universal: 99.7 percent of the population was covered by an LTE network, above the European and world averages.

Table 17.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Spain

Indicator	Spain	Europe	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	39.2	37.2	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	99.7	99.5	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/.

Note: Data for Spain is from 2024, data for Europe and the world from 2025.

On the supply side, Spanish enterprises outperform the European Union in e-commerce sales in 2024: 32.22 percent recorded against 23.83 percent (see Table 17.9). Cross-border activity is stronger too, with 10.49 percent selling online to other European Union countries and 7.31 percent to the rest of the world. Demand-side adoption is comparatively weaker: the share of individuals making an online purchase stood at 68.94 percent in 2024, below the European Union average of 71.76 percent. Spain's digital infrastructure and the above-average propensity of its enterprises to sell online across borders, including beyond the European Union, are concrete assets for reaching distant markets through cross-border e-commerce, including China.

Table 17.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Spain and the European Union

Indicator	Spain 2021	Spain 2024	EU 2024
Individuals who bought goods or services online	66.63	68.94	71.76
Enterprises with web sales to other European Union countries	8.21	10.49	8.82

Continued

Indicator	Spain 2021	Spain 2024	EU 2024
Enterprises with web sales to the rest of the world	5. 25	7. 31	5. 28
Enterprises with e-commerce sales	27. 87	32. 22	23. 83

Source: Eurostat JSON API, https://ec. europa. eu/eurostat/api/dissemination/statistics/1. 0/data/.

Note: This table covers Enterprises with 10 or more employees (GE10), activities exclude financial sector.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Spain's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that underpin its export capacity. The professional talent base is addressed within the factor endowment subsection.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

As of 2024, Spain's working-age population (aged 15-64) stood at 32 million people, or 65. 9 percent of the total population (down from 68. 2 percent in 2010), above the European Union average of 63. 6 percent (see Figure 17. 3, Table 17. 10).

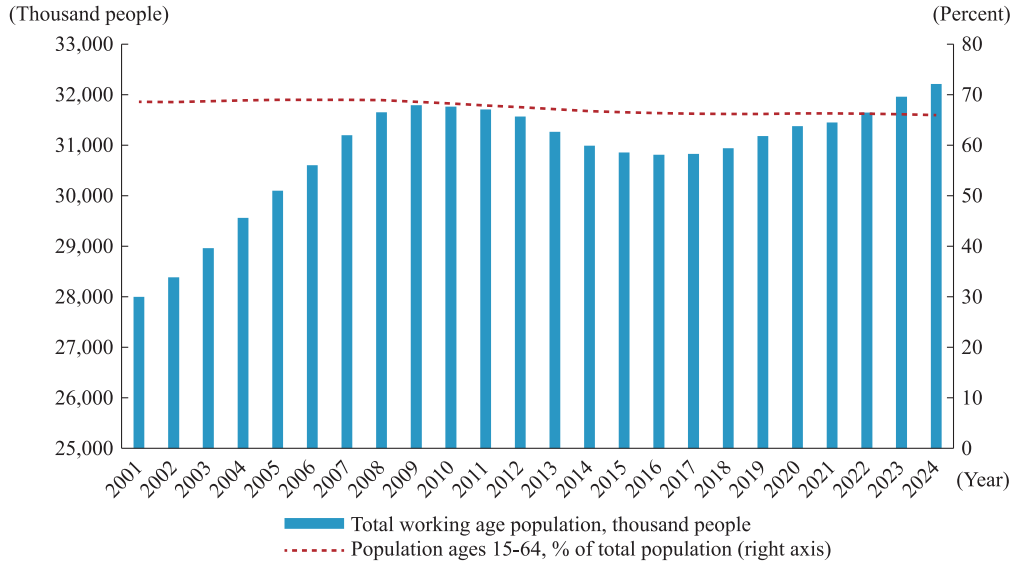


Figure 17. 3 Total Working Age Population, Spain, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data. worldbank. org/.

Gross capital formation amounted to 21.17 percent of GDP in 2024, below the world average of 26.3 percent, but close to the European Union average of 21.6 percent (see Table 17.10). R&D expenditure intensity reached 1.49 percent of GDP in 2023, its highest recorded level, though still below the European Union average of 2.3 percent and the world average of 2.6 percent.

Spain's higher education system is well developed by international standards. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education stood at 93.8 percent in 2024, above the high-income country average of 82.0 percent (see Figure 17.4). The graduate profile has shifted: STEM graduates declined from 28.8 percent in 2004 to 21.3 percent in 2023, and Business, Administration and Law from 24.4 percent in 2001 to 19.3 percent in 2022, though together they still account for over 40 percent of tertiary graduates. The declining STEM share, combined with R&D intensity below European Union and world averages, may constrain Spain's capacity to export higher-technology goods and to meet the increasingly sophisticated requirements of Chinese importers.

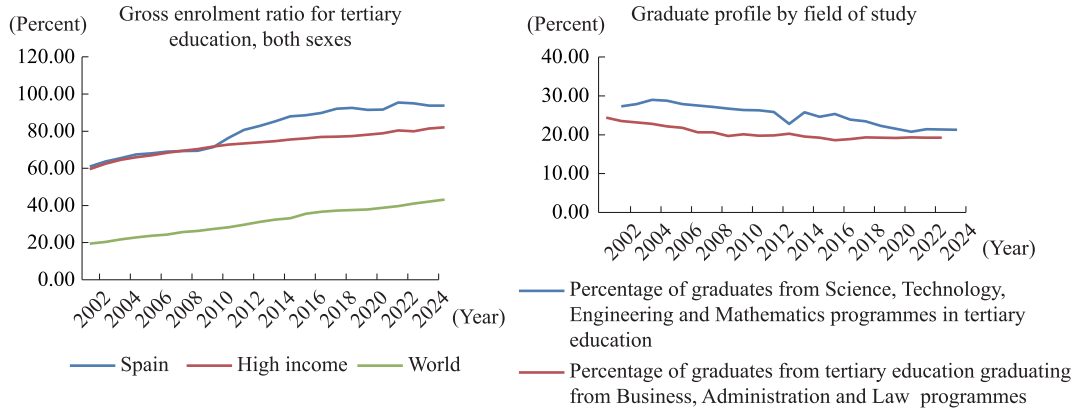


Figure 17.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Spain (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

Note: Graduate profile data not available for 2018 and 2019. Lines connect available data points.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 2.8 percent of value added (European Union

average 1.6 percent), industry for 19.5 percent (22.3 percent) and services for 68.9 percent of GDP (66 percent; see Figure 17.5). Both agriculture and industry have declined as shares of GDP since 2001, while services has expanded. With the share of industry value added in GDP now below the European Union average, Spain's export base is increasingly oriented toward services, which may limit the scope for scaling goods exports to China.

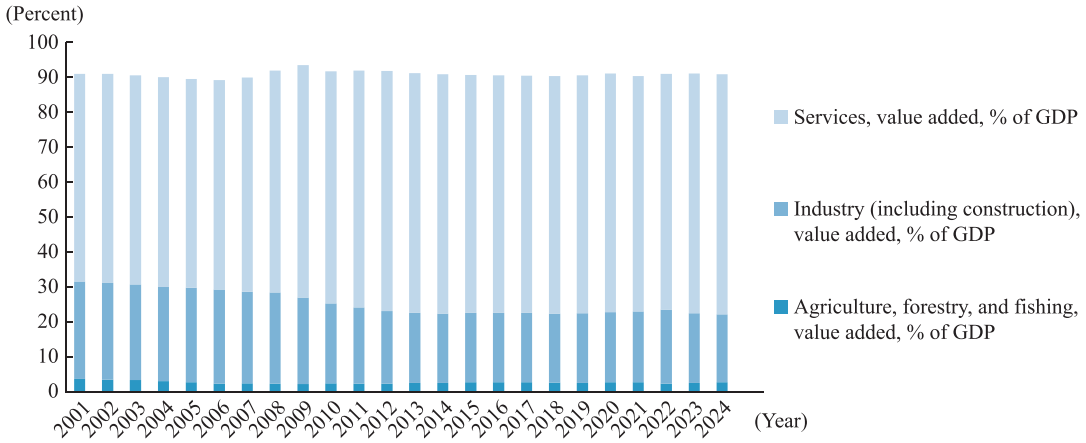


Figure 17.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Spain, 2001–2024

Source: World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry is mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value-added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added decreased from 15.8 percent of GDP in 2001 to 10.84 percent in 2024, below both the world average of 15 percent and the European Union average of 14.3 percent. The share of medium- and high-technology industry in manufacturing value-added stood at 37.81 percent in 2022, and the estimated share of medium- and high-technology sectors in GDP declined from 5.3 percent in 2001 to 4.17 percent in 2022 (see Table 17.10). While Spain retains meaningful medium- and high-technology manufacturing capacity, the declining share of manufacturing in

GDP and the contraction of its technology-intensive component suggest that the industrial base may not be well positioned to drive broad-based export expansion to China across manufactured goods categories.

Table 17.10 Industrial System Indicators, Spain, 2014-2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15-64, % of total population	66.69	66.46	66.31	66.19	66.13	66.17	66.24	66.28	66.22	66.09	65.93
Total working age population, thousand people	30,986	30,853	30,808	30,824	30,938	3,1178	31,371	31,445	31,642	31,955	32,207
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	4.27	3.99	4.18	4.31	4.07	4.11	3.91	4.08	4.01	3.50	3.47
Gross capital formation, % GDP	18.15	19.37	19.06	19.57	20.71	20.91	20.63	21.87	22.69	21.12	21.17
Research and development expenditure, % GDP	1.23	1.21	1.18	1.2	1.23	1.24	1.4	1.4	1.41	1.49	—
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	2.53	2.72	2.82	2.80	2.70	2.52	2.78	2.77	2.37	2.61	2.75
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	19.87	19.92	19.79	19.90	19.74	19.98	20.12	20.32	21.22	19.96	19.45
Services, value added, % of GDP	68.70	68.23	68.17	67.98	68.12	68.27	68.40	67.45	67.60	68.69	68.90
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	11.00	11.01	10.95	11.11	10.79	10.70	10.85	11.26	11.03	10.95	10.84
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	38.68	38.52	38.77	38.70	37.80	37.79	39.28	36.46	37.81	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	4.25	4.24	4.25	4.30	4.08	4.04	4.26	4.11	4.17	—	—

Source: World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews Spain's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and financial and foreign investment conditions.

(Ⅰ) Trade Openness

Spain's openness to trade (trade to GDP ratio) stood at 37.1 percent in 2024, below the European average of 46.3 percent. Spain's Openness Indicator of 0.77 in 2024 was slightly below the developed economies average but above the world average (see Figure 17.6). Its openness rank improved from 37 (out of 129) in 1990 to 32 in 2024.

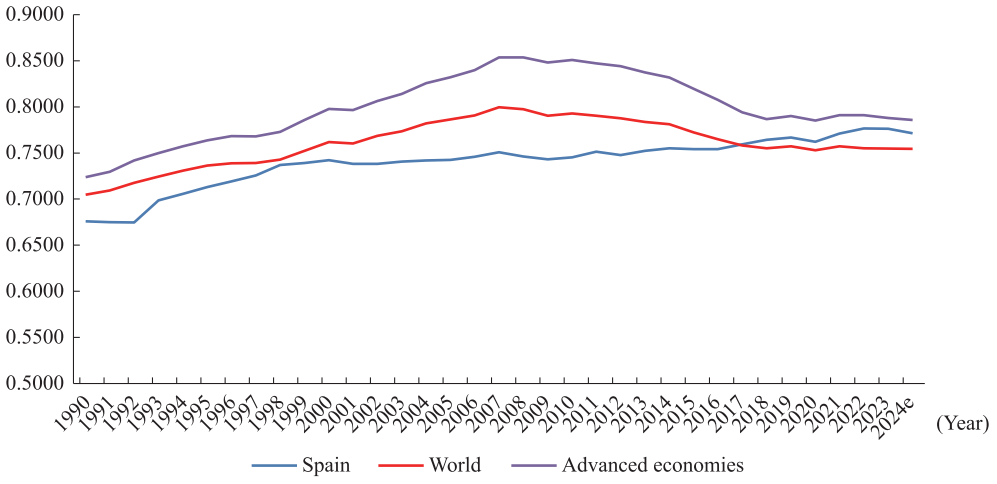


Figure 17.6 Spain's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

Spain is a founding member of the WTO. Its trade policy is largely determined at the European Union level, which negotiates trade agreements, sets the common external

tariff and is a member of the WTO. According to the latest WTO Trade Policy Review in 2023, the European Union combines a generally open trade regime with an increasingly assertive trade policy agenda focused on sustainability, strategic autonomy and resilience.

Spain is deeply integrated into trade networks within and beyond the European Union. Approximately 60 percent of Spain's exports are directed to other European Union members, reflecting the structural importance of regional integration. Spain benefits from the European Union's extensive network of preferential trade agreements, which increasingly cover not only goods but also services, investment protection and regulatory cooperation. Around 25 percent of Spain's exports go to countries with which the European Union has preferential trade agreements. The European Union has no RTAs with China.

Spain has been a strong performer on trade facilitation, with its overall implementation score rising to 89.25 percent in 2025 (see Table 17.11). It is at or above the regional average on most dimensions, including Transparency (100 percent, against a regional 98.4 percent), Formalities (95.83 against 88.5 percent), Paperless Trade (96.29 against 88.1 percent) and Cross-Border Paperless Trade (72.22 against 63.4 percent). Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation (66.66 against 85.1 percent) and SME-related facilitation (53.3 against 64.1 percent) are below the regional average. Spain's export procedures are highly efficient: exported goods clear all border control agencies in 4 days at a cost equivalent to 3 percent of the value of goods exported, with Spain obtaining full marks on border management.[①] These low procedural time and cost burdens apply to all export destinations, including China, and provide a competitive advantage.[②]

① World Bank (2026a).

② World Bank (2025a).

Table 17.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Spain

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	86.66	91.66	55.55	88.88	44.44	77.42
2021	93.33	95.83	66.66	96.29	61.11	86.02
2025	100	95.83	66.66	96.29	72.22	89.25

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

The European Union applies a common external tariff characterised by low and stable levels of protection, with a simple average MFN rate of 5.0 percent in 2025. Weighted averages are lower, particularly on non-agricultural products, indicating that non-agricultural imports are relatively concentrated in lower-tariff products, and agricultural tariffs are significantly higher (see Table 17.12). Spain's open market provides a competitive advantage as intermediate goods can be imported efficiently.

Table 17.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Spain and European Union, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	5.0	4.1	10.5
Trade weighted av.	2.8	2.4	8.7

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2026).

Figure 17.7 and Figure 17.8 show the average number of non-tariff measures (NTMs) applied per product in agri-food and manufacturing sectors, respectively. Spain and the European Union apply technical measures at a level similar to other developed countries but below what full alignment with international standards would require. Non-technical measures are limited and on par with developed-country peers.

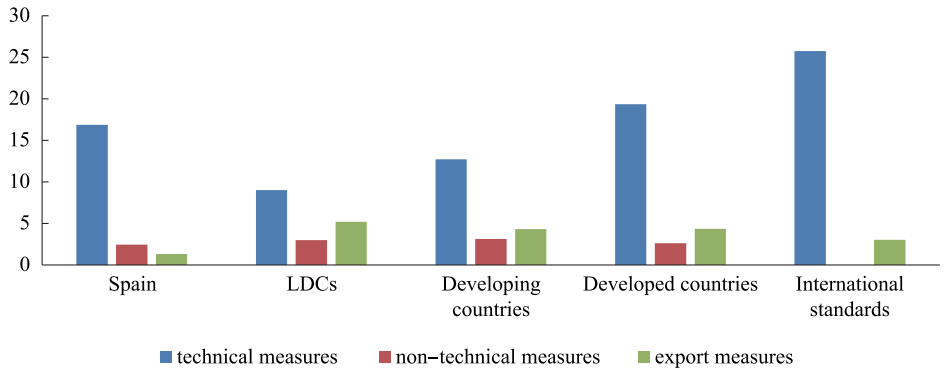


Figure 17.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Spain

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Spain/European Union data is from 2025

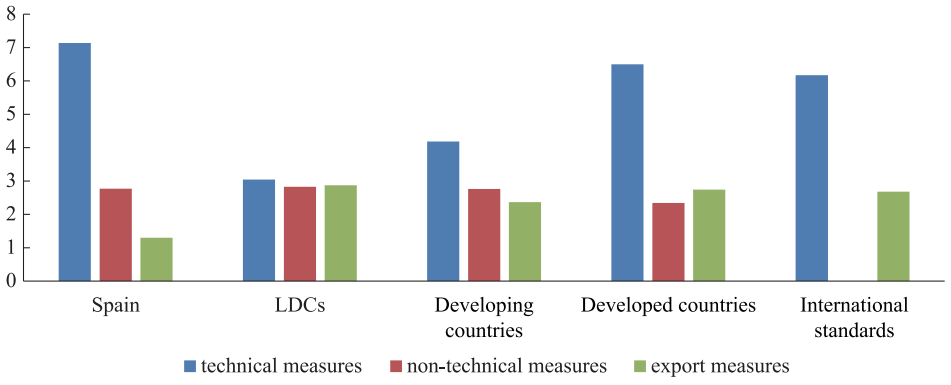


Figure 17.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Spain

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Spain/European Union data is from 2025

The regulatory similarity index (see Figure 17.9) measures the relative similarity of SPS and TBT between different countries and vis-à-vis international standards. A higher regulatory similarity tends to facilitate trade. Figure 17.9 shows that Spain and the European Union have relatively high regulatory similarity with China's regulations in both agri-food and manufacturing sectors. They are also among the most similar to

the Codex Alimentarius, IPPC and WOAH international standards in agri-food sectors. Therefore, its regulatory framework has relatively low similarity to the global average, with the gap particularly pronounced in manufacturing.

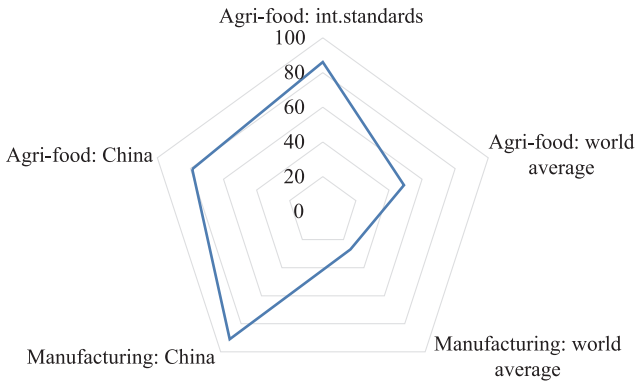


Figure 17.9 Spain's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Spain/European Union data from 2025; data for China from 2024.

Spain's close regulatory alignment is underpinned by strong SPS capacity. Regulatory quality is high (64.7), with a perfect accreditation score (100) and 1,166 accredited laboratories, ranking 9th among 37 OECD countries. SPS certification is fully digitalized, and Spain (through the European Union) notifies a consistently high number of SPS and TBT measures to the WTO (see Figure 17.10). ISO management system certification is well developed: Spain holds 41,616 ISO 9001:2015 certificates and 631 ISO 22000:2018 certificates, ranking 6th and 16th worldwide respectively. ① Spain's high regulatory alignment with China and international standards and strong SPS capacity represent a significant advantage for exporters navigating Chinese import requirements.

① ISO and IAF (2025).

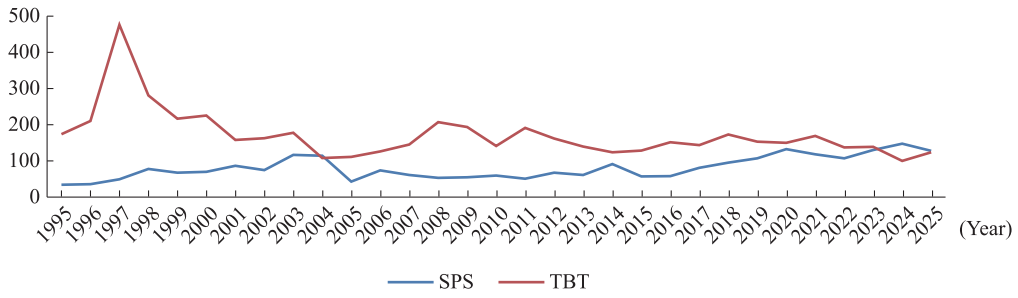


Figure 17.10 Spain's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 1995-2025

Source: Author calculations based on the WTO Notification Portal.

Spain maintains export restrictions on dual-use items, sanctions-related goods and other usually controlled categories. Spain has implemented tighter controls on semiconductor manufacturing equipment, advanced computing hardware, quantum-related hardware, and other strategic industrial goods through the European Union dual-use regime. These measures primarily take the form of export licensing requirements, with approvals assessed based on destination, end user, end use, diversion risk, and security considerations. Moreover, in response to major geopolitical conflicts, Spain has implemented sanctions-related export restrictions adopted at the European Union level such as export prohibition of goods that could be used for inhuman treatment pursuant to European legislation.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Spain's capital account restrictiveness declined sharply following the alignment of national legislation with European Union rules prohibiting capital controls and has remained broadly unchanged since then. Spain's Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) stood at 0.18 in 2024, slightly above the average for other high-income countries (approximately 0.16).

Spain's trade with countries outside the European Union is largely invoiced in

euro (around 65 percent) and the United States dollar (around 27 percent), with a gradual increase of other currencies.[①] Spain is both a major recipient and source of foreign direct investment (FDI) with an inward FDI amounting to approximately USD 19.9 billion and outward FDI reaching USD 31.3 billion, although both declined compared with 2024. Spain's inward FDI stock increased to approximately USD 1.05 trillion in 2025. Spain's inward FDI stock is about 60 percent of GDP placing it among the more internationally integrated large economies in Europe.[②] Spain's open capital account and high FDI integration support the financing conditions that export-oriented sectors require and present a favourable environment for Chinese investors.

V. Conclusion

Spain's trade relationship with China has expanded considerably. Exports rose significantly, with China becoming a more important destination, moving from 24th to 12th place among Spain's export markets. This points to a deepening bilateral relationship, but one that remains selective and often below potential. Spain's exports to China are concentrated in a limited number of sectors and remain only partly aligned with China's broader import demand dynamics. The main opportunities for Spain to increase exports to China lie in consolidating established areas of competitiveness, particularly in agri-food, pharmaceuticals and selected consumer-oriented products, while expanding into product categories where Chinese demand is growing.

For Spain, infrastructure, regulatory similarity, and trade facilitation, all of which are very well developed by international standards, are not binding constraints. Challenges on Spain's side to increase goods exports to China are rather structural, lying in the composition and direction of what Spain produces rather than in the

① Eurostat (2026).
② UNCTAD (2026d).

conditions under which it trades. The declining share of manufacturing in GDP, the contraction of medium- and high-technology activity, and the falling share of STEM graduates point to an economy in long-term structural transition toward services, which may limit the scope for broad-based goods export expansion to China. R&D intensity, while rising, remains below European Union and world averages, which may constrain Spain's competitiveness in the Chinese market. European Union export controls in specific sectors may also affect opportunities in a few product categories.

Spain nevertheless has several enabling conditions that can support export success to China, including world-class trade logistics, efficient export procedures, institutional quality, strong regulatory alignment with Chinese import requirements and an open trade and investment environment. Spain's challenge is therefore one of product fit, technological capacity and value-chain positioning rather than its domestic trade policy. Sustained export growth to China will depend on Spain's ability to scale up existing competitive sectors, enter new product niches where Spain has high comparative advantage and strengthen links with East Asian production networks. Progress in R&D, higher-technology manufacturing and bilateral investment would help convert Spain's structural advantages into more diversified and durable export flows to China.

Chapter XVIII

Tanzania

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Tanzania's export performance and export potential to China, examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition and revealed comparative advantage (RCA). It compares Tanzania's exports to China with its overall export profile and with China's import demand in order to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where it remains below potential, and which product groups offer the strongest opportunities for export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Tanzania's overall exports have expanded significantly over the past two decades, rising from less than USD 1 billion in 2001 to approximately USD 10 billion in 2025 (see Figure 18.1). Exports to China have also increased substantially over the same period, growing from about USD 3 million in 2001 to USD 750 million in 2025. China has become an increasingly important destination for Tanzania's exports, moving from its 36th largest export market in 2001 to its 5th largest in 2025. However, the growth of Tanzania's exports to China has not been uniform over time.

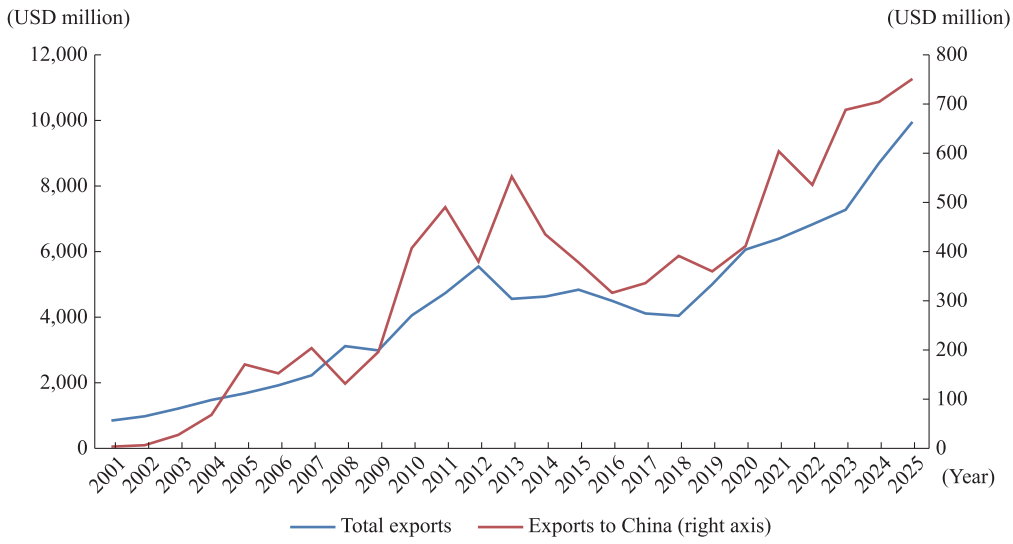


Figure 18.1 Tanzania Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001-2025

Source: Based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

These growth patterns highlight the sensitivity of Tanzania's export performance to shifts in the global economic environment. During the hyper-globalization phase (2001-2008), exports expanded rapidly, with particularly strong acceleration in exports to China, reflecting deepening integration into global value chains and China's rising demand for raw materials and agricultural commodities. This momentum continued in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (2008-2012), with export growth remaining robust as stimulus-driven recovery in major economies sustained demand for Tanzania's exports, especially from China. In the subsequent 2012-2019 period, export growth slowed markedly and exports to China effectively stagnated, consistent with weaker commodity price dynamics and increasing global protectionist pressures. By contrast, the 2019-2025 period shows a renewed rebound in export growth for both total exports and exports to China.

The product composition of Tanzania's export profile is only weakly aligned with China's import demand (see Figure 18.2). Tanzania's dominant export categories diverge from the large-scale intermediate inputs and manufactured goods that represent the bulk of China's demand for imported goods. The sub-unity Trade Intensity Index

since 2012 indicates that Tanzania's exports to China remain below the share by China's importance in global imports, suggesting some scope for Tanzania's firms to seek market opportunities in China.

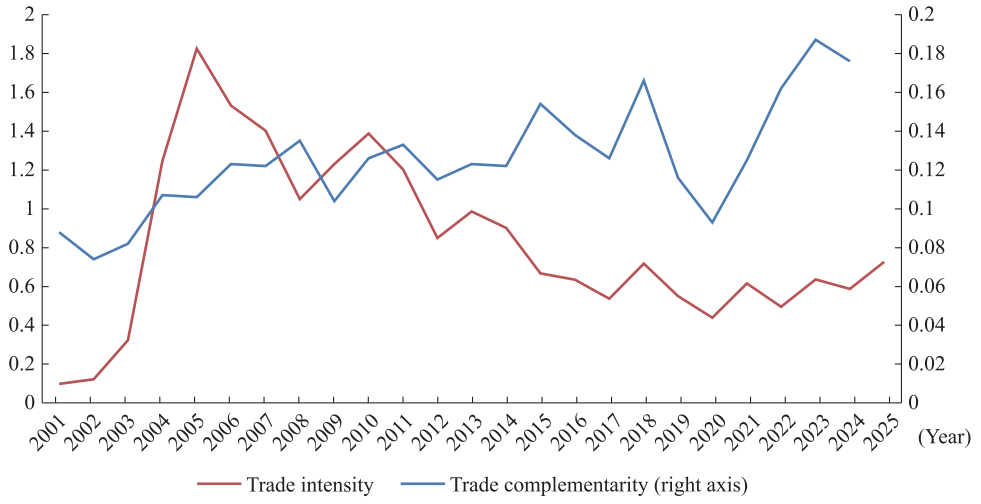


Figure 18.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Tanzania and China, 2001–2025

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Tanzania's global export structure has become more concentrated over time, indicating growing reliance on a narrower group of products in its overall exports (see Table 18.1). Exports to China initially became highly concentrated, but this trend reversed after 2009–2012. The decline in China-facing concentration suggests that Tanzania's exports to China have become less dependent on a small number of products in recent periods, even as its global export basket has moved in the opposite direction.

Table 18.1 Tanzania Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.30	0.44	0.22	0.18
Overall exports	0.07	0.10	0.12	0.15

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indicators, Tanzania's export basket remains concentrated in primary commodities. Agricultural commodities and natural resource-based goods, particularly minerals and other largely unprocessed extractive products, continue to account for a large share of the country's export profile (see Table 18.2). By contrast, semi-processed intermediates and final manufactured goods account for only a small share of total exports, pointing to constraints in domestic processing and industrial capacity. These patterns are even more pronounced in exports to China, suggesting that Tanzania's trade relationship with China is largely concentrated in upstream segments of the value chain.

Table 18.2 **Tanzania Export Structure, 2024** Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	16	2	13	31
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	5	8	56	69
Overall, by stage of processing	21	10	69	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	6	0	33	39
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	0	8	53	61
Overall, by stage of processing	6	8	86	100

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At a more disaggregated level, Tanzania's exports to China remain concentrated in a small number of sectors. In 2025, the ten largest HS 2-digit chapters accounted

for 94 percent of total exports to China (see Table 18.3). The two leading categories, copper and oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, alone represented 62 per cent of total exports to China. Other resource-intensive categories, including ores, slag and ash, as well as salt, sulfur, earths, stone, also accounted for sizeable shares. Concentration is also high within several of these sectors, indicating that exports are often driven by only a small number of products within each category. Most major sectors have recorded growth in exports to China, although performance varied. In recent years, mineral categories and fish and crustaceans have expanded more strongly, while growth in oil seeds & oleaginous fruits has been more muted. The volatility in growth rates reported for some commodity products should be interpreted cautiously because they may partly reflect base effects rather than sustained changes in export capacity.

Table 18.3 Tanzania Export to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	239.2	32	0.55	138	7	33	18
12	Oil Seeds & Oleaginous Fruits	222.6	30	0.98	42	62	10	5
26	Ores, Slag and Ash	88.1	12	0.43	163	23	-36	46
25	Salt, Sulfur, Earths & Stone	54.8	7	0.25	38	185	44	48
03	Fish & Crustaceans	35.6	5	0.52	9	30	32	35
53	Other Vegetable Textile Fibers	21	3	0.92	24	23	18	-8
52	Cotton	13.3	2	1.00	30	106	-28	27

Continued

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
44	Wood & Articles of Wood	12.3	2	0.54	21	15	10	3
76	Aluminum & Articles	10.2	1	0.54	—	-25	—	12
24	Tobacco & Manufactures	10.1	1	1.00	—	—	-11	10

Source: UNCTAD calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: — implies that exports to China were marginal during the period.

According to statistics from the General Administration of Customs of China, China-Tanzania trade totaled USD 7.62 billion from January to July 2026, up 25.6% year on year. China's imports from Tanzania totaled USD 340 million, up 6%. Among these imports, China's coffee imports from Tanzania totaled USD 14.43 million, up 167.5% year on year.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Assessing whether recent export growth has come from existing products or from new ones is important for understanding Tanzania's export potential in China. The former points to scope for scaling up established flows, while the latter signals potential for diversification. Between 2019 and 2025, Tanzania's export expansion to China was driven mainly by existing products: 56 HS 6-digit lines accounted for nearly USD 233 million in additional exports, rising to USD 585.4 million (see Table 18.4). However, the extensive margin was also significant, with 31 newly exported products

generating about USD 165 million by 2025. This suggests that Tanzania's export potential in China depends primarily on deepening established trade flows, while also benefiting from some capacity to diversify its product base in response to Chinese demand.

Table 18.4 Tanzania Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	56	352.3	585.4	233.1
Discontinued products	17	7.2	0.0	-7.2
New products (extensive margin)	31	0.0	165.0	165.0

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Despite a concentrated export basket and persistent capacity constraints, Tanzania's RCA dynamics point to meaningful export potential in the Chinese market. The China import-weighted RCA, which measures competitiveness relative to the structure of Chinese import demand, increased from 0.7 in 2001-2008 to 1.5 in 2020-2025 (see Table 18.5). This indicates that Tanzania has become better positioned in products that are important to China's import basket, including in categories where Chinese demand has been growing rapidly such as copper. However, competitiveness has weakened in some established export categories, such as fish & crustaceans, cotton and ores, slag and ash, while remaining broadly stable in others, including oil seeds & oleaginous fruits and mineral-based products. Overall, the RCA evidence suggests that Tanzania's export potential in China is real but conditional, with future gains depending on the ability to remain competitive in core export products while expanding into products more closely aligned with China's evolving import

demand and domestic upgrading objectives.

Table 18.5 Tanzania Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	0.7	0.9	1.3	1.5
China import growth-weighted	0.8	1.1	1.5	2.0
	RCA within largest 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	2.13	2.7	4.5	9.7
12: Oil Seeds & Oleaginous Fruits	5.22	5.8	6.3	5.5
26: Ores, Slag and Ash	13.14	9.3	4.8	2.6
25: Salt; Sulfur; Earths & Stone	1.87	4.1	5.7	6.0
03: Fish & Crustaceans	18.64	8.0	4.6	3.3
53: Other Vegetable Textile Fibers	18.75	16.0	24.8	18.7
52: Cotton	10.25	9.2	4.8	5.1
44: Wood & Articles of Wood	1.18	1.2	0.9	1.3
76: Aluminum & Articles Thereof	0.14	0.2	0.1	0.1
24: Tobacco & Manufactures	20.21	24.5	23.2	13.8

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the sector-level evidence, a detailed product-level analysis identifies HS 4-digit sectors where export potential in the Chinese market may warrant further assessment (see Table Ⅷ in the Annex). The assessment is based on RCA, Tanzania's recent export performance, Chinese import demand, and market size. Products with higher potential are grouped into four categories. Core export products include sectors where Tanzania already has established trade links with China and possible scope to scale up existing flows, such as fish, oil seeds and unrefined copper. Underexploited products refer to sectors where Tanzania has demonstrated export capacity and China represents a sizeable market, but bilateral exports remain below

potential, including cotton and refined copper. Emerging sectors, such as coffee, tobacco and copper ores, point to areas where Chinese demand is significant but Tanzania's current market presence remains limited. Finally, latent opportunities include products where Tanzania is internationally competitive but exports to China are negligible or absent, such as gold, bran and copper mattes.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Tanzania's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Tanzania's ports handled approximately 985,000 TEUs[①] in 2024, up 54 percent from 2015. Maritime connectivity is broadly in line with regional and world averages (see Table 18.6), while the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index rose by about a quarter over the decade to 69.73 in 2025.[②] Tanzania has a rail network of 2,717 km and direct air connections to 84 economies, above the Sub-Saharan Africa average. The main weakness is container import dwell time of 13.5 days, well above the world average of 7.9. This gap adds to export costs and reduces price competitiveness, although Tanzania's broad international connectivity remains an asset for exporters.

① Twenty-foot equivalent units, or the size of a twenty-foot container. The unit used to measure vessel/port capacity.

② The Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI) measures a country's integration into global liner shipping networks; higher values indicate better connectivity.

Table 18.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Tanzania

Indicator	Tanzania	Sub-Saharan Africa average	World average
Container import dwell time (days)	13.5	12.5	7.9
Maritime partner economies	21.0	20	22
Aviation partner economies	84.0	69	92

Source: UNCTAD Data Hub; World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2024).

Note: Regional and world averages are calculated by UNCTAD based on all economies with available data; the world average is an unweighted average.

Tanzania faces relatively inadequate compatibility between agricultural product storage-transport systems and market requirements. Outdated preservation technologies and high cold-chain transportation costs lead to pervasive spoilage and material losses during long-distance transit.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Electricity remains a constraint for firms in Tanzania. In 2023, around one-third of firms reported electrical outages, while the number of outages per month remained below regional and world comparators (see Table 18.7). Yet, 42.2 percent of firms identified electricity as a major constraint, above both the Sub-Saharan African and world averages. For export-oriented firms, unreliable power supply raises production costs and makes it harder to meet importers' quality and delivery requirements.

Table 18.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Tanzania, 2023

Indicator	Tanzania	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	34.1	71.9	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	0.7	6.7	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	42.2	37.4	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org.

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband subscriptions stand at 0.246 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, well below the African and world averages (see Table 18.8). Mobile network coverage is stronger: 88 percent of the population was covered by at least an LTE network in 2024, above the African average and close to the world level. The near absence of fixed broadband may limit the digital trade tools and electronic documentation that exporting increasingly requires.

Table 18.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Tanzania

Indicator	Tanzania	Africa	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	0.246	1.2	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	88	75.2	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub: https://datahub.itu.int/.

Note: Data for Tanzania is from 2024, 2025 for Africa and the world.

Internet access expanded over 2021-2024 and cross-border parcel and express volumes have grown, suggesting increasing engagement with international e-commerce (see Table 18.9). Yet the share of adults buying online fell sharply, from 5.94 to 1.76 percent, against a Sub-Saharan African average that rose to 7 percent.[①] Business digital readiness also remains limited: Tanzania ranks 97th of 127 in the Network Readiness Index 2025, behind regional peers such as Kenya (77th). Tanzania's limited digital readiness means that cross-border e-commerce, a growing channel into the Chinese market, remains out of reach for many Tanzanian exporters.

① This decline coincided with a sharp contraction in mobile-money use following the introduction of a transaction levy in July 2021 (GSMA, 2023).

Table 18.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Tanzania

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	10,675	15,506
International parcels dispatched (total)	1,423	2,340
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (15+ age, %)	5.94	1.76
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	16.94
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	22.88	31.16

Sources: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Tanzania's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that underpin its export capacity. The professional talent base, which shapes the economy's longer-term capacity to move up value chains, is addressed within the factor endowment subsection.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

As of 2024, total working-age population (aged 15-64) was 37 million, or 54.4 percent of the total population (Sub-Saharan Africa average was 56 percent). The working-age population in total population share has remained broadly stable since 2000 (see Figure 18.3). The agricultural sector still absorbs most workers, 65.09 percent of total employment in 2024 (see Table 18.10).

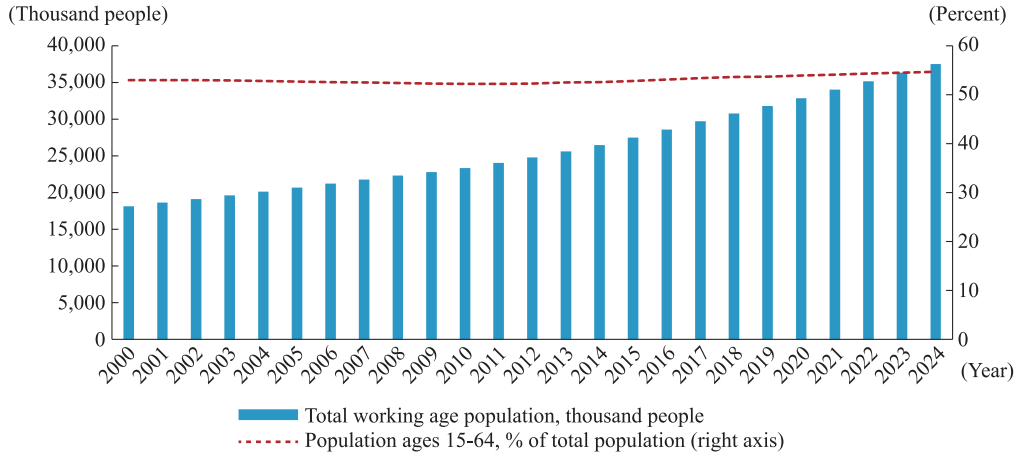


Figure 18.3 Total Working Age Population, Tanzania, 2000–2024

Source: World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Table 18.10 Industrial System Indicators, Tanzania, 2014–2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15 – 64, % of total population	52.29	52.53	52.82	53.07	53.25	53.41	53.61	53.84	54.05	54.23	54.42
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	66.83	66.43	65.98	65.57	65.14	64.68	65.79	65.92	65.58	65.16	65.09
Gross capital formation, % GDP	37.65	32.76	32.17	32.35	38.38	39.73	38.75	39.69	41.07	41.00	39.76
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	25.80	26.75	27.44	28.75	27.87	26.59	25.25	24.79	24.26	23.69	23.32
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	25.14	24.49	24.86	25.04	27.01	28.67	27.08	27.30	27.68	28.03	28.57
Services, value added, % of GDP	41.30	40.43	39.45	37.96	37.24	36.83	34.24	32.55	30.64	28.70	29.56
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	9.12	7.86	7.81	7.67	8.07	8.50	8.03	8.02	8.18	8.40	8.06

Continued

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	6.75	7.28	6.72	6.70	6.70	6.70	6.61	6.61	6.64	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	0.62	0.57	0.52	0.51	0.54	0.57	0.53	0.53	0.54	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry (including construction), % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Gross capital formation amounted to 39.8 percent of GDP in 2024, which was above the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 24.1 percent (world average 26.3 percent).

R&D spending is limited: R&D intensity (spending as share of GDP) was 0.51 percent in 2013 and is reported at a similar level in 2024,[①] against a world average of 2.6 percent. Tanzania's higher education system remains limited in scale. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education stood at 4.0 percent in 2024, well below the Sub-Saharan African (9.3 percent) and world (43.2 percent) averages (Figure 18.4). Within that low base, STEM graduates rose from 9.3 percent to 13.7 percent of tertiary graduates between 2021 and 2024, while Business, Administration and Law graduates accounted for 27.2 percent in 2024.

Low R&D investment and a limited pool of skilled graduates may constrain Tanzania's capacity to export more value-added products along the value-chain and to meet the quality and standards requirements by Chinese importers.

① UNESCO.

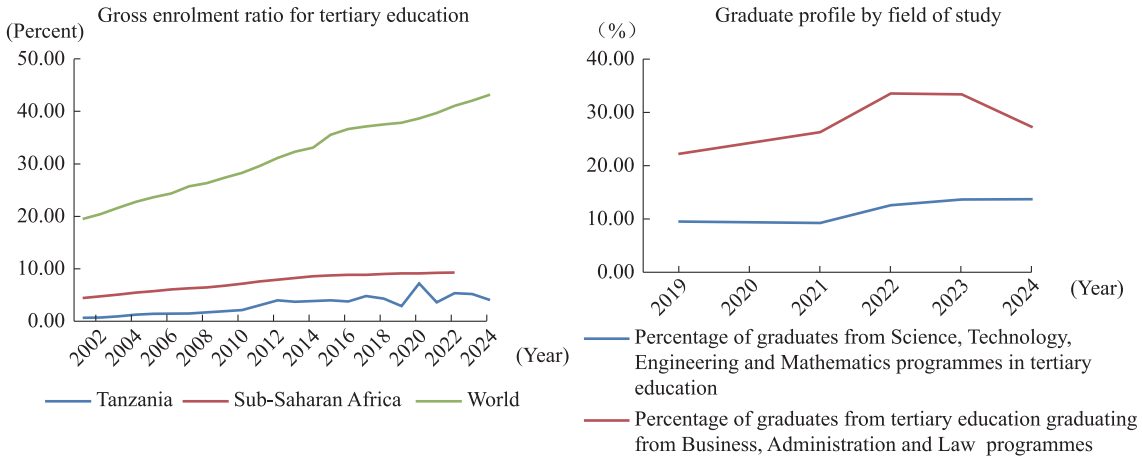


Figure 18.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Tanzania (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

Note: Enrolment ratio data not available for Tanzania for 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2014. Graduate profile data not available for 2020. Lines connect available data points only.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 23.3 percent of value added, industry for 28.6 percent and services for 29.6 percent of GDP, against Sub-Saharan Africa averages of 18, 25.3 and 49.6 percent respectively (see Figure 18.5). The industrial sector's share has expanded since 2001, although it reflects growth in mining and construction rather than manufacturing, whose share of GDP declined over the same period.

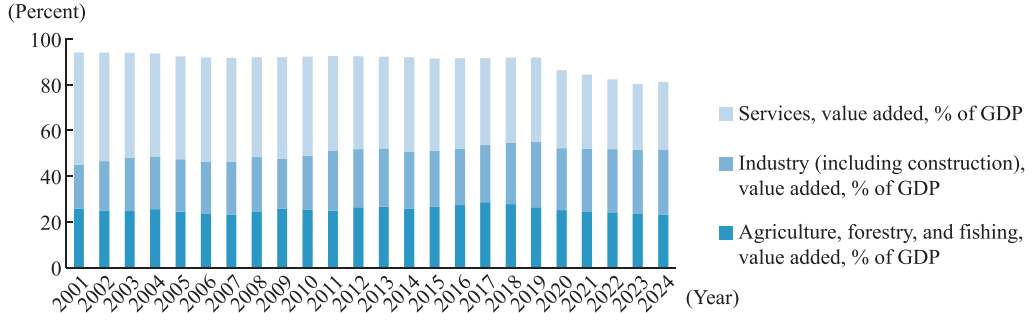


Figure 18.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Tanzania, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry includes mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas. Shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

The concentration of employment in agriculture (65 percent of total in 2024) suggests that structural transformation remains at an early stage, which may constrain the range and sophistication of goods Tanzania can export.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Value-added by manufacturing decreased from 9.9 percent of GDP in 2001 to 8.06 percent of GDP in 2024. This is below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 10 percent and world average of 15 percent in 2024. The share of medium- and high-tech Industry in manufacturing value added was 6.64 percent in 2022. Estimated share of medium- and high-technology manufacturing was 0.54 percent of GDP in 2022 (see Table 18.10).

The low and declining share of manufacturing in GDP, combined with minimal medium and high-tech content, may limit Tanzania's ability to export processed or value-added goods to China.

Tanzania's overall agricultural production capacity remains relatively low, with limited capacity for large-scale supply. The agricultural sector is dominated by smallholder farming and lacks modern large-scale crop and livestock production bases, with no standardized, large-scale supply system yet in place. The quality of agricultural products is inconsistent, with uneven quality control. Packaging is often basic in design, and some products lack essential information such as traceability details, place of origin and shelf life.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews Tanzania's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations, and

foreign investment conditions.

(I) Trade Openness

Tanzania's openness to trade (trade to GDP ratio) is in the lower range of smaller economies, at 40.1 percent in 2024 compared with Sub-Saharan Africa (56.6 percent) (UNCTADstat). Its Openness Indicator of 0.61 in 2024 places it 122nd out of 129 economies, below both the regional and world average (see Figure 18.6).

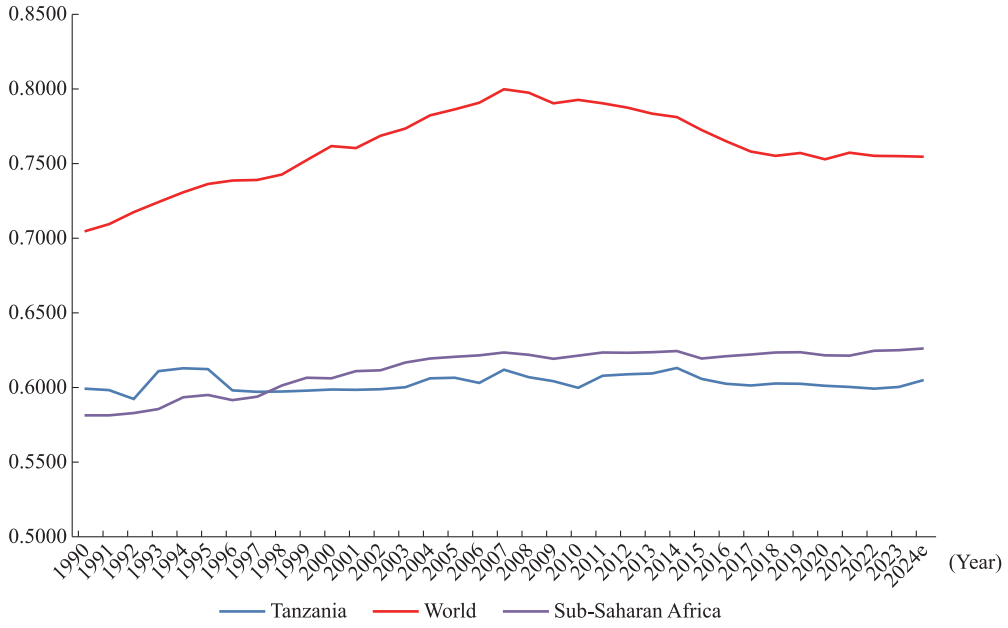


Figure 18.6 Tanzania's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

As founding WTO member, Tanzania has, according to its latest Trade Policy Review (2019), advanced regional integration and trade facilitation, though trade costs remain elevated because of regulatory, administrative and infrastructure barriers. Tanzania belongs to four overlapping regional trade agreements① (below the world

① The African Continental Free Trade Area, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community, and the East African Community (EAC).

average of 12) and has no bilateral agreements; in 2024 these partners accounted for about 45 percent of its exports. As a least-developed country (LDC), Tanzania also benefits from non-reciprocal preferences granted by 25 economies, including China's DFQF, the European Union's EBA and the United States' AGOA. Tanzania has achieved strong utilization of Duty-Free market access, with preference utilization under the European Union's initiative exceeding 95 percent since 2015.① This performance reflects ongoing trade facilitation and digitalization reforms, including the Tanzania Electronic Single Window System and customs modernization efforts.

Tanzania has sustained a decade-long upward trajectory in trade facilitation implementation, advancing to 80.6 percent in 2025 outperforming the Eastern Africa average across all five categories (see Table 18.11). Nonetheless, progress has been uneven: cross-border paperless trade remains the weakest dimension, with electronic permits and certificates of origin only partly implemented and no e-commerce facilitation measures yet in place. This raises transaction costs for exporters.

Table 18.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Tanzania

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	46.67	50.00	33.33	40.74	0.00	35.48
2021	66.67	50.00	55.56	44.44	22.22	46.24
2025	93.33	91.67	77.78	81.48	55.56	80.65

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

Complying with export requirements takes 8 days at a cost equivalent to 9 percent of the value of goods exported, indicating that procedural frictions remain material

① GSP Hub.

despite headline reform progress. ①

With duty-free access to the Chinese market now in place, continued efforts in Tanzania to reduce procedural barriers could enhance its export competitiveness in that market.

Tanzania's tariff system has been characterised by a relatively high and stable tariff level since 2000, with lower tariffs on regional imports. The simple average applied tariff rate is 14.2 percent, compared with a world average of 7.4 percent. Trade weighted applied rates are lower, showing that imports are concentrated in relatively lower tariff lines. The latter does not hold for agriculture, where sensitive sectors are more heavily protected (see Table 18.12).

As a member of the EAC, Tanzania applies the Common External Tariff. This reinforces regional integration and predictability, limiting unilateral tariff changes.

Table 18.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Tanzania, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	14.2	12.5	25
Trade weighted av.	10.6	7.7	47.7

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2026).

Compared with other LDCs, Tanzania applies more non-tariff measures (NTMs) per agri-food product across all measure types, indicating both regulatory complexity (technical NTMs) and trade restrictiveness (non-technical NTMs). For technical measures, the country is on par with non-LDC developing countries and with regard to non-technical and export measures it exceeds all other groups (see Figure 18.7). Figure 18.8 leads to the same conclusions in the manufacturing sector.

① World Bank (2025a).

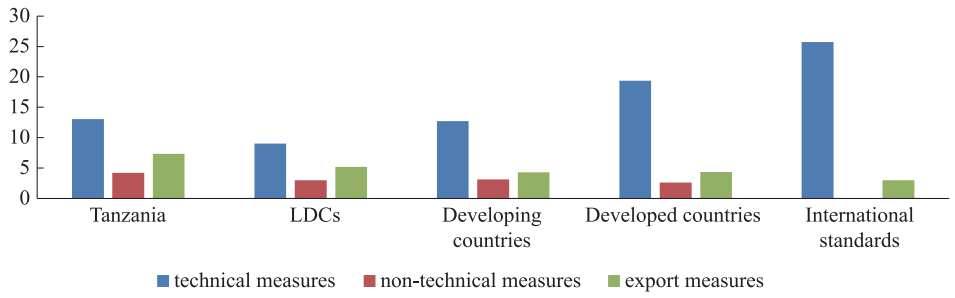


Figure 18.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Tanzania

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Tanzania data is from 2022.

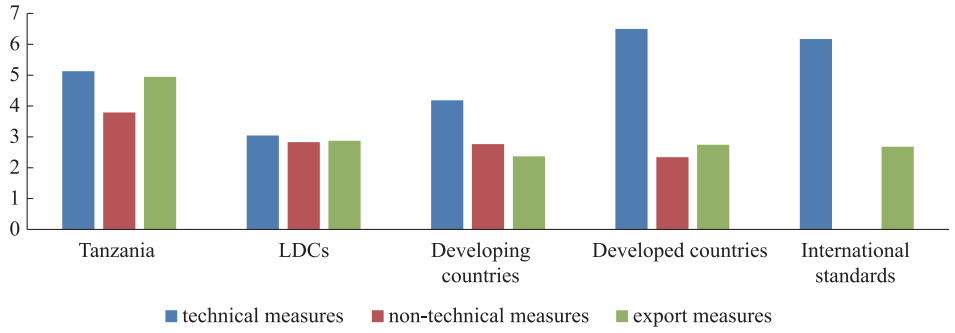


Figure 18.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Tanzania

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Tanzania data is from 2022.

The regulatory similarity index (see Figure 18.9) measures the relative similarity of SPS and TBT between different countries and vis-à-vis international standards. A higher regulatory similarity tends to facilitate trade. Tanzania scores among the lowest in the global sample for manufacturing, being among the 10 percent of countries with the lowest similarity to the world average and China. In the agri-food sector, Tanzania exhibits only minimal similarity to the world average and China, and scores lowest for similarity with international standards. This indicates low regulatory capacity and higher

trade costs. However, similarity scores in Figure 18.9 are based on 2022 data. Since then, Tanzania's SPS and TBT notifications to the WTO have risen sharply (see Figure 18.10), a sign of strengthening regulatory activity and transparency. The 2022 scores may therefore understate Tanzania's current regulatory alignment.

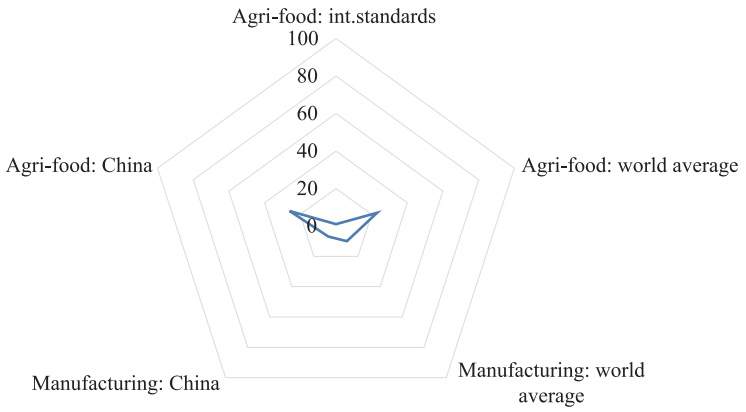


Figure 18.9 Tanzania's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Tanzania data is 2022; data for China 2024.

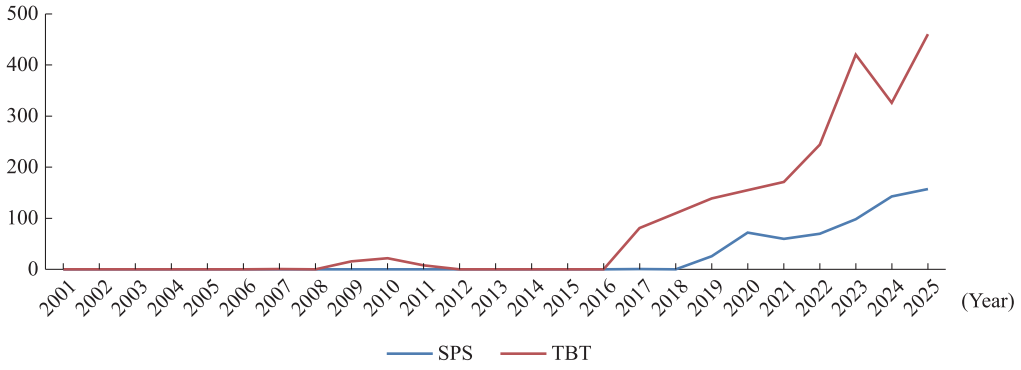


Figure 18.10 Tanzania's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001–2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

Tanzania's limited regulatory similarity in agri-food reflects underlying constraints in its SPS capacity. Regulatory quality is moderate (46.4), while Tanzania maintains

76 accredited laboratories (7th among 41 African countries). Border implementation is advancing through the gradual adoption of electronic SPS certification and ePhyto systems. ISO management-system certification remains low by global standards, with Tanzania ranking 104th for ISO 9001 and 88th for ISO 22000 implementation.

Tanzania maintains export restrictions on natural resources, serving three objectives: promoting domestic value addition (restrictions on raw minerals, round logs, green-leaf tobacco and raw hides and skins); environmental and responsible-sourcing goals (prohibitions on plastic bags and charcoal and certification for conflict minerals); and food and energy security (export permits for staple crops and natural gas).[①] This indicates a will to increase value-addition of primary products.

Low alignment with Chinese and international standards can raise compliance costs for Tanzanian exporters, though increased notification activity may signal gradual improvements.

The Chinese Embassy in Tanzania and Tanzania's Ministry of Industry and Trade jointly organized policy briefings and training sessions on the "Zero Tariffs, Shared Opportunities" initiative. Tanzania has participated in the China International Import Expo (CIIE) for eight consecutive years, and the Chinese Embassy in Tanzania has organized send-off events for Tanzanian exhibits to the CIIE to encourage greater participation by Tanzanian exhibitors. China has also invited Tanzanian officials, exporters and other stakeholders to China to participate in training on zero-tariff policies, quality testing and other relevant areas, helping them better understand the requirements of the Chinese market, trade procedures, packaging and certification, and supporting the expansion of Tanzanian exports to China.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Over the past two decades, Tanzania has progressively liberalized its capital

① UNCTAD (2026c).

account, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) declining from 0.86 in 2001 to approximately 0.60 in recent years. The level of restrictiveness remains higher than the average for low-income countries, around 0.46. The most recent reforms eased restrictions on both capital inflows and outflows.

The United States dollar remains the principal settlement currency for foreign trade, with few exceptions including the Chinese yuan. Tanzania has actively promoted the use of local currencies within Africa.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) plays an important but not dominant role. FDI inflows increased modestly to approximately USD 1.7 billion in 2025, from USD 1.66 billion in 2024. The stock of inward FDI rose to about USD 23.4 billion, 27 percent of GDP, below the world average of 51 percent. Investment is concentrated in mining, manufacturing, finance, telecommunications and infrastructure. Recent reforms have supported a gradual increase in inflows despite a generally weak global investment climate. ①

Although the capital account has been liberalizing, it remains more restrictive than in comparable economies, which can constrain the foreign investment and financing that capital-intensive export sectors need to expand.

Ⅴ. Conclusion

Tanzania's trade relationship with China has expanded markedly, with exports rising from about USD 3 million in 2001 to roughly USD 750 million in 2025. Over this period, China moved from Tanzania's 36th largest export market to its 5th largest. This points to a substantial deepening of bilateral trade, but it also masks a trade relationship that remains narrow and exposed to volatility. Exports to China are still

① UNCTAD (2026d).

centered on a limited set of primary and resource-based products, especially copper, oil seeds, minerals, fish and other commodity-based goods. While recent export growth has partly reflected diversification into new products, it has been driven mainly by the expansion of established export flows. The trade complementarity remains limited. The main export potential therefore lies in consolidating and scaling existing areas of competitiveness, while removing the obstacles that prevent Tanzania from diversifying into a wider range of products for the Chinese market.

For Tanzania, constraints include domestic conditions that determine whether firms can compete reliably and at scale. Long container dwell times, electricity supply challenges and very limited fixed-broadband access continue to raise costs, limit capacity and weaken reliability for exporters. Despite significant progress on trade facilitation and financial openness, firms still face avoidable costs linked to weak cross-border paperless trade and a relatively restrictive financial and foreign investment regime. Tanzania will also need stronger quality and compliance infrastructure, including accredited laboratories, inspection services, cold-chain systems, residue testing, quality-control systems and digital documentation linked to Chinese requirements, to reduce uncertainty for firms and increase confidence among importers. The structural regulatory similarity of Tanzania with China and international standards is low, raising compliance costs. The productive base also remains narrow, with limited manufacturing capacity, low medium- and high-technology activity, a small skilled-labour pool and weak research capacity.

Overall, the challenge for Tanzania is to make export flows more scalable, competitive and resilient. The report shows that Tanzania is increasingly positioned in products relevant to Chinese demand, but this potential will translate into sustained export growth only if firms can supply consistently, meet quality requirements and manage export procedures at lower cost. Continued progress on supply capacity, infrastructure, trade facilitation and regulatory compliance will therefore be decisive.

These reforms would help established exporters expand existing flows, strengthen their foothold in the Chinese market and reduce the volatility associated with a narrow export base.

Looking into the future, the following measures are recommended. First, tap the potential of high-quality Tanzanian agricultural products for export to China by strengthening promotion, upgrading packaging and improving quality control. Second, promote the development of agricultural value chains by adding value through processing activities such as cashew shelling and cocoa processing, thereby increasing output while creating more local employment opportunities. Third, establish efficient supplier-buyer matchmaking platforms to facilitate direct connections between Tanzanian suppliers and Chinese buyers, thereby translating the benefits of zero-tariff policies into tangible gains in commercial contracts and export earnings.

Chapter XIX

Thailand

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses Thailand's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition, and revealed comparative advantage. It compares Thailand's exports to China with its overall export profile and with China's import demand to identify where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has shifted, and which product groups offer the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, Thailand's total goods exports expanded substantially, rising from about USD 68 billion in 2001 to roughly USD 340 billion in 2025 (see Figure 19.1). Exports to China grew even faster, increasing ninefold from about USD 4.7 billion to almost USD 50 billion over the same period. China has become a more important destination for Thai merchandise exports, rising from 4th place in 2001 to 3rd in 2025. Growth was particularly strong during the 2000s and early 2010s, accelerated again after 2017, and reached a peak in 2022 before moderating during 2023–2025. This pattern suggests that Thailand's export relationship with China remains

significant, while the recent slowdown appears more closely linked to changes in Chinese import demand than to a broad deterioration in Thailand's overall export competitiveness.

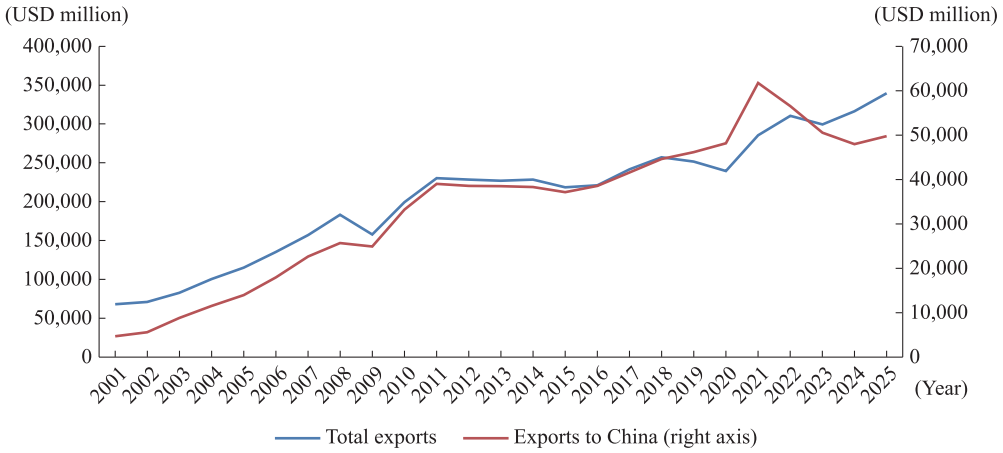


Figure 19.1 Thailand Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

Thailand's exports to China have remained relatively intensive. The Trade Intensity Index stayed above unity throughout the period, indicating that China has been a more important destination for Thai exports than China's share of global imports alone would imply (see Figure 19.2). However, trade intensity has generally declined from the higher levels recorded in the 2000s. The Trade Complementarity Index has also trended downward, suggesting that Thailand's export basket has become less closely aligned with the composition of China's import demand. The central message is therefore mixed: Thailand continues to trade with China more intensively than the global benchmark would suggest, but this relationship appears to rest on a narrower and gradually less complementary set of products.

A key feature of Thailand's global export structure is its high degree of diversification. Exports to China are somewhat more concentrated than Thailand's overall exports, but they remain very diversified compared with more resource-

dependent export relationships (see Table 19.1). Moreover, the trade concentration index for exports to China declined from 0.06 in 2009–2012 to 0.03 in 2020–2025, indicating progressive diversification into a wider export basket.

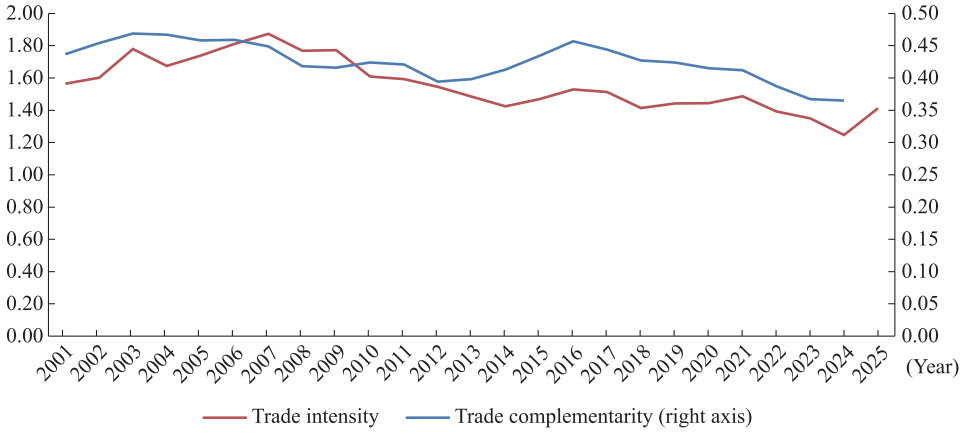


Figure 19.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between Thailand Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Table 19.1 Thailand Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.04	0.06	0.03	0.03
Overall exports	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, Thailand's total export basket in 2024 was split mainly between final goods and intermediate products (see Table 19.2). Final goods accounted for 51 percent of total exports, intermediate products for 41 percent, and primary products for 8 percent. Manufacturing and natural-resource products represented 86 percent of total exports, while agriculture accounted for 14 percent.

Exports to China show a somewhat different profile. Intermediate products were slightly more important, at 44 percent, while final goods accounted for 42 percent and primary products for 14 percent. Agriculture also played a larger role in exports to China than in Thailand's global export basket, accounting for 22 percent of the total. The China-facing basket therefore combines Thailand's role in regional manufacturing value chains with sizeable agricultural and resource-related exports.

Table 19.2 **Thailand Export Structure, 2024** Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	12	2	0	14
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS 25-99)	39	39	8	86
Overall, by stage of processing	51	41	8	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	19	2	1	22
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS 25-99)	23	42	13	78
Overall, by stage of processing	42	44	14	100

Source: UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, Thailand's exports to China are diversified across a range of manufacturing, agricultural, and resource-based sectors, but the leading chapters still account for most exports (see Table 19.3). In 2025, machinery and mechanical appliances and electrical machinery were the two largest categories, each accounting for about 17 percent of exports to China. Rubber and

articles thereof and edible fruit and nuts followed, each at 12 percent, while copper and articles thereof accounted for 7 percent. Plastics, optical and medical instruments, aluminum, wood, and edible vegetables made up most of the remaining leading sectors. This composition reflects Thailand's dual role as both a manufacturing hub integrated into Asian production networks and a supplier of agricultural, rubber-based, and selected resource-related products.

Table 19.3 Thailand Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
84	Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	8,274.5	17	0.39	37	5	0	-4
85	Electrical Machinery & Equipment	8,227.6	17	0.11	31	1	5	-1
40	Rubber & Articles	6,142.2	12	0.34	32	21	-5	7
08	Edible Fruit & Nuts	6,045.9	12	0.46	23	36	18	11
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	3,622.8	7	0.59	1	58	14	41
39	Plastics & Articles	2,501.6	5	0.11	15	16	3	-7
90	Optical, Photographic, Medical Inst.	1,651.7	3	0.10	24	24	17	-5
76	Aluminum & Articles	1,342.5	3	0.64	3	0	16	82
44	Wood & Articles of Wood	1,286.7	3	0.73	15	36	3	1
07	Edible Vegetables	974.8	2	0.84	11	49	-11	9

Source: Based on UNComtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The table is compiled by HS 2-digit chapters in descending order of export value.

Recent sectoral dynamics have been uneven. Between 2019 and 2025, exports of rubber, edible fruit and nuts, copper, aluminum, wood, and edible vegetables expanded, with especially rapid growth in copper and aluminum. By contrast, machinery, electrical machinery, plastics, and optical and medical instruments declined over the same period. The overall pattern points to a process of rotation within Thailand's exports to China: several established manufacturing categories have weakened, while agricultural products, rubber, metals, and selected resource-based products have provided resilience and growth. This suggests that future export potential will depend both on sustaining Thailand's manufacturing competitiveness and on upgrading fast-growing agricultural and industrial-input sectors.

(Ⅱ) Export potential to China

Understanding whether Thailand's recent export performance in China reflects the expansion of existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of future potential. Table 19.4 shows that export growth between 2019 and 2025 was driven mainly by the intensive margin: 2,205 products exported in both years increased from USD 43.445 billion to USD 47.6152 billion, generating about USD 4.2 billion in additional exports. New products also made a meaningful contribution, adding USD 2.143 billion across 145 HS 6-digit lines. At the same time, 653 discontinued products reduced exports by USD 2.7155 billion. Overall, Thailand's export composition to China appears dynamic, with significant product entry and exit. The near-term priority is therefore to consolidate and upgrade existing product strengths, while reducing product churn and broadening the set of competitive exports to China.

Table 19.4 Thailand Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	2,205	43,445.0	47,615.2	4,170.2
Discontinued products	653	2,715.5	0.0	-2,715.5
New products (extensive margin)	145	0.0	2,143.0	2,143.0

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Thailand's revealed comparative advantage (RCA) indicators point to selective, but weakening, export competitiveness in China. At the aggregate level, the China import-weighted RCA declined from 1.2 in 2001-2008 to 1.0 in 2020-2025, while the China import growth-weighted RCA fell from 1.3 to 0.9 over the same period (see Table 19.5). Since values above unity indicate revealed comparative advantage, the recent values suggest that Thailand's overall export basket is now only marginally aligned with the products that dominate China's imports and less aligned with faster-growing segments of Chinese demand than it was in the 2000s. This aggregate weakening, however, masks clear sector-level strengths. Comparative advantage remains strong in rubber, edible fruit and nuts, machinery, electrical machinery, plastics, wood, edible vegetables, and copper. Optical and medical instruments and aluminum are closer to, or below, unity, indicating weaker relative competitiveness despite their presence among the leading export categories. Overall, the RCA evidence points to meaningful export competitiveness in selected agricultural, rubber-based, machinery, electronics, and industrial input sectors, but more limited broad-based alignment with China's evolving import basket.

Table 19.5 Thailand Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.0
China import growth-weighted	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.9
	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
84: Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5
85: Electrical Machinery & Equipment	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.3
40: Rubber & Articles Thereof	5.4	6.4	5.9	6.4
08: Edible Fruit & Nuts	0.8	1.0	1.5	3.4
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	0.6	0.5	0.8	1.3
39: Plastics & Articles Thereof	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.4
90: Optical, Photographic, Medical Inst.	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8
76: Aluminum & Articles Thereof	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9
44: Wood & Articles of Wood	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.4
07: Edible Vegetables	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.3

Source: UNCTAD Calculations based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the sector-level evidence, the Annex (Table Ⅸ) identifies more granular HS 4-digit export opportunities for Thailand in China. These opportunities fall into four groups. Core export products include areas where Thailand already has a strong presence in China and where further expansion would mainly involve scaling up existing flows, such as selected ores and concentrates, fresh fruit, recovered-paper pulp, sugars, starches, and rubber-based hygienic or pharmaceutical articles. Underexploited products include sectors where export capacity and Chinese demand are sizeable but current penetration remains more limited, such as feldspar, imitation jewellery, watch straps, electric transformers, and cellulose derivatives. Emerging

sectors include products where Thailand has export capacity but a relatively low share going to China, including recording media, antimony, fibre-cement products, sugar, and selected metals. Latent opportunities identify products where exports to China remain limited despite potential demand, including some garments sectors.

Thailand hopes to expand its agricultural exports to China and is concerned about the widening trade deficit with China.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how Thailand's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(Ⅰ) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

Thailand is a major manufacturing and export hub on the Gulf of Thailand. Its ports handled about 11.43 million TEUs in 2024, up from 8.66 million a decade earlier, an increase of about 32 percent.[①] Maritime connectivity links Thailand to 38 partner economies, above both the East Asia and Pacific average of 31.2 and the world average of 28.2 (see Table 19.6), while aviation connectivity, at 122.5 partner economies, is also above regional and world levels. Its Liner Shipping Connectivity Index rose by about 27 percent over the decade to 271.29 in 2025.[②] Container import dwell time of 4.0 days is below both the regional average of 5.8 and the world average of 7.9. The railway network, about 4,100 km long,[③] is being expanded through double-tracking and a planned Bangkok-Nong Khai high-speed link toward China.[④]

① UNCTAD (2026a).
② UNCTAD (2026a).
③ World Bank (2024b).
④ State Railway of Thailand.

Taken together, fast cargo handling, strong maritime and air connectivity and continued rail investment give Thai exporters efficient access to distant markets, including China.

Table 19.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in Thailand

Indicator	Thailand	East Asia & Pacific	World average
Container import dwell time (days)	4.0	5.8	7.9
Maritime partner economies	38	31.2	28.2
Aviation partner economies	122.5	108.4	91.5

Source: World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2024).

Note: Regional and world averages are unweighted figures calculated by UNCTAD and the World Bank.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Electricity supply is highly reliable. In 2025 only 13.2 percent of firms reported experiencing electrical outages, far below the regional and world averages and affected firms recorded just 0.1 outages in a typical month (see Table 19.7). Obtaining an electrical connection takes 7 days, well below the world average of 44.6.[①] Reliable, low-cost power is a clear competitive asset for Thai exporters, supporting consistent production for demanding markets such as China.

Table 19.7 Stability of Energy Supply in Thailand, 2025

Indicator	Thailand	East Asia & Pacific	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	13.2	42.7	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	0.1	1.6	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	4.9	18	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org.

① World Bank (2025b).

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Fixed-broadband subscriptions stood at 14.9 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, below the world average of 20.1 (see Table 19.8), but mobile infrastructure is among the most advanced in the region: LTE covers 99 percent of the population and 5G around 95 percent. ①

Table 19.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in Thailand

Indicator	Thailand	Asia & Pacific	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	14.9	17.5	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	99	64.1	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/.

Note: Data for Thailand and Asia and the Pacific from 2024; world from 2025.

Demand-side e-commerce is mature, with 46.6 percent of adults buying online in 2024, and cross-border express and parcel volumes rising sharply between 2021 and 2024 (see Table 19.9). Thailand ranks 44th of 127 economies in the Network Readiness Index 2025, with a business digital engagement sub-pillar score of 21.3. Deep e-commerce adoption, near-universal mobile coverage and strong logistics make cross-border digital trade with China a well-established channel for Thai exporters.

Table 19.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in Thailand

Indicator	2021	2024
International express items dispatched (total)	547,568	3,049,214
International parcels dispatched (total)	486,946	1,010,477
Used a mobile phone or the internet to buy something online (15+ age,%)	51.0	46.6

① ITU (2026).

Continued

Indicator	2021	2024
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	—	21.3
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	85.3	90.9

Sources: UPU Postal Statistics Database; World Bank, Global Findex Database 2025; ITU, World Telecommunication Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

China has promoted Thailand's competitive products through cross-border e-commerce and related trade fairs and exhibitions, and has established three online and offline Thai national pavilions on e-commerce platforms such as JD.com and in Shanghai's "Silk Road E-commerce" pilot zone.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines Thailand's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China.

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic Factor Endowment Structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 50.1 million, about 69.9 percent of the total (East Asia and Pacific average: 68.3 percent); it grew to 2013 and has since eased (see Figure 19.3). Agriculture employs 29 percent of workers, down from 42.8 percent in 2001.

Gross capital formation was 21.6 percent of GDP in 2024, below the East Asia and Pacific (34.7 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages; it has fallen since 2021 (28.7 percent) and was volatile over 2001-2024 (mean 24.9 percent), pointing to unstable investment with a downward tilt. R&D intensity rose over the long

term but fell after 2020 to 0.94 percent of GDP in 2023, below the regional (2.8 percent) and world (2.6 percent) averages, which may weaken Thailand's ability to compete in more innovation-intensive segments. ①



Figure 19.3 Total Working Age Population, Thailand, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Thailand's tertiary enrolment is moderate. The gross enrolment ratio was 49.1 percent in 2025, below the 2024 East Asia and Pacific average (63.3 percent) but above the world average (43.2 percent) (see Figure 19.4). STEM graduates accounted for a comparatively strong 30.5 percent of tertiary graduates in 2025, while business, administration and law graduates made up 33.0 percent.

A comparatively strong STEM orientation supports Thailand's export-oriented manufacturing, though R&D intensity below the world average may limit further upgrading into more innovation-intensive exports to China.

① UNESCO.

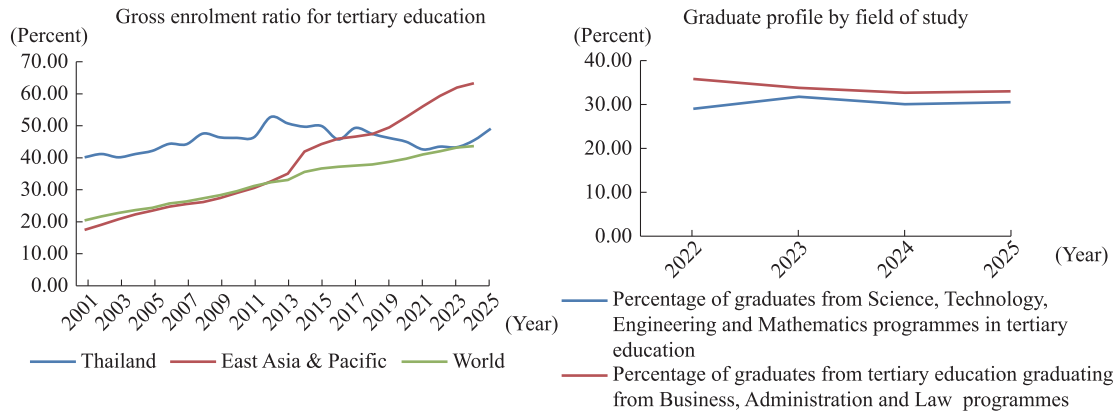


Figure 19.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, Thailand (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 8.7 percent of value added, industry for 32.1 percent and services for 59.2 percent of GDP (regional averages: 5.6 percent, 34.2 percent and 59.7 percent; see Figure 19.5). Agriculture's share was broadly stable; industry grew to 2010 then declined, while services moved in the opposite direction.

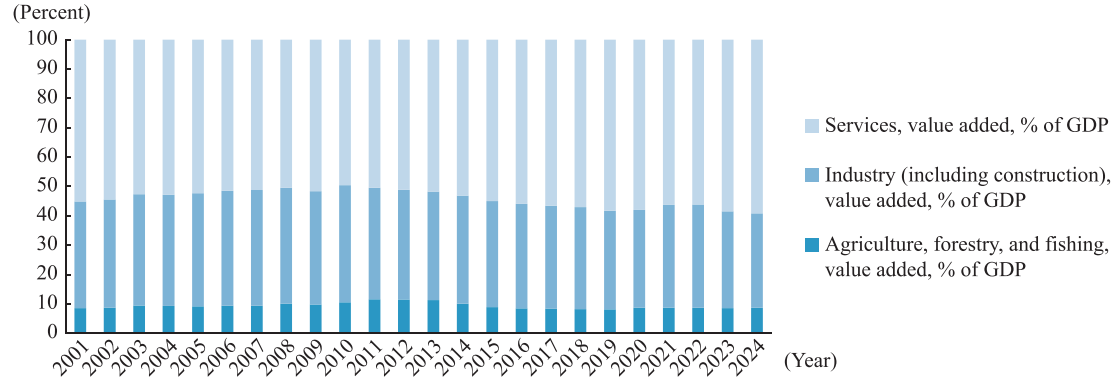


Figure 19.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, Thailand, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added eased from 27.8 percent of GDP in 2001 to 24.33 percent in 2024 (peaking around 2010), still above the regional (22.6 percent) and world (15 percent) averages. Medium- and high-tech industry rose from 37.9 percent to 41.36 percent of manufacturing value added over 2001-2022, lifting its estimated share of GDP from 10.5 percent to 11.18 percent (see Table 19.10).

Table 19.10 Industrial System Indicators, Thailand, 2014-2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15-64, % of total population	71.66	71.57	71.48	71.40	71.28	71.12	70.93	70.72	70.47	70.19	69.89
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	33.49	32.33	31.23	31.53	32.20	31.49	31.39	31.90	30.42	30.22	28.99
Gross capital formation, % GDP	23.92	22.36	21.11	22.93	25.22	23.81	23.76	28.67	27.86	22.46	21.58
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	10.09	8.87	8.48	8.41	8.20	8.13	8.70	8.69	8.72	8.56	8.71
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	36.76	36.18	35.59	35.02	34.74	33.59	33.29	35.03	35.12	32.98	32.14
Services, value added, % of GDP	53.15	54.95	55.94	56.57	57.06	58.28	58.01	56.28	56.16	58.46	59.15
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	27.57	27.37	27.14	27.01	26.71	25.62	25.56	27.15	27.02	24.98	24.33
Medium and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	41.36	41.36	40.13	41.36	41.36	41.36	41.36	41.36	41.36	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	11.40	11.32	10.89	11.17	11.05	10.60	10.57	11.23	11.18	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry (including construction), % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Overall, Thailand has relatively strong industrial export potential to China, supported by a sizeable export-oriented manufacturing base and a large medium- and high-tech segment (an estimated 11.2 percent of GDP in 2022). This is tempered by the recent fall in gross capital formation, a declining working-age population, R&D intensity below the world average, and structural risks. Escalating US-China trade tensions could also affect Thai manufacturers embedded in supply chains linked to Chinese exports to the US, limiting export-growth potential to China.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews Thailand's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(Ⅰ) Trade Openness

Thailand's openness to trade (trade to GDP ratio) is high, at 136.6 percent in 2024, well above the 60.6 percent average for the developing economies of Asia and Oceania and the world average of 57.2 percent.[①] Despite this, its broader Openness Indicator was 0.67 in 2024 (see Figure 19.6), placing it 77th out of 129 economies. The index moved through two phases: Thailand's rank fell from 41st to 92nd by 2009, then recovered, though it stayed below the East Asia and Pacific average of 0.76. Its latest score is about 11 percent below the world average.

① UNCTAD (2026b).

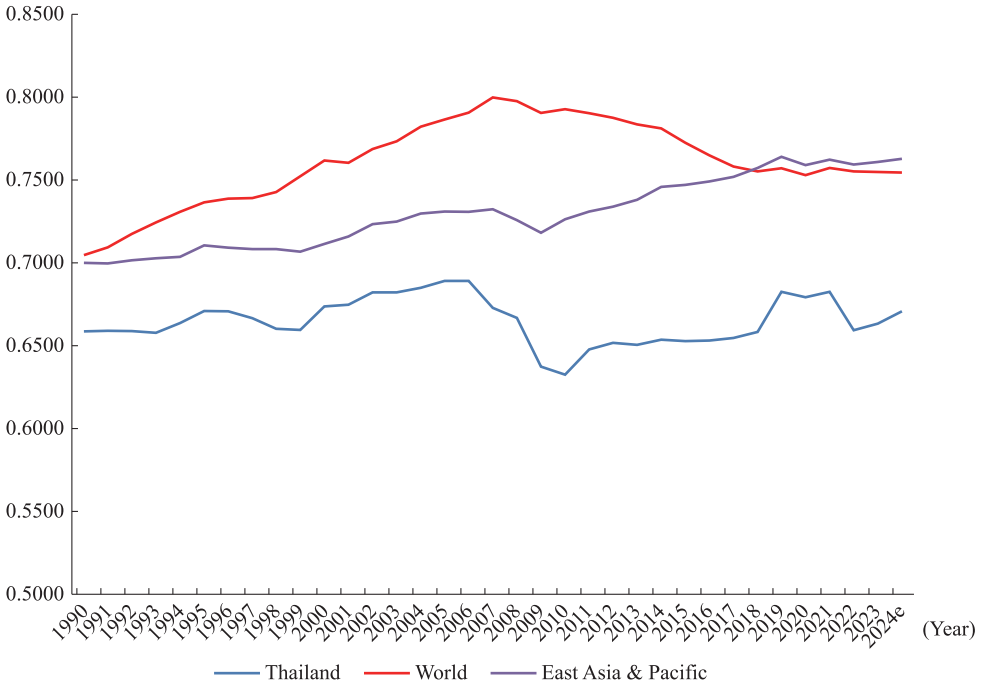


Figure 19.6 Thailand's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

Thailand belongs to 12 overlapping trade agreements (excluding three partial scope agreements), in line with the world average of 12: as an ASEAN member it joins the bloc's regional agreements, while six are bilateral, including two partial-scope arrangements with neighbours and two with China's mainland and Hong Kong SAR of China. ①

Thailand is no longer eligible for the major GSP schemes of Canada, the European Union, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States; utilization of its preferential agreement with Japan reaches about 86 percent over the 2023-2025 period, broadly unchanged from a decade ago. ②

Thailand performs strongly on trade facilitation, its implementation rate rising from

① WTO.

② UNCTAD (2026b).

69.89 percent in 2015 to 88.17 percent in 2025, well above the South-East Asia average of 80.3 percent (see Table 19.11). It fully implements Formalities and scores highly on transparency (93.33 percent), paperless trade (88.89 percent) and cross-border paperless trade (77.78 percent), all above the regional average; institutional Arrangement and cooperation (66.67 percent) is least developed. These largely paperless procedures support Thai competitiveness in distant markets, including China, under the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area.

Table 19.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in Thailand

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2015	73.33	79.17	44.44	85.19	44.44	69.89
2021	93.33	100	44.44	88.89	72.22	84.95
2025	93.33	100	66.67	88.89	77.78	88.17

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

Thailand's tariff regime has undergone gradual liberalization since 2001, when tariffs averaged above 16 percent; by 2025 the simple average had declined to about 9.9 percent. Sectoral differences nonetheless remain very large: agriculture is highly protected, with a simple average of 28.2 percent and a trade-weighted rate of 36.6 percent, while industrial tariffs are relatively low (see Table 19.12).

Table 19.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, Thailand, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	9.9	7.0	28.3
Trade weighted av.	7.4	5.5	35.8

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2026).

Thailand applies more non-tariff measures (NTMs) per agri-food product than other developing countries and than the developed-country average (see Figure 19.7); heavy use of technical measures reflects an advanced regulatory system, while above-average non-technical and export measures point to a more interventionist policy. In manufacturing, technical measures are very high, far above the developed-country average (see Figure 19.8), and non-technical and export measures are also above average, suggesting over-regulation that adds to trade costs.

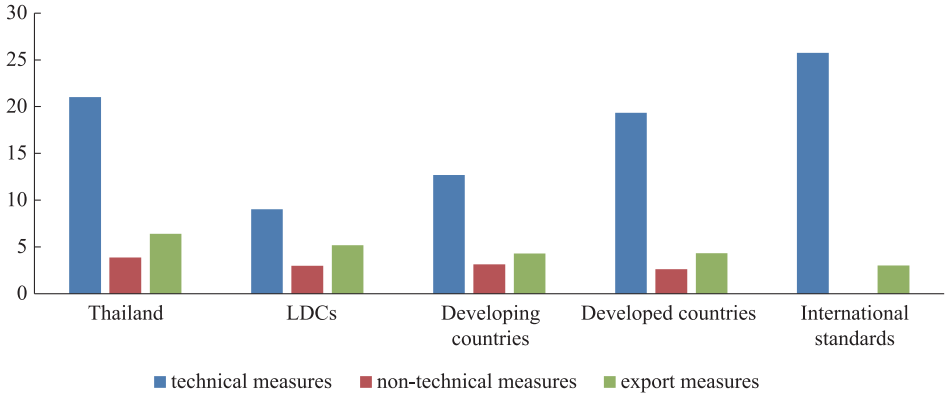


Figure 19.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Thailand

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Thailand data is from 2024

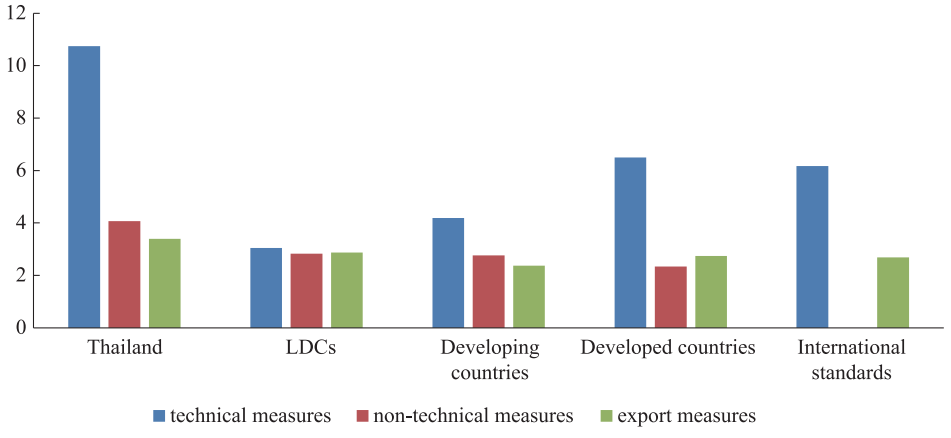


Figure 19.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, Thailand

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Thailand data is from 2024.

The regulatory similarity index measures how closely countries' SPS and TBT measures align with international standards (see Figure 19.9). Thailand's alignment with agri-food international standards is among the highest in the world, and its similarity with China, in both agri-food and manufacturing, is remarkably high, facilitating trade with China and keeping costs low. Similarity with the rest of the world is comparatively low.

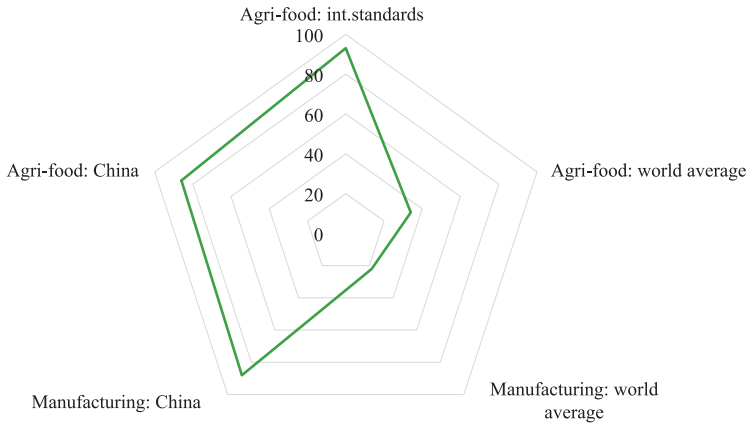


Figure 19.9 Thailand's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: Thailand data is from 2024; data for China from 2024.

Figure 19.10 shows that Thailand is actively promoting regulatory transparency through WTO notifications. Relatively low numbers of SPS notifications before 2019 may be due to adherence to international standards, which do not need to be notified. The spike of notifications since 2021 is explained by measures taken against the import of specific animal-borne diseases such as avian influenza and swine fever.

Thailand exhibits strong SPS capacity, underpinned by extensive technical infrastructure and mature regulatory systems. Regulatory quality is relatively high (56.5), and the country maintains 1,630 accredited laboratories, ranking 5th among 18 East Asia and Pacific countries. QI4SD indicators show a perfect accreditation score

(100) and moderate conformity-assessment capacity (27.4). Border implementation continues to advance through participation in the ePhyto Hub, although electronic SPS certification remains only partially implemented. ① ISO management-system certification is well developed: 12,149 ISO 9001 and 575 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 18th and 19th worldwide. ②

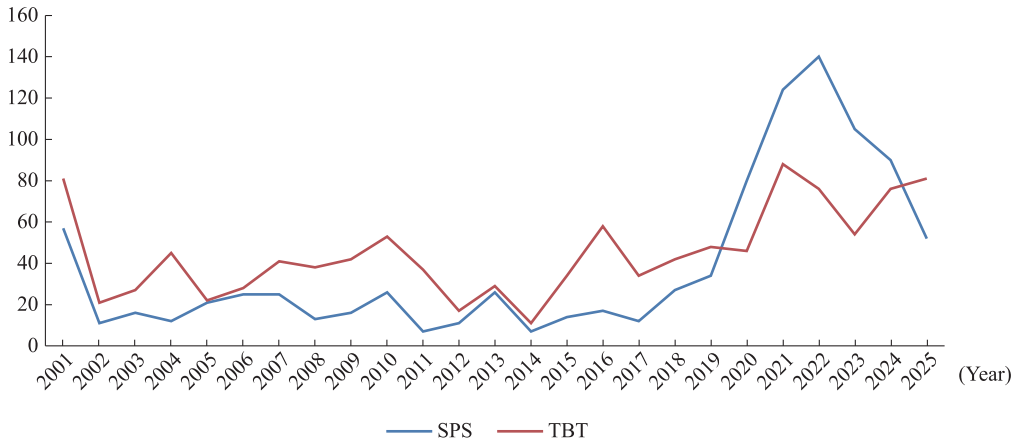


Figure 19.10 Thailand's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

Thailand maintains export restrictions across several product groups. For feed security, soybean-meal exports require licensing. To retain domestic supply and add value, it sets a minimum export price on raw gypsum (a commodity it supplies heavily), licenses 14 minerals, and bans exports of unrefined gold and coal. For conservation, it prohibits exports of Siamese rosewood and natural sand, licenses elephant exports, applies export duties on certain logs and raw hides and skins, and requires certification for wooden charcoal. In energy, temporary bans and permits for

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; SPS notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

fuels and crude palm oil protect domestic supply during Middle East disruptions, while diesel exports within the contiguous zone require licences to curb smuggling and tax evasion.

High alignment with Chinese and international standards keeps compliance costs low for Thai exporters, reinforcing their preferential access to the Chinese market under the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area.

On July 9, 2026, the Ministry of Commerce of China, together with Thailand's Ministry of Commerce and the Chinese Embassy in Thailand, held a promotional event for the Ninth China International Import Expo (CIIE) and a Thailand-focused "Export to China" event in Thailand. The event highlighted China's policy position of actively expanding voluntary opening-up and promoting balanced trade. More than 200 representatives from Chinese and Thai enterprises, industry and business associations, and government agencies attended the event and reached preliminary purchase agreements.

China has actively responded to Thailand's concerns by inviting Thailand to serve as the Guest Country of Honor at the Eighth CIIE in 2025 and as the featured country of the 2026 "Export to China" initiative. China has also welcomed Thailand's efforts to promote its competitive products to the Chinese market through platforms such as the CIIE and the China-ASEAN Expo, with a view to expanding the scale of its exports to China.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Thailand's capital account has become moderately less restrictive, with the Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) declining from 0.58 in 2001 to about 0.50, though it remains above the upper-middle-income average (0.33).[①] The

① IMF.

United States dollar (USD) continues to dominate export invoicing, accounting for about 75 percent of exports in 2024, while the Thai baht's share has risen to 17 percent from 5 percent in 2007. Although the USD also dominates Thailand's trade with China, the use of the Chinese yuan (RMB) has gradually increased, reflecting its growing role in bilateral trade. ①

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is an important component of Thailand's export-oriented economy. FDI inflows reached approximately USD 19.1 billion in 2025, while inward FDI stock increased to USD 381.5 billion, equivalent to 70 percent of GDP, well above the world average. Investment is concentrated in automotive production, electronics, digital industries, chemicals and advanced manufacturing. Overall, electronics, electric vehicles and supply-chain diversification continue to support investment across Southeast Asia. ②

V. Conclusion

Thailand's export relationship with China has expanded strongly over the past two decades and China remains one of Thailand's most important export markets. Exports rose from about USD 5 billion in 2001 to almost USD 50 billion in 2025. China moved from Thailand's 4th-largest export destination to its 3rd-largest. Growth peaked in 2022 before slowing down, suggesting that the recent slowdown is linked more to shifts in Chinese demand than to a broad weakening of Thailand's export capacity. Thailand's exports to China remain relatively diversified, combining machinery and electrical equipment, agricultural products, metals, plastics and rubber, precision instruments, and forestry products. Recent performance points to some rotation in the export basket, with several manufacturing sectors weakening while agricultural

① Chaeng-lum, Nookhwun and Pattararangrong (2026).

② UNCTAD (2026d).

products, metals, and resource-based products have continued to grow.

The analysis identifies several factors that support Thailand's potential to increase exports to China. Thailand is a major manufacturing and export hub, with strong maritime and air connectivity, efficient cargo handling and continued rail investment. Electricity supply is reliable, while mobile coverage, e-commerce adoption and cross-border parcel flows provide useful digital channels for exporters. Thailand also benefits from the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area, strong trade facilitation performance and high regulatory similarity with China, which can help reduce Thailand compliance costs. However, investment has slowed, the working-age population is declining, research and development intensity remains below regional and world averages, and relatively extensive non-tariff measures may add to trade costs.

Overall, Thailand has a strong and relatively diversified export position in China, supported by its manufacturing base, logistics connectivity, reliable power supply and regulatory alignment. The main challenge is to sustain manufacturing competitiveness while upgrading fast-growing agricultural, rubber-based and industrial-input sectors. The strongest near-term opportunities are likely to come from scaling existing strengths in mineral products, agri-food products, and rubber products, while expanding into industrial minerals, manufactured goods, including electrical and electronic products, chemical products, and textiles and apparel.

Thailand, as the ASEAN-side Chair for the negotiations on Version 3.0 of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA 3.0), is encouraged to continue playing a constructive role in advancing the early entry into force and implementation of the Protocol, and to expedite the translation of the Protocol's preferential rules into tangible benefits for regional development.

Chapter XX

United Kingdom

Ⅰ. Export Performance and Potential

This section assesses the United Kingdom's export performance and export potential to China by examining bilateral export flows, trade intensity, product diversification, sectoral composition, and revealed comparative advantage. It compares the United Kingdom's exports to China with both its overall export profile and China's import demand to identify areas where bilateral trade has expanded, where recent performance has weakened, and which product groups present the strongest opportunities for future export growth.

(Ⅰ) Export Performance

Over the past two decades, the United Kingdom's total goods exports expanded substantially, rising from roughly USD 270 billion in 2001 to more than USD 550 billion in 2025 (see Figure 20.1). Exports to China grew even faster in percentage terms, increasing from around USD 3 billion in 2001 to about USD 19 billion in 2025. China became a much more important destination for United Kingdom merchandise exports, rising from the United Kingdom's 17th-largest export market in 2001 to its 3rd-largest in 2025. However, this growth has not been linear. Exports to China

expanded rapidly during the 2000s and early 2010s, reached high levels in 2014 and again in 2018 – 2019, peaked in 2021, and then declined. This pattern is more consistent with shifts in the composition of China's import demand and sector-specific changes in the competitiveness of the United Kingdom than with a generalized loss of its manufacturing export capacity.

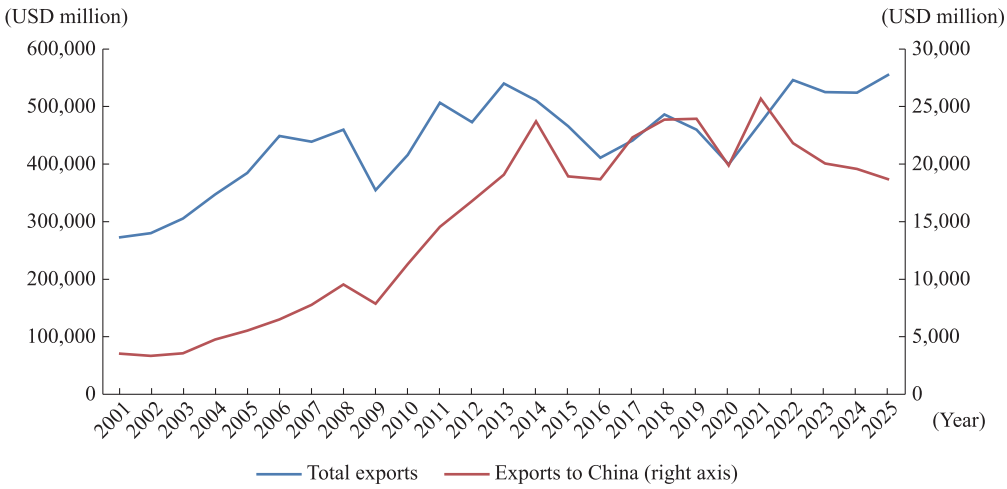


Figure 20.1 United Kingdom Total Exports and Exports to China, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UNCTADstat and China National Statistics.

Although the United Kingdom's exports to China remain far larger than in 2001, the nature of the bilateral export relationship has changed over time. The Trade Intensity Index rose markedly after the mid-2010s and reached its highest levels in the most recent period, indicating that China has become a more intensive destination for United Kingdom exports relative to China's role in global imports. By contrast, the Trade Complementarity Index has gradually declined, suggesting that the United Kingdom's overall export basket has become less aligned with the composition of China's import demand (see Figure 20.2). The central message is therefore mixed: the United Kingdom trades with China more intensively than the global benchmark would imply, but this relationship appears to rely on a narrower and less structurally complementary set of products rather than on broad-based export alignment.

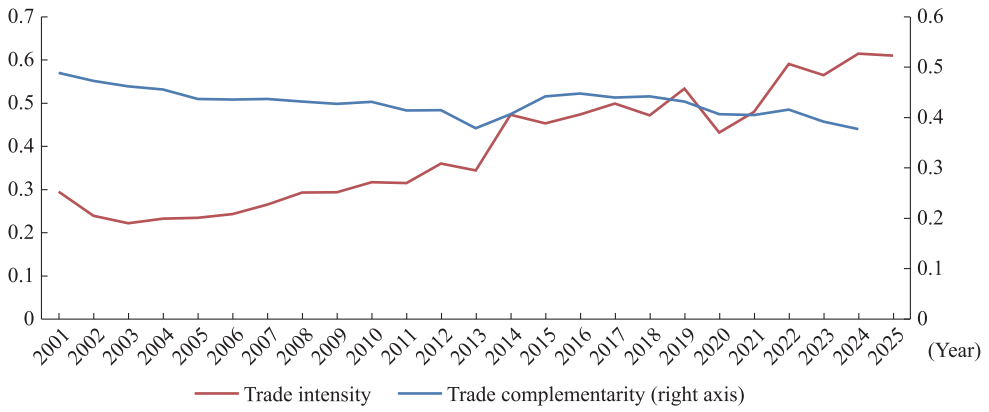


Figure 20.2 Trade Complementarity and Intensity Between United Kingdom Exports and China Imports, 2001–2025

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

A key feature of the United Kingdom's global export structure is its diversification. However, exports to China have become increasingly concentrated. The trade concentration index for exports to China rose from 0.01 in 2001–2008 to 0.10 in 2020–2025, while the index for overall exports remained close to 0.01 throughout the period (see Table 20.1). This confirms that the China relationship depends on a narrower group of competitive products than the United Kingdom's global export portfolio.

Table 20.1 United Kingdom Export Diversification Trends

	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (annual average over the period)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Exports to China	0.01	0.03	0.07	0.10
Overall exports	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: The index is calculated at the HS 6-digit level.

Looking beyond aggregate indices, the United Kingdom's total export basket in 2024 was split mainly between intermediate inputs and final goods (see Table 20.2).

Intermediate products accounted for 46 percent of total exports, final goods for 42 percent, and primary products for 12 percent. Exports to China show a different profile. Final goods represented 57 percent of United Kingdom exports to China, while intermediate products accounted for only 26 percent and primary products for 17 percent. Agriculture played a limited role in both baskets, at 8 percent of total exports and 6 percent of exports to China. The China-facing basket is therefore more tilted toward final manufactured goods and selected primary or resource-based products, rather than the intermediate-input profile that characterizes United Kingdom exports to the world.

Table 20.2 United Kingdom Export Structure, 2024 Unit: %

Total exports (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	6	2	0	8
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	36	44	12	92
Overall, by stage of processing	42	46	12	100
Exports to China (2024)				
	Final	Intermediates	Primary	Overall, by broad sector
Agriculture (HS01-24)	6	0	0	6
Manufacturing and Natural Resources (HS25-99)	51	26	17	94
Overall, by stage of processing	57	26	17	100

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Note: Percentages are rounded independently and, as a result, may not sum exactly to the reported totals.

At the more disaggregated HS 2-digit level, the United Kingdom's exports to China cover a substantial number of sectors. In 2025, the 10 largest chapters accounted

for nearly four fifths of total exports to China (see Table 20.3). Vehicles were the largest category, at USD 3.1537 billion, equivalent to about 17 percent of exports to China, followed by machinery at USD 2.5601 billion, or 14 percent. Optical, photographic and medical instruments, mineral mineral fuels & oils, essential oils & cosmetics, electrical machinery & equipment, pharmaceuticals, copper and articles thereof, aluminum, and miscellaneous chemical products made up the remainder of the leading group. This composition shows that the United Kingdom's China-facing export basket combines high-value manufacturing, consumer goods, instruments, energy-related products, and metals.

Table 20.3 United Kingdom Exports to China, 2025

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
87	Vehicles (Not Railway/Tramway)	3,153.7	17	0.56	58	48	-4	-4
84	Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	2,560.1	14	0.04	12	6	1	-1
90	Optical, Photographic, Medical Inst.	1,798.7	10	0.04	16	13	5	1
27	Mineral Fuels & Oils	1,471.4	8	0.88	-1	20	60	-23
33	Essential Oils & Cosmetics	1,288.3	7	0.83	19	24	39	7
85	Electrical Machinery & Equipment	1,164.8	6	0.05	1	1	-3	3

Continued

HS code	Short description	Year 2025			Annual Average growth (CAGR) during the period			
		Export to China (USD million)	As a percentage of total exports to China (%)	Concentration index within sector	2001-2008 (%)	2008-2012 (%)	2012-2019 (%)	2019-2025 (%)
30	Pharmaceutical Products	990.1	5	0.26	18	22	5	-2
74	Copper and Articles Thereof	900.3	5	0.94	32	34	-6	8
76	Aluminum & Articles	588.2	3	0.85	18	17	6	19
38	Miscellaneous Chemical Products	518.5	3	0.23	16	1	6	5

Source: Based on UNComtrade and China National Statistics.

Recent sectoral dynamics have been uneven. Vehicles and machinery remain major export categories, but both contracted after 2019. Mineral fuels declined more sharply between 2019 and 2025, reversing part of the strong growth recorded during 2012-2019. By contrast, cosmetics, electrical machinery, copper, aluminum, and miscellaneous chemical products continued to expand, with aluminum recording particularly strong recent gains. Pharmaceuticals retained a sizeable position but declined modestly after 2019. Overall, the sectoral pattern points to a process of rotation: traditional pillars of the United Kingdom's exports to China have weakened, while selected consumer goods, chemical products, and metals have provided resilience and emerging opportunities.

(Ⅱ) Export Potential to China

Understanding whether recent United Kingdom export performance in China reflects changes in existing products or entry into new ones helps clarify the source of

future potential. Table 20.4 shows that the decline between 2019 and 2025 was driven mainly by the intensive margin: products exported in both years fell by about USD 5.2 billion, from USD 22.735 billion to USD 17.4877 billion. A further USD 1.2 billion was lost as 735 products exported in 2019 were no longer exported to China in 2025. The United Kingdom added 144 new HS 6-digit product lines, generating about USD 1.1621 billion in exports.

Table 20.4 United Kingdom Recent Export Growth at the Intensive and Extensive Margin

	Number of HS 6-digit lines	Value in 2019 (USD million)	Value in 2025 (USD million)	Growth (USD million)
Existing products (intensive margin)	2,683	22,735.0	17,487.7	-5,247.3
Discontinued products	735	1,194.9	0.0	-1,194.9
New products (extensive margin)	144	0.0	1,162.1	1,162.1

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

The United Kingdom's export potential in China is significant in selected sectors, but remains uneven and constrained by imperfect alignment with Chinese import demand. At the aggregate level, both the China import-weighted revealed comparative advantage (RCA) and the China import growth-weighted RCA remain below unity, indicating that the United Kingdom is not strongly specialized in the products that dominate Chinese imports or in faster-growing areas of Chinese demand (see Table 20.5). At the sectoral level, comparative advantage is strongest in vehicles (not railway/tramway), machinery, mechanical appliances and parts, optical, photographic, medical Inst, essential oils & cosmetics, pharmaceutical products, and miscellaneous chemical products, mineral fuels & oils, electrical machinery & equipment, copper and articles thereof, and aluminum & articles thereof remain below unity. Overall, the

RCA evidence points to selective export potential, concentrated in high-value manufacturing, instruments, branded consumer goods, and life-science-related sectors, but weaker across several resource-based and electrical-product categories.

Table 20.5 United Kingdom Revealed Comparative Advantage

	Weighted revealed comparative advantage RCA (index)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
China import-weighted	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
China import growth-weighted	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
	RCA within top 10 HS 2-digit sectors (China import-weighted)			
	2001-2008	2009-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
87: Vehicles (Not Railway/Tramway)	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.3
84: Machinery, Mechanical appliances and Parts	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4
90: Optical, Photographic, Medical Inst.	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5
27: Mineral Fuels & Oils	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7
33: Essential Oils & Cosmetics	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9
85: Electrical Machinery & Equipment	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.4
30: Pharmaceutical Products	2.5	2.6	2.1	1.6
74: Copper and Articles Thereof	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5
76: Aluminum & Articles Thereof	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7
38: Miscellaneous Chemical Products	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.4

Source: Based on UN Comtrade and China National Statistics.

Building on the sector-level evidence, the Annex (Table X) identifies more granular HS 4-digit export opportunities for the United Kingdom in China. These opportunities fall into four groups: core export products, where the United Kingdom already has a strong presence and further growth would involve scaling up existing flows, such as gold, motor cars, and scientific instruments; underexploited products,

where export capacity and Chinese demand are sizeable but current penetration remains limited, including titanium and surveying instruments; emerging sectors, where United Kingdom export capacity is large or growing but the China share remains low, such as turbo-jets, gas turbines, and navigational instruments; and latent opportunities, where exports to China are negligible despite significant Chinese import demand, including acyclic hydrocarbons and alloy steel flat-rolled products.

Ⅱ. Economic Infrastructure

This section assesses how the United Kingdom's transport, energy, information and communications, and digital infrastructure support or constrain export competitiveness.

(I) Transport and Logistics Connectivity

The United Kingdom is a major maritime trading nation. Its ports handled about 9.62 million TEUs in 2024.[①] The United Kingdom links to 93 maritime partner economies and 159 aviation partner economies, far above the Europe and Central Asia averages of 33.8 and 113 and the world averages of 28.2 and 91.5 respectively (see Table 20.6). Its Liner Shipping Connectivity Index of 388.95 in 2025 is among the highest in the world.[②] Container import dwell time of 4.2 days is below both the regional average of 4.8 and the world average of 7.9. The rail network extends to about 15,678 km.[③] The United Kingdom's deep-water port capacity, strong liner shipping connectivity, and extensive air freight networks place United Kingdom exporters among the best-connected in Europe for reaching Chinese markets.

① UNCTAD (2026a).
② UNCTAD (2026a).
③ International Union of Railways (2025).

Table 20.6 Transport and Logistics Connectivity in the United Kingdom

Indicator	United Kingdom	Europe and Central Asia	World
Container import dwell time (days)	4.2	4.8	7.9
Maritime partner economies	93	33.8	28.2
Aviation partner economies	159	113	91.5

Source: World Bank, Logistics Performance Index 2.0 (2024).

Note: Regional and world averages are unweighted figures calculated by UNCTAD and the World Bank.

(Ⅱ) Stability of Energy Supply

Electricity supply is reliable by international standards. In 2024, 14.3 percent of firms in the United Kingdom experienced electrical outages, well below the Europe and Central Asia average of 25.5 percent and the world average of 46.1 percent.[①] Average outages of 0.2 per month are negligible compared with the world average of 3.1 (see Table 20.7). The primary concern is cost, not reliability: 26.1 percent of firms identify electricity as a major or very severe constraint, a share broadly in line with the world average but above the regional average. United Kingdom industrial electricity prices, at approximately USD 0.34 per kWh in 2024, were the highest of the 25 countries reporting to the International Energy Agency, roughly 2.4 times the United States level and about 50 percent above France and Germany.[②] This cost burden weighs on energy-intensive manufacturers and is a structural competitiveness disadvantage for United Kingdom exporters competing in the Chinese market.

① World Bank (2025b).

② IEA (2025).

Table 20.7 Stability of Energy Supply in the United Kingdom, 2024

Indicator	United Kingdom	Europe and Central Asia	World
percent of firms experiencing electrical outages	14.3	25.5	46.1
Average electrical outages per month	0.2	0.5	3.1
percent of firms identifying electricity as a major or very severe constraint	26.1	22.6	27.7

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys, www.enterprisesurveys.org (2024).

(Ⅲ) Digital Infrastructure and E-Commerce

Digital infrastructure is highly developed. Fixed-broadband subscriptions stood at 42.2 per 100 inhabitants in 2024, above the European average of 37.2 and more than double the world average of 20.1 (see Table 20.8), while LTE coverage is universal at 99.9 percent and 5G reaches 85 percent.

Table 20.8 Information and Communications Infrastructure in the United Kingdom

Indicator	United Kingdom	Europe	World
Fixed-broadband subscriptions (per 100 inhabitants)	42.2	37.2	20.1
Population coverage, by mobile network technology (at least LTE) (in percentage)	99.9	99.5	92.7

Source: ITU DataHub, https://datahub.itu.int/.

Data for the United Kingdom from 2024; Europe and world averages from 2025.

E-commerce is mature: internet sales accounted for 27.5 percent of retail sales in 2024, and 89 percent of consumers made an online purchase (see Table 20.9). The United Kingdom ranks 8th of 127 economies in the Network Readiness Index 2025, with a business digital engagement sub-pillar score of a high 71.6. A sophisticated digital economy and strong logistics make cross-border e-commerce an effective channel into the Chinese market.

Table 20.9 Digital Platform and E-Commerce Ecosystem in the United Kingdom

Indicator	2024
Individuals who made an online purchase (%)	89
Internet sales as a share of total retail sales (%)	27.5
Business digital engagement sub-pillar (score 0-100)	71.6
Individuals using the internet (% of population)	95.5

Sources: Office for National Statistics (retail internet sales; online shoppers); ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database; Portulans Institute, Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025.

Note: Data only available for 2024.

Ⅲ. Industrial System

This section examines the United Kingdom's industrial system, focusing on the factor endowments, including professional talent base underpinning the economy's longer-term ability to move up value chains, sectoral structure and manufacturing base that shape its capacity to expand and upgrade exports, including to China

(Ⅰ) Macroeconomic factor endowment structure

In 2024, the working-age population (aged 15-64) was 43.8 million, about 63.3 percent of the total (Europe and Central Asia average: 64.5 percent), declining since 2009 (Figure 20.3). Population ageing is a key constraint that may limit industrial development and raise public spending over the medium term.

Gross capital formation was 19.1 percent of GDP in 2024, below the Europe and Central Asia (22.4 percent) and world (26.3 percent) averages and broadly flat over 2001-2024 (apart from a 2009-2014 dip to about 16.9 percent). R&D intensity, by contrast, has risen since 2013 to 2.7 percent of GDP in 2023 (from 1.6 percent in 2001 and 2.3 percent in 2014), above the regional average (2.13 percent) and world average (2.6 percent),[①] suggesting the United Kingdom can compete in more

① UNESCO.

innovation-intensive segments of the Chinese market.

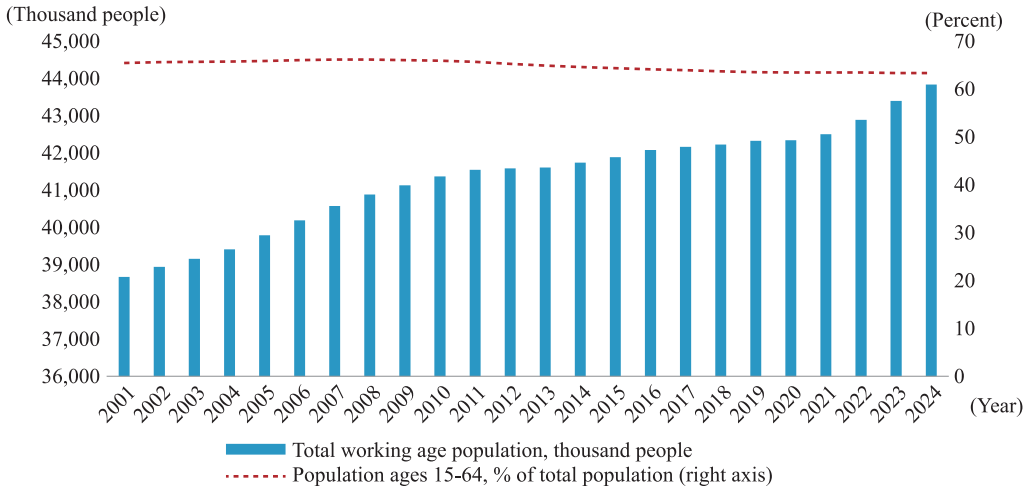


Figure 20.3 Total Working Age Population, United Kingdom, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

The United Kingdom has a large, well-developed higher education system. The gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education was 80.4 percent in 2023, close to the Europe and Central Asia average (81.5 percent) and far above the world average (43.2 percent) (see Figure 20.4). STEM graduates accounted for 22.8 percent of tertiary graduates in 2023, while business, administration and law graduates made up 27.5 percent.

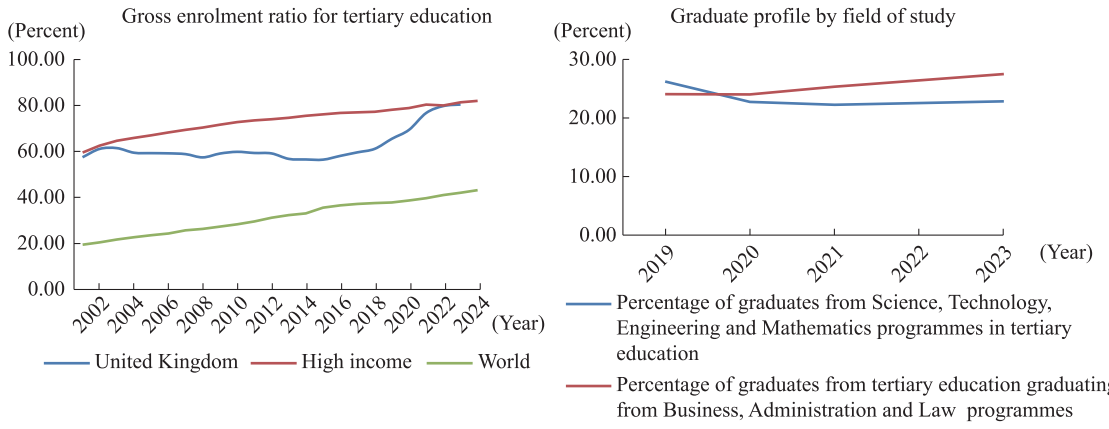


Figure 20.4 Higher Education Enrolment by Graduate Profile, United Kingdom (Percentage)

Source: UNESCO.

A large graduate pool and rising R&D intensity support the United Kingdom's capacity to export higher value-added, technology-intensive products to China, even as broad-based manufacturing exports remain constrained by the economy's structural shift towards services.

(Ⅱ) Evolution of the Three-Sector Structure

In 2024, agriculture accounted for 0.6 percent of value added, industry for 17.1 percent and services for 72.5 percent of GDP (regional averages: 1.2 percent, 22.9 percent and 65.4 percent; see Figure 20.5). Agriculture was broadly stable, industry fell from 21.8 percent in 2001, and services rose over the period.

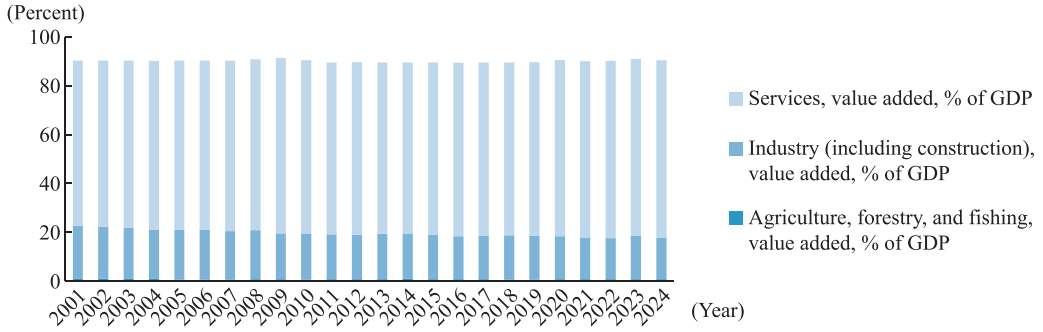


Figure 20.5 GDP Share of Agriculture, Industry, and Services, United Kingdom, 2001-2024

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: Industry is comprised of mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, water, and gas industries. Sectoral value added shares may not sum to 100 percent because GDP at market prices includes net taxes on products and possible statistical discrepancies.

(Ⅲ) Industrialization and Manufacturing Base

Manufacturing value added fell from 12.5 percent of GDP in 2001 to 7.99 percent in 2024, below the regional (13.5 percent) and world (15 percent) averages. Medium- and high-tech industry was broadly unchanged at about 40.75 percent of

manufacturing value added in 2022, but its estimated share of GDP declined from 5.1 percent in 2001 to 3.24 percent in 2022 (see Table 20.10).

Table 20.10 Industrial System Indicators, United Kingdom, 2014-2024

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Population ages 15-64, % of total population	64.58	64.35	64.13	63.91	63.69	63.52	63.43	63.45	63.44	63.35	63.32
Employment in agriculture, % of total employment	1.24	1.14	1.14	1.16	1.07	1.09	0.98	0.90	0.76	0.88	0.87
Gross capital formation, % GDP	18.43	18.48	18.60	19.13	18.88	19.03	18.28	18.90	18.35	18.46	19.12
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added, % of GDP	0.74	0.63	0.59	0.61	0.56	0.58	0.68	0.70	0.68	0.65	0.64
Industry (including construction), value added, % of GDP	18.35	18.14	17.67	17.82	18.00	17.87	17.50	16.96	16.82	17.67	17.12
Services, value added, % of GDP	70.15	70.47	70.92	70.81	70.75	70.98	72.11	72.17	72.48	72.42	72.45
Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP	9.44	9.38	9.13	9.04	9.02	8.98	9.08	8.73	7.96	8.22	7.99
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added	43.85	41.89	43.22	44.58	43.50	43.06	42.78	40.57	40.75	—	—
Medium- and high-tech Industry, % of GDP	4.14	3.93	3.95	4.03	3.92	3.87	3.89	3.54	3.24	—	—

Source: World Bank Open Data Portal, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Note: "Medium- and high-tech Industry (including construction), % of GDP" is calculated by multiplying "Manufacturing, value added, % of GDP" and "Medium- and high-tech Industry, % manufacturing value added". Obtained number is then divided by 100.

Overall, the indicators point to limited broad-based industrial export potential to China: the shares of industry, manufacturing and the estimated medium- and high-

tech segment in GDP all declined over 2001－2024. However, rising R&D intensity means export potential is likely concentrated in selected high value-added technological products rather than broad manufacturing exports. This potential may, however, be constrained by population ageing, slow productivity growth, and external pressures on fiscal space and investment.

Ⅳ. Trade Policy Profiles

Trade policy is a key determinant of export competitiveness. This section reviews the United Kingdom's trade policy, including trade agreements, trade-related regulations and foreign investment conditions.

(Ⅰ) Trade Openness

The United Kingdom's trade to GDP ratio was 62.8 percent in 2024, slightly above the developed-country (56.1 percent) and world (57.2 percent) averages. Its Openness Indicator stood at 0.80, 10th of 129 economies (see Figure 20.6).[①] The index moved through two phases over 35 years: the United Kingdom's rank improved from 45th to 5th by 2008, then stalled, though it still exceeds the advanced-economy average of 0.79 and is about 6 percent above the world average.

As WTO member, the United Kingdom is part of an extensive network of trade agreements. It has 39 regional, interregional and bilateral agreements, well above the world average of 12, of which 30 are bilateral. None of these agreements currently includes China.[②]

① UNCTAD (2026b).
② WTO.

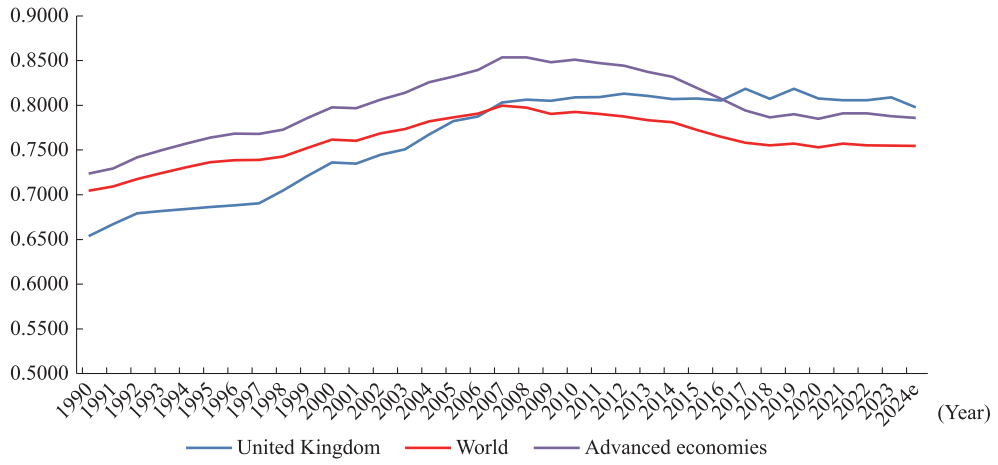


Figure 20.6 United Kingdom's Openness Indicator, 1990-2024

Source: World Openness Report 2025.

Note: "e" denotes an estimate.

The United Kingdom is a strong performer ontrade facilitation, with its overall implementation rate rising from 75.27 percent in 2017 to 88.17 percent in 2025, among the highest in the survey (see Table 20.11). It fully implements the Transparency and Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation measures. Cross-Border Paperless Trade, historically its weakest dimension, has improved markedly to 72.22 percent. Operational outcomes are more middling, however: exports are cleared by all border control agencies in 8 days at a cost equal to 8 percent of export value, with a border-management score of 34 out of 50.[①] These procedures apply uniformly to all destinations, including China.

Table 20.11 Trade Facilitation Implementation in the United Kingdom

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2017	100	83.33	77.78	70.37	50.00	75.27

① World Bank (2025a).

Continued

Year	Transparency	Formalities	Institutional Arrangement & Cooperation	Paperless Trade	Cross-Border Paperless Trade	Overall Score
2021	100	83.33	88.89	85.19	55.56	81.72
2025	100	87.50	100	88.89	72.22	88.17

Source: UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD (2025).

Note: Implementation rate (0-100) is the percentage of trade-facilitation measures implemented. The overall score is calculated at the measure level and is not a simple average of the five category scores.

The United Kingdom's tariff regime has remained consistently low since 2001. After leaving the European Union, the United Kingdom introduced its own schedule, but levels changed little: the simple average applied MFN rate eased to 3.7 percent in 2025, well below the world average of 7.4 percent. Trade-weighted rates are lower still on non-agricultural goods, while agriculture remains more heavily protected, with a simple average of 8.8 percent and a trade-weighted average of 12.9 percent (see Table 20.12). Low tariffs on industrial and intermediate goods support the competitiveness of exporters that rely on imported inputs.

Table 20.12 MFN Applied Tariffs, United Kingdom, 2025

	Total	Non-Agriculture	Agriculture
Simple average	3.7	2.9	8.8
Trade weighted av.	3.6	2.5	12.9

Source: World Tariff Profiles (ITC, UNCTAD, WTO 2025).

Figures 20.7 and 20.8 show the average number of non-tariff measures (NTMs) applied per product in agri-food and manufacturing sectors, respectively. The United Kingdom applies technical measures at a level similar to other developed countries. Non-technical measures are limited and on par with developed-country peers. This

indicates high regulatory capacity and a generally open policy stance.

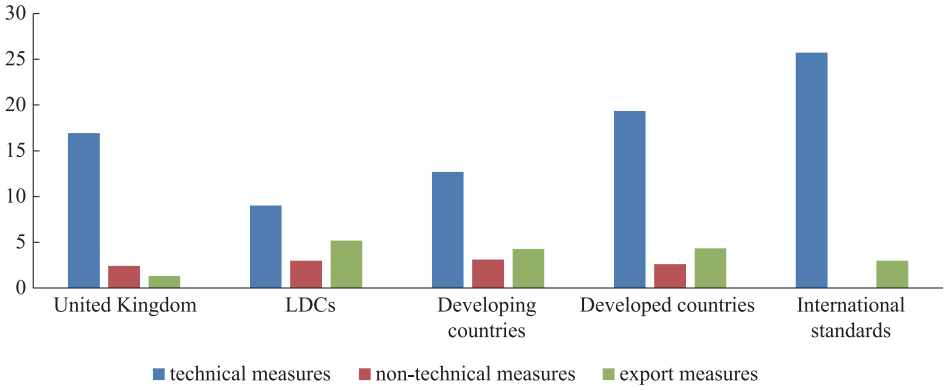


Figure 20.7 Agri-Food: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, United Kingdom

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: UK data is from 2025 and based on EU NTMs data before Brexit, updated with UK's notifications to WTO.

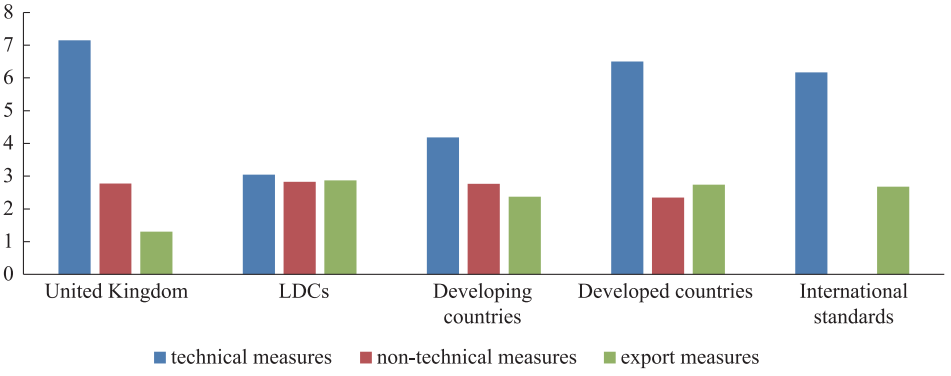


Figure 20.8 Manufacturing: Average Number of Distinct Non-Tariff Measures Applied per Product, by Type of Measure, United Kingdom

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: UK data is from 2025 and based on EU NTMs data before Brexit, updated with UK's notifications to WTO.

The regulatory similarity index measures the relative similarity of SPS and TBT between different countries, vis-à-vis international standards and across sectors. In

agri-food sectors, the United Kingdom exhibits a high regulatory similarity with agri-food international standards as well as China, but only average similarity with the rest of the world (see Figure 20.9). This puts the United Kingdom in a strong overall position for agri-food trade. In manufacturing, regulatory similarity with China is also very high, thus facilitating bilateral trade. With the rest of the world, however, regulatory similarity in manufacturing is low.

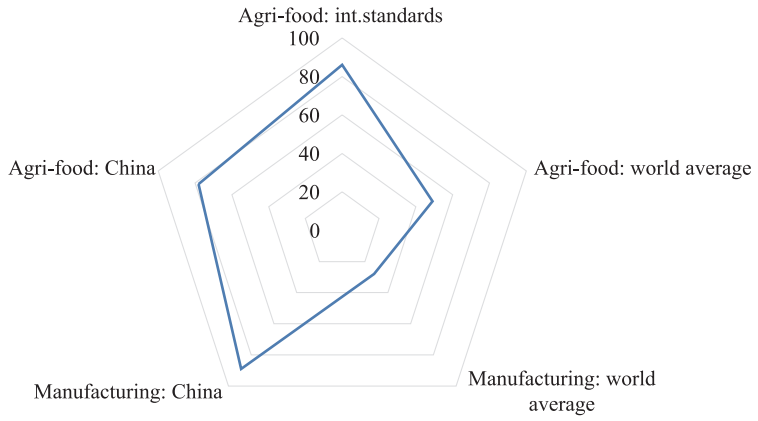


Figure 20.9 United Kingdom's Regulatory Similarity to International Standards, World Average and China (as Percentile of Global Sample)

Source: UNCTAD TRAINS NTM database.

Note: UK data is from 2025 and based on EU NTMs data before Brexit, updated with UK's notifications to WTO; data for China from 2024.

Figure 20.10 shows the number of SPS and TBT notifications made to the WTO. Until 2020, this includes both unilateral notification and European Union notifications; thereafter (in solid lines) only notifications by the United Kingdom alone. Despite the drop in notifications in 2021 due to the exit from the European Union, the United Kingdom is an active participant in the multilateral transparency system.

The United Kingdom has a highly advanced SPS capacity profile. Regulatory quality is exceptionally strong (78.7) and it maintains 2,117 accredited laboratories, 5th among 37 OECD countries. QI4SD indicators show a perfect accreditation score

(100) and a strong conformity-assessment score (70.5). Border implementation is supported by participation in the ePhyto Hub and partial digitalization of SPS certification. ① ISO management-system certification is well developed, with 32,988 ISO 9001 and 57 ISO 22000 certificates, ranking 8th and 65th worldwide respectively. ②

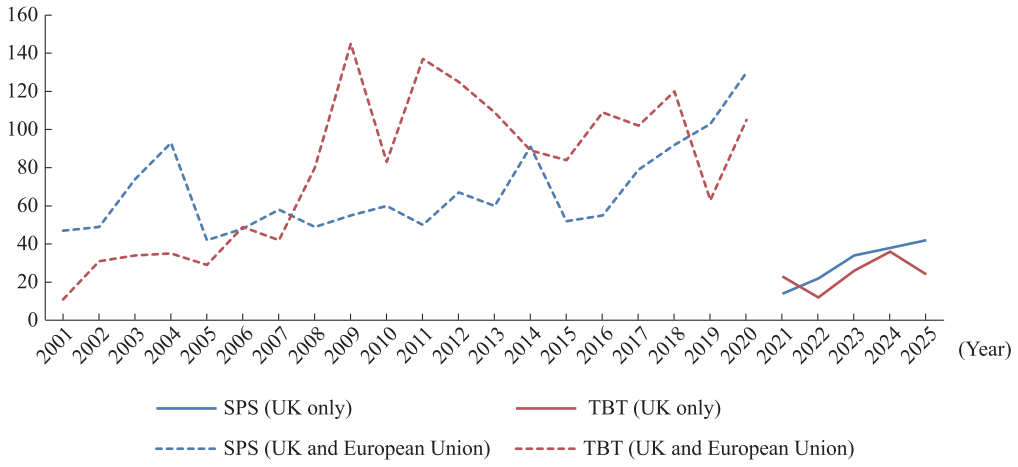


Figure 20.10 United Kingdom's Number of Notifications to the WTO, SPS Measures and TBT, per Year, 2001-2025

Source: WTO Notification Portal.

The United Kingdom maintains export restrictions on military goods, dual-use items and CITES-protected wildlife products. Controls have been strengthened on semiconductor manufacturing equipment, advanced computing hardware, quantum-related technologies and other strategically sensitive goods through export-licensing requirements assessed by destination, end user, end use, diversion risk and national-security considerations. The United Kingdom also maintains parallel-export restrictions on a regularly updated list of medicines subject to actual or anticipated shortages.

① Regulatory quality from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators; accreditation and conformity-assessment scores from the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) index; notification counts from the WTO.

② ISO and IAF (2025).

High regulatory alignment with Chinese and international standards helps keep compliance costs low for United Kingdom exporters, supporting their competitiveness in the Chinese market.

(Ⅱ) Financial and Foreign Investment Environment

Over two decades the United Kingdom has kept a highly open capital account, remaining one of the world's most financially open economies. Its Financial Account Restrictiveness Index (FARI) rose from a very low 0.02 to 0.11 in 2013-2014, reflecting post-global financial crisis regulatory reforms aimed at strengthening financial sector resilience. Nevertheless, the index remained below the average for high-income economies (approximately 0.16).①

The United Kingdom's non-European Union exports are predominantly invoiced in United States dollars and pounds sterling, although the currency composition has shifted markedly over time. The United States dollar share rose from 37 percent in 2015 to 60 percent in 2025, while the share invoiced in pounds sterling declined from 57 percent to 20 percent. The use of the Chinese yuan for export invoicing also increased, with its share rising from 0.5 percent to 1.3 percent over the same period.②

The United Kingdom is one of the world's largest sources and destinations for foreign direct investment (FDI). FDI inflows is approximately USD 75.2 billion in 2025, while FDI outflows rose to USD 84.8 billion, from USD 42.6 billion in 2024. The inward FDI stock stood at approximately USD 2.67 trillion in 2025, equivalent to 70 percent of GDP, among the highest ratios for major advanced economies. The *World Investment Report 2025* notes that FDI flows into developed economies remain highly volatile, while large, mature markets continue to host substantial accumulated FDI stocks.③

---

① IMF.

② Office for National Statistics (2025).

③ UNCTAD (2026d).

V. Conclusion

The United Kingdom's export relationship with China has expanded substantially over the past two decades. Exports rose from about USD 3 billion in 2001 to about USD 19 billion in 2025. China moved from the United Kingdom's 17th-largest export destination to its 3rd-largest. However, exports to China peaked in 2021 and declined thereafter, suggesting that the recent slowdown is linked more to shifts in China's import demand than to a general loss of United Kingdom export capacity. The China-directed export basket remains relatively diversified, but it has become more concentrated over time and less aligned with the composition of Chinese import demand. Exports to China are led by transport equipment, machinery and industrial equipment, medical and precision instruments, energy products, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and metals, with recent performance pointing to a shift towards selected consumer goods, chemical products, and metals.

The analysis identifies several factors that support the United Kingdom's ability to export to China. The country has strong maritime and air connectivity, deep-water port capacity, advanced digital infrastructure and a mature e-commerce ecosystem, all of which help firms reach distant markets. Electricity supply is reliable, and the United Kingdom also benefits from a strong research base, a large tertiary-educated workforce, high regulatory capacity, and close regulatory similarity with China in both agri-food and manufacturing. Its trade policy environment is generally open, with low tariffs, strong trade facilitation and a large foreign investment base. At the same time, several constraints limit broader export growth. Industrial electricity costs are high, manufacturing's share of GDP has declined, investment remains relatively low, and the economy's shift toward services reduces the scope for broad-based manufacturing export expansion.

Overall, the United Kingdom has selective strengths in the Chinese market rather than broad-based export competitiveness. Its strongest position is in high-value manufacturing, instruments, branded consumer goods, pharmaceuticals and selected chemical products, while performance is weaker in several resource-based and electrical-product categories. The main challenge is to stabilize and upgrade existing export strengths while developing new niches where Chinese demand is sizeable. The strongest opportunities are likely to come from scaling established exports of certain transport equipment and scientific and precision instruments, expanding certain underexploited areas in industrial equipment and instruments, and developing emerging opportunities in certain advanced machinery, chemical products, and metal products.

Appendix

This annex presents a product-level assessment of the export potential of the 10 countries in the Chinese market. The analysis combines four indicators: their revealed comparative advantage (RCA), recent export performance, the size of Chinese import demand, and the growth trajectory of Chinese imports. These indicators are summarized in a Composite Export Potential Score, which provides a framework for identifying HS 4-digit sectors where opportunities for export expansion appear strongest.

Table Ⅰ Colombia Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Sectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Colombia exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2709	Petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals; crude	51.5	16,529.0	18.2	342,781.1
	2616	Precious metal ores and concentrates	50.0	281.6	22.5	10,258.1
	7202	Ferro-alloys	30.2	663.9	50.3	20,916.3
	1520	Glycerol, crude; glycerol waters and glycerol lyes	27.3	20.1	69.4	616.0
	7404	Copper; waste and scrap	26.1	319.3	53.6	15,306.5
	2713	Petroleum coke, petroleum bitumen; other residues of petroleum oils or oils obtained from bituminous minerals	22.9	285.5	35.4	5,063.3

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Colombia exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	7103	Precious (excluding diamond) and semi - precious stone; worked, graded, not strung, mounted, set; ungraded precious (excluding diamond) and semi-precious stone, temporarily strung for convenience of transport	32.6	345.0	2.5	2,083.7
	2701	Coal; briquettes, ovoids and similar solid fuels manufactured from coal	45.6	10,457.1	3.9	37,385.9
	0901	Coffee, whether or not roasted or decaffeinated; husks and skins; coffee substitutes containing coffee in any proportion	44.2	3,550.0	3.4	830.4
Emerging sectors	2101	Extracts, essences, concentrates of coffee, tea or mate; preparations with a basis of these products or with a basis of coffee, tea or mate; roasted chicory and other roasted coffee substitutes and extracts, essences and concentrates thereof	39.7	407.1	1.3	351.5
	8702	Vehicles; public transport passenger type	37.7	82.8	0.2	30.2
	7108	Gold (including gold plated with platinum) unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	32.0	3,551.6	0.6	90,426.6
	1704	Sugar confectionery (including white chocolate), not containing cocoa	30.7	263.3	0.2	349.9

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Colombia exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	1516	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their fractions; partly or wholly hydrogenated, inter-esterified, re-esterified or elaidinised, whether or not refined, but not further prepared	27.7	30.6	0.1	924.0
	8706	Chassis; fitted with engines, for the motor vehicles of heading no. 8701 to 8705	36.8	9.2	0.0	59.9
	3211	Driers; prepared	36.3	5.8	0.0	31.3
	4106	Tanned or crust hides and skins of other animals, without wool or hair on, whether or not split, but not further prepared	33.2	3.1	0.0	68.6
	2803	Carbon; carbon blacks and other forms of carbon n.e.c.	29.7	72.1	0.0	480.5

Table Ⅱ Kazakhstan Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Sectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Kazakhstan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2302	Bran, sharps and other residues; whether or not in the form of pellets derived from the sifting, milling or other working of cereals or of leguminous plants	46.8	115.6	88.3	477.7

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Kazakhstan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2844	Radioactive chemical elements and radioactive isotopes (including the fissile or fertile chemical elements and isotopes); and their compounds; mixtures and residues containing these products	41.3	3,625.0	34.4	2,664.8
	7202	Ferro-alloys	37.1	2,905.5	35.9	20,916.3
	2603	Copper ores and concentrates	35.9	2,953.2	90.1	61,200.7
	7403	Copper; refined and copper alloys, unwrought	35.1	3,385.8	61.5	37,190.6
	2613	Molybdenum ores and concentrates	34.6	115.1	60.1	960.7
	1204	Oil seeds; linseed, whether or not broken	34.1	284.9	35.5	442.0
Underexploited potential	2709	Petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals; crude	54.2	40,618.8	8.0	342,781.1
	7201	Pig iron and spiegeleisen in pigs, blocks or other primary forms	30.0	36.5	6.8	473.1
	1001	Wheat and meslin	23.3	1,579.9	5.8	3,855.5
Emerging sectors	1101	Wheat or meslin flour	37.1	603.2	0.3	84.4
	7108	Gold (including gold plated with platinum) unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	33.4	11,618.6	0.4	90,426.6
	8108	Titanium; articles thereof, including waste and scrap	26.2	175.2	3.9	673.0

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Kazakhstan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	2804	Hydrogen, rare gases and other non-metals	18.3	255.8	0.3	2,461.9
	2610	Chromium ores and concentrates	25.4	125.3	0.0	4,835.7
	7106	Silver (including silver plated with gold or platinum); unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	23.1	812.1	0.0	1,256.3
	2706	Tar distilled from coal, from lignite, peat and other mineral tars, whether or not dehydrated or partially distilled; including reconstituted tars	22.3	8.4	0.0	88.6
	4706	Pulps of fibres derived from recovered (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard or of other fibrous cellulosic material	19.6	8.3	0.0	1,248.2
	2501	Salt (including table salt and denatured salt); pure sodium chloride whether or not in aqueous solution; sea water	17.6	39.1	0.0	538.3

Table Ⅲ Kenya Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Sectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Kenya exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2615	Niobium, tantalum, vanadium or zirconium ores and concentrates	30.0	46.2	65.7	1,662.0
	4101	Raw hides and skins of bovine (including buffalo) or equine animals (fresh, salted, dried, limed, pickled, otherwise preserved but not tanned, parchment dressed or further prepared), whether or not dehaired or split	29.8	11.0	11.3	1,149.1
	2614	Titanium ores and concentrates	29.5	157.3	44.4	1,465.3
	4106	Tanned or crust hides and skins of other animals, without wool or hair on, whether or not split, but not further prepared	29.0	5.9	58.4	68.6
	0802	Nuts (excluding coconuts, Brazils and cashew nuts); fresh or dried, whether or not shelled or peeled	28.9	80.9	22.1	1,888.5
	1301	Lac; natural gums, resins, gum-resins and oleoresins (for example, balsams)	28.7	8.1	68.9	63.8
	0305	Fish, dried, salted or in brine; smoked fish, whether or not cooked before or during the smoking process; flours, meals and pellets of fish, fit for human consumption	23.1	16.9	56.7	278.1

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Kenya exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	1302	Vegetable saps and extracts; pectic substances, pectinates and pectates; agar-agar and other mucilages and thickeners, whether or not modified, derived from vegetable products	13.2	14.0	9.0	393.5
Emerging sectors	2836	Carbonates; peroxocarbonates (percarbonates); commercial ammonium carbonate containing ammonium carbamate	34.9	81.7	2.8	5,528.3
	2529	Feldspar; leucite; nepheline and nepheline syenite; fluorspar	30.8	6.1	0.2	161.7
	0901	Coffee, whether or not roasted or decaffeinated; husks and skins; coffee substitutes containing coffee in any proportion	30.6	303.2	1.7	830.4
	1211	Plants and parts of plants (including seeds and fruits), used primarily in perfumery, pharmacy; for insecticidal, fungicidal or similar purposes, fresh or dried, whether or not crushed or powdered	30.4	45.2	0.1	324.3
	1515	Fixed vegetable fats and oils (including jojoba oil) and their fractions, whether or not refined; but not chemically modified	29.1	62.0	0.9	706.3
	1209	Seeds, fruit and spores; of a kind used for sowing	28.5	36.6	0.9	480.1

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Kenya exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	6105	Shirts; men's or boys', knitted or crocheted	23.1	24.9	0.4	235.4
	7108	Gold (including gold plated with platinum) unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	37.0	610.6	0.0	90,426.6
	6704	Wigs, false beards, eyebrows and eyelashes, switches and the like, of human or animal hair or of textile materials; articles of human hair, n.e.c. or included	36.4	21.1	0.0	146.2
	8001	Tin; unwrought	36.2	4.6	0.0	895.5
	0106	Animals; live, n.e.c. in Chapter 01	34.8	13.3	0.0	59.0

Table Ⅳ Pakistan Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Sectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Pakistan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	7403	Copper; refined and copper alloys, unwrought	42.0	721.1	99.7	37,190.6
	7402	Copper; unrefined, copper anodes for electrolytic refining	36.0	303.7	97.8	9,040.6
	2610	Chromium ores and concentrates	35.6	114.8	86.2	4,835.7

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Pakistan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	1207	Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, n. e. c. in chapter 12; whether or not broken	32. 0	308. 7	67. 1	1,970. 8
	5205	Cotton yarn (other than sewing thread), containing 85 or more by weight of cotton, not put up for retail sale	31. 0	874. 5	59. 5	3,577. 9
	2515	Marble, travertine, ecaussine and other calcareous stone; of an apparent specific gravity of less than 2. 5, alabaster, whether cut by sawing etc, into blocks, slabs of a rectangular (square) shape	25. 3	24. 6	79. 6	1,190. 5
	2608	Zinc ores and concentrates	23. 9	121. 7	99. 3	4,378. 0
Underexploited potential	2501	Salt (including table salt and denatured salt); pure sodium chloride whether or not in aqueous solution; sea water	32. 3	72. 0	6. 4	538. 3
	6109	T-shirts, singlets and other vests; knitted or crocheted	26. 7	628. 6	2. 2	955. 4
Emerging sectors	5701	Carpets and other textile floor coverings; knotted, whether or not made up	30. 9	71. 8	0. 3	10. 7
	6116	Gloves, mittens and mitts; knitted or crocheted	30. 7	274. 2	0. 9	25. 3
	0910	Ginger, saffron, tumeric (curcuma), thyme, bay leaves, curry and other spices	30. 6	85. 9	0. 3	76. 7

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Pakistan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Emerging sectors	6101	Coats; men's or boys' overcoats, car-coats, capes, cloaks, anoraks, ski-jackets, wind-cheaters, wind-jackets and similar articles; knitted or crocheted, other than those of heading no. 6103	30.5	115.3	0.3	55.6
	5206	Cotton yarn (other than sewing thread), containing less than 85% by weight of cotton, not put up for retail sale	30.4	35.1	0.8	285.2
Latent opportunities	7201	Pig iron and spiegeleisen in pigs, blocks or other primary forms	29.3	12.7	0.0	473.1
	0201	Meat of bovine animals; fresh or chilled	28.4	412.1	0.0	738.5
	7207	Iron or non-alloy steel; semi-finished products thereof	22.3	125.3	0.0	1,515.7
	1516	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their fractions; partly or wholly hydrogenated, inter-esterified, re-esterified or elaidinised, whether or not refined, but not further prepared	21.2	47.8	0.0	924.0
	1702	Sugars, including lactose, maltose, glucose or fructose in solid form; sugar syrups without added flavouring or colouring matter; artificial honey, whether or not mixed with natural honey; caramel	18.8	72.6	0.0	1,120.3

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Pakistan exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	0804	Dates, figs, pineapples, avocados, guavas, mangoes and mangosteens; fresh or dried	18.7	142.3	0.0	1,059.4

Table V Srbia Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-digit Sectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Serbia exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2603	Copper ores and concentrates	62.6	1,534.4	67	61,200.7
	7403	Copper; refined and copper alloys, unwrought	39.5	649.8	46	37,190.6
	2616	Precious metal ores and concentrates	30.4	79.1	100	10,258.1
	4408	Sheets for veneering (including those obtained by slicing laminated wood), for plywood or for similar laminated wood and other wood, sawn lengthwise, sliced or peeled, planed or not, sanded, spliced or end-jointed, of a thickness not exceeding 6 mm	19.3	22.8	20	389.3
Underexploited potential	8501	Electric motors and generators (excluding generating sets)	32.7	844.6	3	4,105.6
	8512	Lighting or visual signalling equipment (excluding articles of heading no. 8539), windscreen wipers, defrosters and demisters; electrical, of a kind used for cycles or motor vehicles	22.2	285.3	4	2,275.1

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Serbia exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	4016	Articles of vulcanised rubber other than hard rubber, n. e. c. in Chapter 40	17.7	176.1	3	2,097.1
Emerging sectors	0811	Fruit and nuts; uncooked or cooked by steaming or boiling in water, frozen, whether or not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter	35.6	524.9	0	1,042.7
	2607	Lead ores and concentrates	30.3	70.8	4	1,699.1
	8539	Lamps; electric filament or discharge lamps, including sealed beam lamp units and ultra-violet or infra-red lamps, arc-lamps	24.1	35.8	0	557.9
	7616	Aluminium; articles n. e. c. in Chapter 76	21.3	70.3	0	753.7
	2106	Food preparations not elsewhere specified or included	18.4	181.0	0	5,482.8
	7018	Glass beads, imitation pearls, precious or semi-precious stones and similar glass smallwares, statuettes and other ornaments of worked glass; glass microspheres not exceeding 1mm in diameter	18.1	14.0	1	123.9
Latent opportunities	4404	Hoopwood; split poles; piles, pickets, stakes of wood, pointed, not sawn lengthwise; wooden sticks, roughly trimmed, not turned, bent, etc., suitable for walking sticks, umbrellas, tool handles, etc.	36.5	3.6	0	4.5

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Serbia exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	0813	Fruit, dried, other than that of heading no. 0801 to 0806; mixtures of nuts or dried fruits of this chapter	35.4	60.0	0	267.6
	8423	Weighing machines; excluding balances of a sensitivity of 5cg or better, including weight operated counting or checking machines and weights of all kinds	34.0	20.9	0	112.6
	4205	Leather or composition leather articles n. e. c. in chapter 42	32.9	103.0	0	112.9
	1206	Sunflower seeds; whether or not broken	31.9	66.9	0	137.3

Table Ⅵ South Africa Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Eectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	South Africa exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2601	Iron ores and concentrates; including roasted iron pyrites	51.6	6,292.8	54.5	131,702.7
	7108	Gold (including gold plated with platinum) unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	51.4	24,845.3	35.9	90,426.6
	2610	Chromium ores and concentrates	46.5	4,666.1	56.9	4,835.7

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	South Africa exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	7202	Ferro-alloys	43.2	4,840.2	32.2	20,916.3
	2615	Niobium, tantalum, vanadium or zirconium ores and concentrates	42.1	600.0	55.4	1,662.0
	4702	Chemical wood pulp, dissolving grades	41.9	935.5	26.3	3,746.1
	2602	Manganese ores and concentrates, including ferruginous manganese ores and concentrates with a manganese content of 20% or more, calculated on the dry weight	40.2	3,044.5	60.5	5,024.3
Underexploited potential	2614	Titanium ores and concentrates	40.9	520.3	5.2	1,465.3
	2833	Sulphates; alums; peroxosulphates (persulphates)	23.3	145.6	8.8	1,072.0
Emerging sectors	2204	Wine of fresh grapes, including fortified wines; grape must other than that of heading no. 2009	18.7	666.9	2.5	1,395.7
	2510	Natural calcium phosphates; natural aluminum calcium phosphates and phosphatic chalk	44.8	154.8	0.3	118.7
	2529	Feldspar; leucite; nepheline and nepheline syenite; fluorspar	44.3	191.6	1.4	161.7
	2616	Precious metal ores and concentrates	40.7	1,547.7	1.5	10,258.1

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	South Africa exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Emerging sectors	0808	Apples, pears and quinces; fresh	40.4	769.1	3.0	231.9
	8111	Manganese; articles thereof, including waste and scrap	39.6	104.3	0.2	99.4
Latent opportunities	2701	Coal; briquettes, ovoids and similar solid fuels manufactured from coal	39.4	9,848.0	1.4	37,385.9
	4106	Tanned or crust hides and skins of other animals, without wool or hair on, whether or not split, but not further prepared	36.1	13.8	1.3	68.6
	3603	Safety fuses; detonating fuses; percussion or detonating caps; igniters; electric detonators	29.6	77.6	0.0	104.1
	1504	Fats and oils and their fractions of fish or marine mammals; whether or not refined, but not chemically modified	27.6	43.8	0.0	468.8

Table Ⅶ Spain Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Eectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Spain exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	0203	Meat of swine; fresh, chilled or frozen	31.0	6,227.5	12.7	3,138.9
	2611	Tungsten ores and concentrates	22.8	33.5	15.0	88.7

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Spain exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	0206	Edible offal of bovine animals, swine, sheep, goats, horses, asses, mules or hinnies; fresh, chilled or frozen	19.3	911.2	58.2	2,869.9
	1214	Swedes, mangolds, fodder roots, hay, lucerne (alfalfa), clover, sainfoin, forage kale, lupines, vetches and similar forage products, whether or not in the form of pellets	13.8	296.3	14.8	676.8
	4302	Tanned or dressed furskins (including heads, tails, paws, other pieces, cuttings), unassembled, or assembled (without addition of other materials), excluding those of heading no. 4303	10.8	49.1	18.8	585.5
Underexploited potential	3004	Medicaments; (not goods of heading no. 3002, 3005 or 3006) consisting of mixed or unmixed products for therapeutic or prophylactic use, put up in measured doses (incl. those in the form of transdermal admin. systems) or packed for retail sale	20.1	14,915.1	4.9	23,038.0
	0307	Molluscs; whether in shell or not, live, fresh, chilled, frozen, dried, salted or in brine; smoked molluscs, whether in shell or not, cooked or not before or during the smoking process; flours, meals and pellets of molluscs, fit for human consumption	17.5	1,292.3	2.1	1,855.6

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Spain exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	3304	Cosmetic and toilet preparations; beauty, make-up and skin care preparations (excluding medicaments, including sunscreen or sun tan preparations), manicure or pedicure preparations	15.6	1,767.8	5.9	15,155.7
	1515	Fixed vegetable fats and oils (including jojoba oil) and their fractions, whether or not refined; but not chemically modified	11.4	282.3	2.5	706.3
	0303	Fish; frozen, excluding fish fillets and other fish meat of heading 0304	10.9	951.7	6.9	4,874.2
Emerging sectors	7506	Nickel; plates, sheets, strip and foil	26.6	46.6	1.0	370.7
	3101	Fertilizers; animal or vegetable, whether or not mixed together or chemically treated; fertilizers produced by the mixing or chemical treatment of animal or vegetable products	16.9	108.1	0.1	9.5
	1805	Cocoa; powder, not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter	14.9	252.1	0.4	204.0
	2009	Fruit juices (including grape must) and vegetable juices, unfermented, not containing added spirit; whether or not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter	14.5	1,194.5	4.1	753.4

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Spain exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Emerging sectors	2101	Extracts, essences, concentrates of coffee, tea or mate; preparations with a basis of these products or with a basis of coffee, tea or mate; roasted chicory and other roasted coffee substitutes and extracts, essences and concentrates thereof	14.2	697.5	0.2	351.5
Latent opportunities	8703	Motor cars and other motor vehicles; principally designed for the transport of persons (other than those of heading no. 8702), including station wagons and racing cars	34.8	39,015.5	0.0	45,491.1
	0810	Fruit, fresh; n.e.c. in Chapter 08	20.5	2,220.9	0.0	7,803.5
	0205	Meat; of horses, asses, mules or hinnies, fresh, chilled or frozen	16.5	33.5	0.0	44.4
	7221	Stainless steel bars and rods, hot-rolled, in irregularly wound coils	11.7	156.0	0.0	225.4
	2708	Pitch and pitch coke; obtained from coal tar or from other mineral tars	9.6	77.9	0.0	82.0

Table Ⅷ Tanzania Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Eectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Tanzania exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2506	Quartz; (other than natural sands), quartzite, whether or not roughly trimmed or merely cut, by sawing or otherwise, into blocks or slabs of a rectangular (including square) shape	30.2	7.3	99.6	788.0
	7402	Copper; unrefined, copper anodes for electrolytic refining	28.9	504.2	23.5	9,040.6
	0305	Fish, dried, salted or in brine; smoked fish, whether or not cooked before or during the smoking process; flours, meals and pellets of fish, fit for human consumption	27.8	82.6	23.4	278.1
	1207	Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, n.e.c. in Chapter 12; whether or not broken	27.5	227.5	79.7	1,970.8
	2609	Tin ores and concentrates	27.4	15.3	24.4	1,736.7
Underexploited potential	7403	Copper; refined and copper alloys, unwrought	31.1	309.2	17.1	37,190.6
	5201	Cotton; not carded or combed	28.3	87.0	9.3	4,902.5
	1212	Locust beans, seaweeds and other algae, sugar beet, sugar cane, fresh, chilled, frozen or dried, whether or not ground; fruit stones, kernels and other vegetable products (including unroasted chicory roots) used primarily for human consumption, n.e.c.	26.0	12.1	15.1	767.7

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Tanzania exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	7103	Precious (excluding diamond) and semi-precious stone; worked, graded, not strung, mounted, set; ungraded precious (excluding diamond) and semi-precious stone, temporarily strung for convenience of transport	25.7	86.5	7.1	2,083.7
	2306	Oil-cake and other solid residues; whether or not ground or in the form of pellets, resulting from the extraction of vegetable fats or oils other than those of heading no. 2304 or 2305	20.5	33.7	15.7	2,289.2
Emerging sectors	2603	Copper ores and concentrates	33.3	244.1	4.2	61,200.7
	0907	Cloves (whole fruit, cloves and stems)	29.5	32.7	0.2	17.8
	2401	Tobacco, unmanufactured; tobacco refuse	27.8	312.2	2.0	1,641.7
	0901	Coffee, whether or not roasted or decaffeinated; husks and skins; coffee substitutes containing coffee in any proportion	27.7	270.3	1.9	830.4
	0713	Vegetables, leguminous; shelled, whether or not skinned or split, dried	27.1	301.8	0.2	1,582.8

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Tanzania exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	7108	Gold (including gold plated with platinum) unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	52.7	3,358.3	0.0	90,426.6
	7401	Copper mattes; cement copper (precipitated copper)	41.7	13.1	0.0	174.7
	7110	Platinum; unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	31.1	49.5	0.0	6,539.1
	2302	Bran, sharps and other residues; whether or not in the form of pellets derived from the sifting, milling or other working of cereals or of leguminous plants	27.4	54.5	0.0	477.7
	6304	Furnishing articles; excluding those of heading no. 9404	26.4	21.2	0.0	23.9

Table Ⅷ Thailand Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Eectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Thailand exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	2617	Ores and concentrates; n.e.c. in heading no. 2601	51.2	35.4	71.2	221.4
	0810	Fruit, fresh; n.e.c. in Chapter 08	40.1	4,545.6	92.6	7,803.5

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Thailand exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	4706	Pulps of fibres derived from recovered (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard or of other fibrous cellulosic material	39.4	606.5	99.2	1,248.2
	1702	Sugars, including lactose, maltose, glucose or fructose in solid form; sugar syrups without added flavouring or colouring matter; artificial honey, whether or not mixed with natural honey; caramel	39.0	829.9	89.2	1,120.3
	4106	Tanned or crust hides and skins of other animals, without wool or hair on, whether or not split, but not further prepared	38.9	47.8	77.0	68.6
	1108	Starches; inulin	38.6	1,662.1	59.3	2,010.0
	4014	Hygienic or pharmaceutical articles (including teats), of vulcanised rubber other than hard rubber, with or without fittings of hard rubber	38.3	311.5	19.5	131.3
Underexploited potential	2529	Feldspar; leucite; nepheline and nepheline syenite; fluorspar	21.6	45.8	9.8	161.7
	7117	Imitation jewellery	19.5	332.9	7.4	343.9
	9113	Watch straps, watch bands, watch bracelets and parts thereof	18.9	89.3	3.5	121.4

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Thailand exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	8504	Electric transformers, static converters (e.g. rectifiers) and inductors	18.2	4,334.4	6.4	11,256.5
	3912	Cellulose and its chemical derivatives, n.e.c. or included, in primary forms	18.0	177.6	7.3	565.2
Emerging sectors	8523	Discs, tapes, solid-state non-volatile storage devices, smart cards and other media for the recording of sound or of other phenomena, whether or not recorded, including matrices and masters for the production of discs, excluding products of Chapter 37	16.3	1,474.5	2.7	4,913.1
	8110	Antimony; articles thereof, including waste and scrap	38.3	52.9	3.3	10.1
	6811	Asbestos-cement, of cellulose fibre-cement or the like	36.2	191.2	0.1	7.6
	1701	Cane or beet sugar and chemically pure sucrose, in solid form	28.5	2,987.3	3.0	2,420.3
	2805	Alkali or alkaline-earth metals; rare-earth metals, scandium and yttrium, whether or not intermixed or interalloyed; mercury	23.3	76.6	1.6	22.3

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	Thailand exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Latent opportunities	6113	Garments made up of knitted or crocheted fabrics of heading no. 5903, 5906 and 5907	23.3	67.7	0.9	9.9
	2308	Vegetable materials and vegetable waste, vegetable residues and bi-products; whether or not in the form of pellets, of a kind used in animal feeding, not elsewhere specified or included	22.3	17.3	0.0	45.6

Table Ⅷ United Kingdom Export to China Potential in Selected HS 4-Digit Eectors

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	United Kingdom exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	7108	Gold (including gold plated with platinum) unwrought or in semi-manufactured forms, or in powder form	44.4	45,392.2	23.91	90,426.6
	8703	Motor cars and other motor vehicles; principally designed for the transport of persons (other than those of heading no. 8702), including station wagons and racing cars	29.8	33,853.3	12.34	45,491.1
	9012	Microscopes (excluding optical microscopes); diffraction apparatus	23.1	220.1	39.72	1,569.8

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	United Kingdom exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Core export products	7404	Copper; waste and scrap	21.3	1,563.2	38.53	15,306.5
	7602	Aluminum; waste and scrap	21.3	1,085.9	25.26	3,474.7
	9027	Instruments and apparatus; for physical or chemical analysis (e.g. polarimeters, spectrometers), for measuring or checking viscosity, porosity, etc, for measuring quantities of heat, sound or light	20.5	2,830.9	14.86	9,501.1
Underexploited potential	8108	Titanium; articles thereof, including waste and scrap	32.9	592.7	5.03	673.0
	7505	Nickel; bars, rods, profiles and wire	31.1	293.6	7.69	406.0
	9015	Surveying (including photogrammetrical surveying), hydrographic, oceanographic, hydrological, meteorological or geophysical instruments and appliances, excluding compasses, rangefinders	21.6	773.1	5.15	1,244.5
	5112	Woven fabrics of combed wool or of combed fine animal hair	21.1	120.9	7.76	268.7
	8412	Engines and motors; n.e.c. (e.g. reaction engines, hydraulic power engines, pneumatic power engines)	20.9	1,204.0	3.17	1,701.2
	8105	Cobalt; mattes and other intermediate products of cobalt metallurgy, cobalt and articles thereof, including waste and scrap	20.6	200.1	5.64	3,965.0

Continued

Category	HS code	Description	Export potential (Score)	United Kingdom exports (USD million)	Percentage exports to China (%)	China total imports (USD million)
Underexploited potential	9011	Microscopes, compound optical; including those for photomicrography, cinephotomicrography or microprojection	20.3	101.3	9.36	701.9
Emerging sectors	8411	Turbo-jets, turbo-propellers and other gas turbines	40.3	29,887.3	2.32	10,530.4
	7508	Nickel; articles thereof n.e.c. in Chapter 75	35.7	386.1	2.45	281.9
	8112	Beryllium, chromium, germanium, vanadium, gallium, hafnium, indium, niobium (columbium), rhenium and thallium; and articles of these metals, including waste and scrap	28.7	159.4	0.36	286.7
	9014	Navigational instruments and appliances; direction finding compasses	23.6	890.6	2.02	305.8
Latent opportunities	2518	Dolomite, whether or not calcined or sintered; including dolomite roughly trimmed, or merely cut by sawing or otherwise into blocks or slabs of rectangular (including square) shape; dolomite ramming mix	18.4	32.70813	0.00	68.162
	2901	Acyclic hydrocarbons	17.1	696.4	0.02	7,095.7
	7225	Alloy steel flat-rolled products, of a width 600mm or more	12.7	688.0	0.01	1,933.0

References

Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2023). Energy Sector Reforms and Financial Sustainability Program: Circular Debt Impact on Power Sector Investment. Manila. Available at https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/53165-002-ld-03.pdf.

Chaeng-lum, M., Nookhwun, N. and Pattararangrong, J. (2026). U.S. Dollar Dominance and the Role of Iocal Currency Settlement Framework: Evidence from Thai exports. PIER Discussion Paper No. 250. Bangkok: Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research (PIER). Available at https://www.pier.or.th/files/dp/pier_dp_250.pdf.

Ember (2025). The Solarisation of Pakistan's Energy Economy. London. Available at https://ember-energy.org/latest-insights/the-solarisation-of-pakistans-energy-economy/.

Eurostat (2025). ICT Usage in Households and by Individuals (isoc_ec_ib20) and ICT Usage and E-Commerce in Enterprises (isoc_ec_esels). Luxembourg. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/digital-economy-and-society/database.

Eurostat (2026). Foreign Direct Investment Positions by Currency (ext_lt_invcur). Luxembourg. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ext_lt_invcur__custom_21729488/.

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (2025). Trade in Yuan Reaches 14 Percent: FPCCI to Work to Diversify, Enhance Exports to China.

Karachi. Available at https://fpcci.org.pk/trade-in-yuan-reaches14-fpcci-to-work-to-diversify-enhance-exports-to-china-atif-ikram-sheikh/.

General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) (2022). Regulations on the Registration and Administration of Overseas Manufacturers of Imported Food (Decree 248). Beijing. Available at https://english.customs.gov.cn.

Government of the Republic of Serbia (2024). Free Trade Agreement Between Serbia and the People's Republic of China Enters into Force. Belgrade. Available at https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/226315/.

GSMA (2023). Tanzania Mobile Money Levy Impact Assessment. London. Available at https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/public-policy/gsma_resources/tanzania-mobile-money-levy-impact-assessment/.

GSP Hub. Generalised Scheme of Preferences Hub. Available at https://gsphub.eu/.

IEA. Serbia. Paris. Available at https://www.iea.org/countries/serbia.

IEA (2025). Energy Prices. Paris. Available at https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/data-product/energy-prices.

IMF. Financial Account Restrictiveness Index. Annual Report on Exchange Arrangements and Exchange Restrictions. Washington, D.C. Available at https://www.elibrary-areaer.imf.org/Pages/Indices.aspx.

Institute of World Economics and Politics, CASS and Research Center for Hongqiao International Economic Forum (2025). World Openness Report 2025: Seeking New Consensus on Openness amid the Balance of Cooperation and Security. Beijing. Available at https://www.ciie.org/resource/static/zbh/default/assets-2025/download/PDF/hqf/World_Openness_Report_2025_EN.pdf.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (2015). ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems - Requirements. Geneva. Available at https://www.iso.org/standard/62085.html.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (2018). ISO 22000:2018 Food Safety Management Systems—Requirements for Any Organization in the Food Chain. Geneva. Available at https://www.iso.org/standard/65464.html.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Accreditation Forum (IAF) (2025). The ISO Survey of Management System Standard Certifications 2024. Geneva. Available at https://www.iso.org/the-iso-survey.html.

International Plant Protection Convention. ePhyto Solution. Rome. Available at https://www.ippc.int/en/ephyto/.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2026). World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database. Geneva. Available at https://datahub.itu.int.

International Trade Centre, UNCTAD and World Trade Organization (2026). World Tariff Profiles 2026. Geneva. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/world_tariff_profiles26_e.htm.

International Union of Railways (UIC) (2025). Railway Statistics Synopsis, 2025 edition. Paris. Available at https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/synopsis_2025_web.pdf.

Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (2025). In January-November 2025, volume of trading in foreign currencies on KASE made up KZT44.8 tn, 9 December. Almaty. Available at https://kase.kz/ru/information/news/show/1556596.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) (2025). Integrated Annual Report 2024. Astana. Available at https://www.railways.kz/media/filer_public/1f/ca/1fca13c4-0c96-4543-bc7b-94a19bed8abf/2024_annual_report.pdf.

Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of Serbia (2025). Hungarian-Serbian Railways Project: Reconstruction and Modernization of the Belgrade-Novi Sad-Subotica-Hungarian Border (Kelebija) Railway. Belgrade. Available at https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/en/projekti/hungarian-serbian-railways-project-reconstruction-and-modernization-belgrade-novi-sad.

National Bureau of Statistics of China (2026). National Data. Beijing. Available

at https://data. stats. gov. cn/english/. .

Office for National Statistics (2025). Internet Sales: Retail Sales Inquiry. Newport. Available at https://www. ons. gov. uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry.

Portulans Institute (2025). Network Readiness Index 2025. Washington, D. C. Available at https://networkreadinessindex. org.

Standards and Trade Development Facility (2010). SPS Capacity Evaluation: A Conceptual Framework. Geneva. Available at https://standardsfacility. org/sites/default/files/DraftWorkingPaper_RevDec10_0. pdf

State Railway of Thailand. Thailand - China High - Speed Railway Project. Bangkok. Available at https://www. highspeedrail-thai-china. com/en/.

UNCTAD (2024a). Non-Tariff Measures and Deep Regulatory Integration in the African Continental Free Trade Area. New York and Geneva. Available at https://unctad. org/publication/non-tariff-measures-and-deep-regulatory-integration-african-continental-free-trade-area.

UNCTAD (2024b). Trade Preferences Outlook 2024. New York and Geneva. Available at https://unctad. org/publication/trade-preferences-outlook-2024.

UNCTAD (2024c). Kenya: Launched Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Geneva. Available at https://investmentpolicy. unctad. org/investment-policy-monitor/measures/4825/launched-strategic-plan-2023-2027-with-implications-for-foreign-investment.

UNCTAD (2025). World Investment Report 2025. Geneva. Available at https://unctad. org/system/files/official-document/wir2025_en. pdf.

UNCTAD (2026a). UNCTADstat Data Centre. Geneva. Available at https://unctadstat. unctad. org/datacentre/dataviewer/.

UNCTAD (2026b). Database on Generalized System of Preferences Utilization. Geneva. Available at https://unctad. org/topic/trade-agreements/trade-preferences-utilization.

UNCTAD (2026c). TRAINS: The Global Database on Non-Tariff Measures.

Geneva. Available at https://trainsonline.unctad.org/.

UNCTAD (2026d). World Investment Report 2026. Geneva. Available at https://unctad.org/publication/world-investment-report-2026-international-investment-turbulent-era.

UNECE. Pan-European Corridors and Major Transport Axes. Geneva. Available at https://unece.org/pan-european-corridors-major-transport-axes

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (n.d.). UIS Data Browser. Montreal. Available at https://databrowser.uis.unesco.org/.

UNIDO. QI4SD Index: Accreditation and conformity assessment indicators. Vienna. Available at https://qi4sd.org/.

United Nations (2026). UN Comtrade Database. New York. Available at https://comtradeplus.un.org/.

United Nations Regional Commissions (2025). UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. Available at https://www.untfsurvey.org/.

Universal Postal Union (UPU) (2025). Postal Statistics Database. Indicators: Number of Express Items, International Service, Dispatch; Number of Parcels, International Service, Dispatch. Berne. Available at https://www.upu.int/en/resources/postal-statistics/query-the-database.html.

World Bank (2024a). Worldwide Governance Indicators: Regulatory Quality. Washington, D.C. Available at https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/.

World Bank (2024b). World Development Indicators: Rail Lines, Total Route-km, Thailand (IS.RRS.TOTL.KM). Washington, D.C. Available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IS.RRS.TOTL.KM.

World Bank (2025a). Business Ready 2025. Washington, D.C. Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/businessready.

World Bank (2025b). Enterprise Surveys. Washington, D.C. Available at https://www.enterprisesurveys.org.

World Bank (2025c). Global Findex Database 2025. Indicators: Used a Mobile Phone or the Internet to Buy Something Online, age 15+ (fin26b); Made a digital merchant payment, age 15 + (merchant. pay). Washington, D. C. Available at https://www. worldbank. org/en/publication/globalfindex/download-data.

World Bank (2025d). Pakistan Development Update, April 2025. Washington, D. C. Available at https://thedocs. worldbank. org/en/doc/e414b36ae736660edf8f0f3cb597b1e9-0310012025/original/Pakistan-Development-Update-Report-April-2025-FINAL. pdf.

World Bank (2026a). Logistics Performance Indicators 2. 0. Washington, D. C. Available at https://lpi. worldbank. org/en/indicators/lpi-2-0.

World Bank (2026b). Overview: Tanzania. Available at https://www. worldbank. org/ext/en/country/tanzania#tab-economy.

World Bank (2026c). Understanding Country Income: World Bank Group Income Classifications for FY26. Washington, D. C. Available at https://blogs. worldbank. org/en/opendata/understanding-country-income-world-bank-group-income-classifica.

World Bank (2026d). World Bank Open Data. Washington, D. C. Available at https://data. worldbank. org/.

World Bank (2026e). World Development Indicators. Washington, D. C. Available at https://databank. worldbank. org/source/world-development-indicators.

World Trade Organization. Notification Portal. Geneva. Available at https://notifications. wto. org/.

World Trade Organization. Regional Trade Agreements Database. Geneva. Available at https://rtais. wto. org/.

Acknowledgements

The *Export-to-China Capacity Development Report* is the result of collective efforts of all those who contributed to its research design, chapter drafting, discussions and review, translation and publication. The team of the Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), and the research team of UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) each prepared relevant parts of the report.

The report was prepared under the leadership of Professor Liao Fan, Director-General of IWEP, CASS. Professor Liao provided guidance on the research direction, overall framework and key revisions of the report. Professor Su Qingyi, Head of the Department of International Trade of IWEP, oversaw the coordination of all matters related to the report, with Li Yuankun, Zhong Xiaohuan, Wei Hongbing, Shi Xianjin and Ma Yingying participating in specific coordination work.

Part Ⅰ of the report was drafted by the IWEP team of CASS. Those who contributed to the writing of relevant chapters include Shi Xianjin, Zang Chengwei, Ma Yingying, Wei Hongbing, Lin Shen, Chen Yihao, Zhuang Zongwu, Zhang Lin, Yao Xi and Li Yuankun. Part Ⅱ was prepared by a team led by Luz Maria de la Mora, Director, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD, and Ralf Peters, Head, Trade Analysis Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities. The contributing authors included Alessandro Nicita, Julien Bliesener and Lori Gegenbaoler. Valuable inputs were also provided by colleagues across

UNCTAD.

During the writing process, Liu Shiguo, Dong Yan, Mao Risheng, Gao Lingyun, Ma Tao and Wang Bijun participated in discussions and offered inputs for revising relevant chapters. After the first draft was completed, experts and scholars including Wan Zhongxin, Luo Yuze, He Jun, Liu Yue, Yao Ling, Liang Ji, Zhao Chunming, Cui Fan, He Huanlang and Li Chunding offered revision comments; Fu Li and Wei Hao provided suggestions on the report outline. We are grateful for the assistance provided by all these experts.

We sincerely thank China Social Sciences Press for its dedicated efforts in publishing the report, and Shanghai Finova Translations Co., Ltd. for its professional translation services. We welcome comments and suggestions from our readers, which will help us further improve the quality of our future annual research.

About the Author

The Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) was founded in 1964. It is an institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and is devoted to the study of international economics and politics. IWEP currently has 130 full-time staffs at twelve research divisions, five editorial offices, three research centers and its administrative offices. The Institute also manages two national academic societies. IWEP is engaged in policy-oriented and theoretical research, mainly covering Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, global macroeconomy, international finance, international trade, international investment, international development, international politics theory, foreign policy analysis, international political economy, global governance, international commodity and security studies. IWEP research has a special focus on China's economic practices and policies.