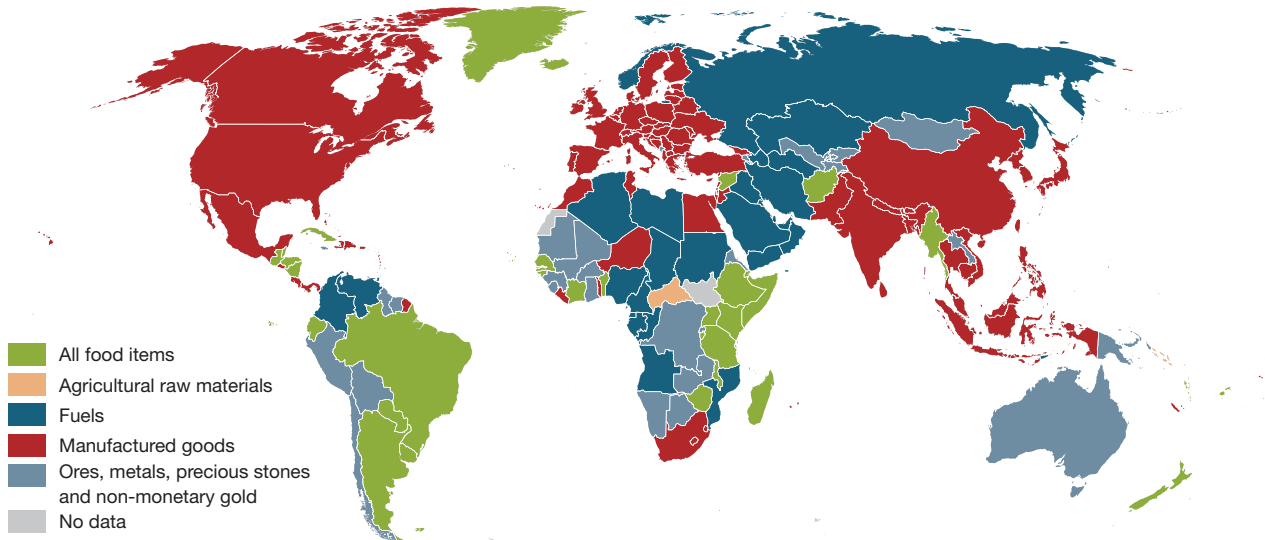




Fact sheet #3: Trade structure by product

Map 1 | Main export products, 2017



Concepts and definitions

The breakdown of merchandise trade by product group is based on the entries in the customs declarations that are coded in accordance with a globally used classification system, called the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS). The values of the individual customs declarations have been summed up to the level of product group, error-checked and submitted to the United Nations Statistics Division for integration in the UN Comtrade database (United Nations, 2018a).

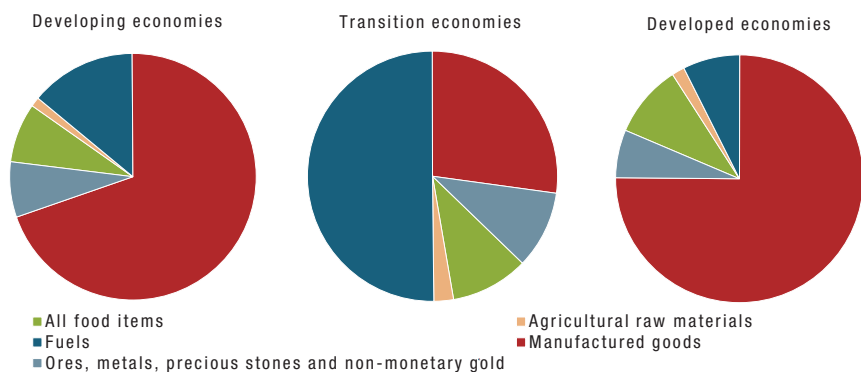
The UN Comtrade database contains product breakdowns based on the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC). These have been obtained by conversion of the raw data coded in HS and constitute the main source of the figures presented in this section. For correspondence between SITC codes and the five broad product groups presented in this section, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2018, annex 6.2.

Regional specialization patterns

Economies specialize their exports by different groups of products. For many developed and developing economies in Southern and Eastern Asia, manufactured goods represent the most exported product group. Many transition economies and developing economies in Western Asia and North and Central Africa rely mainly on fuels. Food is strongly represented in the exports of some economies in South America and Eastern Africa; and ores, metals, precious stones and non-monetary gold in the exports of several Southern and Western African and Central Asian economies.

For developing economies in 2017, manufactured goods accounted for 70 per cent of total exports – almost as much as in developed economies. In transition economies, only one quarter of exports were manufactured goods, while fuels accounted for one half.

Figure 1 | Export structure by product group, 2017 (Percentage)



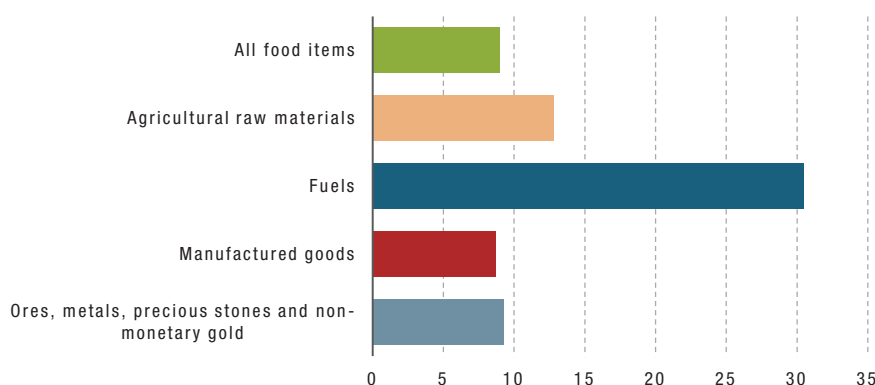
Note: Non-allocated products are not considered.



Upswing in trade throughout a whole range of products

With exports increasing by 31 per cent between 2016 and 2017, fuels led the global recovery in merchandise trade (see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2018, chapter 1.1). However, ample growth was recorded also for all other main product groups. Exports of agricultural raw materials rose by 13 per cent; exports of food, ores, metals, precious stones, non-monetary gold and manufactured goods increased at rates of around 9 per cent.

Figure 2 Annual growth rate of exports by product group, 2017
(Percentage)

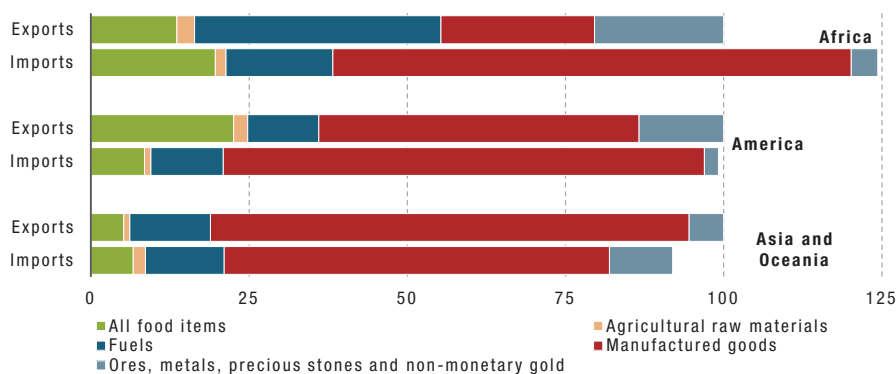


What do developing economies trade with others?

An analysis of extra-trade by product group shows that developing economies in Africa and America import much higher values of manufactured goods from the rest of the world than they export. In America this is offset by a positive balance in trade for food and for ores, metals, precious stones and non-monetary gold. In Africa, however, it caused an overall extra-trade deficit. This deficit was the equivalent of one quarter of total exports in 2017 despite positive balances in trade of primary commodities except food.

Extra-trade from developing economies in Asia and Oceania show a slight surplus in 2017, accounting for 9 per cent of exports, mainly because exports of manufactured goods exceed imports.

Figure 3 Developing economies' extra-trade structure, 2017
(Percentage of exports)



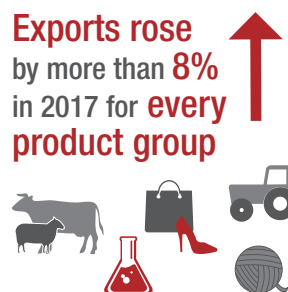
Note: Non-allocated products are not considered.

For references, see UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2018, annex 6.4.

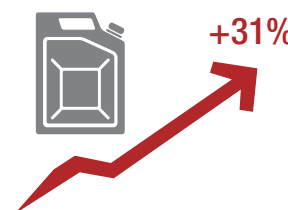
Food is main export in many South American and Eastern African economies



Exports rose by more than 8% in 2017 for every product group



Fuels exports surged



Africa's net exports of primary commodities do not compensate for net imports of manufactures

