



## ET EXTERNAL TRADE

For the month of: **February 2020** • Published on: **March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### IMPORTS UP 3.1%, DOMESTIC EXPORTS DOWN 22.9% IN FEBRUARY 2020

#### IMPORTS

**FEBRUARY 2020:** Belize's total imports for the month of February 2020 were valued at \$150.5 million. This was an increase of 3.1 percent or \$4.5 million from imports for February 2019, which totaled \$146 million (see Figure 1).

**INCREASING CATEGORIES:** Among the major commodity categories, the most notable increases were recorded for 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' and 'Food and Live Animals'. These two categories together saw a combined increase of almost \$10 million in February 2020 when compared to the same month of 2019 (see Figure 2).

#### Machinery and Transport Equipment

Purchases of 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' grew by more than \$5 million, from \$27.7 million in February 2019 to \$33.3 million in February 2020, due to heightened purchases of vehicles, trailers and pumps.

#### Food and Live Animals

Imports of 'Food and Live Animals' rose by \$4.5 million, from \$13 million in February 2019 to \$17.5 million in February 2020, on account of greater purchases of powdered milks, corn seeds and coffee.

#### Beverages and Tobacco

The category of 'Beverages and Tobacco' went up from \$3.1 million to \$4.3 million, with increased purchases of hard liquor and beer during the month.

#### Commercial Free Zones

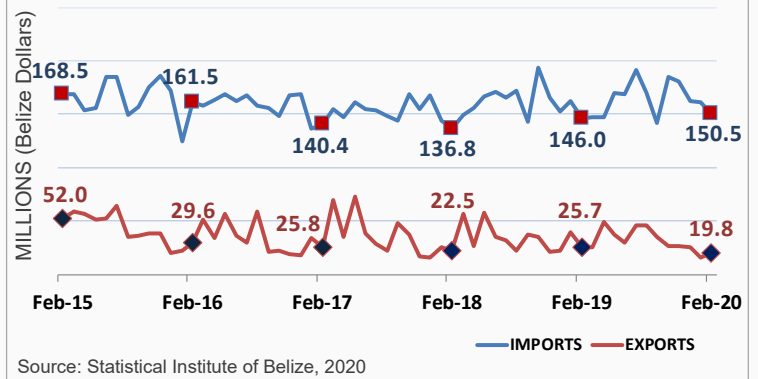
Goods destined for the 'Commercial Free Zones' grew by \$1 million, from \$22.5 million to \$23.5 million, due to increased purchases of fans and handbags in February 2020.

**DECREASING CATEGORIES:** Notwithstanding the overall increase in the country's merchandise imports during the month, there were decreases recorded in a few of the major commodity categories, with the most significant decline for the month being seen in the 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' category (see Figure 2).

#### Mineral Fuel and Lubricants

'Mineral Fuels & Lubricants' declined by almost \$5 million from \$26.5 million in February of last year to \$21.8 million in February of this year. This drop was mainly due to a significant reduction in imported quantities of diesel fuel during the month.

**Figure 1: Monthly Gross Imports and Domestic Exports; February 2015 - February 2020**



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2020

#### Manufactured Goods

Imports of 'Manufactured Goods' decreased from \$21.3 million in February 2019 to \$19.6 million in February 2020, attributed to fewer purchases of steel rods, metal structures and glass bottles.

#### Chemical Products

The category of 'Chemical Products' fell by \$1.2 million, from \$14.5 to \$13.3 million, owing to a reduction in purchases of fertilizers and medicines.

#### Other Manufactures

With fewer purchases of plastic cups, baby diapers and metal furniture, the 'Other Manufactures' category fell from approximately \$11 million in February 2019 to almost \$9.9 million in February 2020.

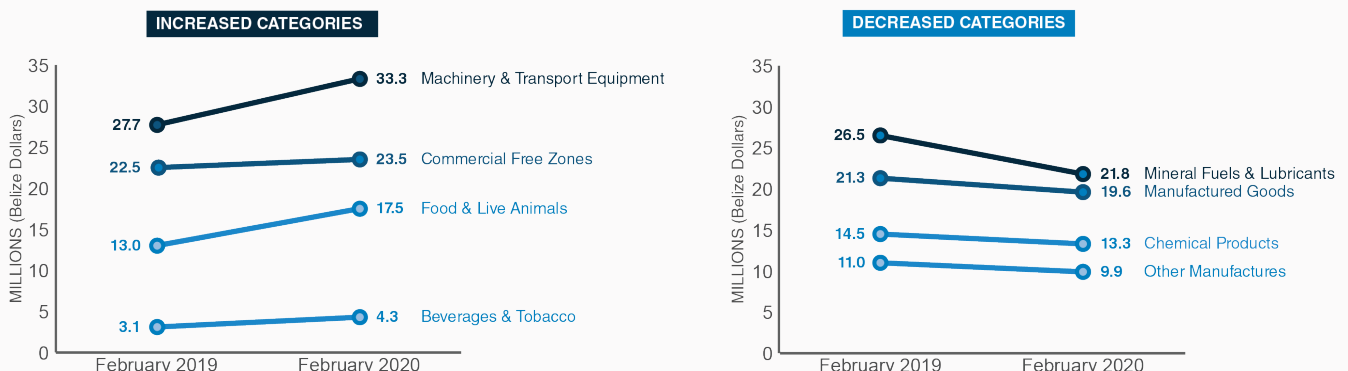
**FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE YEAR:** Merchandise imports for the first two months of this year, January to February 2020, amounted to \$311.3 million, representing a 1.1 percent or \$3.5 million increase from the same period last year.

**INCREASING CATEGORIES:** Greater expenditures across most commodity categories led to the overall growth in merchandise imports over this period. In particular, 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' and 'Commercial Free Zones' recorded significant increases during the two-month period.

#### Machinery and Transport Equipment

Imports of 'Machinery and Transport Equipment' rose by \$5.4 million, from almost \$66 million in 2019 to \$71.4 million in 2020, due to increased purchases of pumps and aviation equipment.

**Figure 2: Composition of Gross Imports by Type; February 2019 and February 2020**



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2020

### Commercial Free Zones

Goods meant for the 'Commercial Free Zones' went up by about \$3 million from \$47.3 million in 2019 to \$50.3 million in 2020, with greater purchases of handbags, women's clothing and fans over the period.

### Beverages and Tobacco

Imports of 'Beverages and Tobacco' rose by \$1.7 million, from \$5.6 million to \$7.3 million, owing largely to an increase in purchases of beer and hard liquor.

### Oils and Fats

With greater purchases of vegetable cooking oils such as olive oil, the 'Oils and Fats' category increased from \$3.4 million to \$4.6 million within this two-month period.

**DECREASING CATEGORIES:** Despite the overall growth in imports, the categories of 'Chemical Products' and 'Manufactured goods' both declined over the period.

### Chemical Products

With lessened imports of fertilizers, the 'Chemical Products' category decreased from \$29.5 million during the first two months of 2019 to just under \$26 million in the same period this year.

### Manufactured Goods

Reduced purchases of steel rods, glass bottles and galvanized steel coils drove the 'Manufactured Goods' category down by \$2.9 million, from \$45.1 million in 2019 to \$42.2 million in 2020.

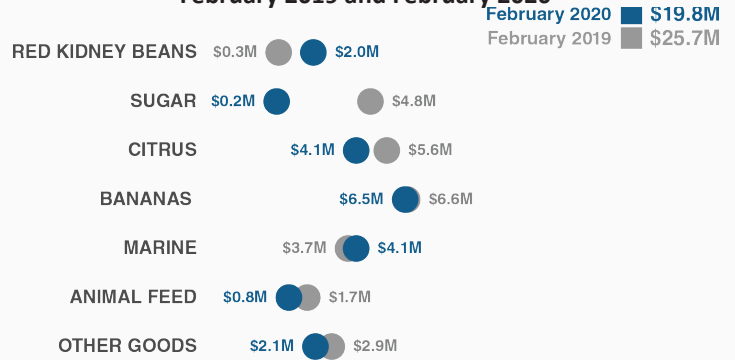
## DOMESTIC EXPORTS

Total domestic exports for February 2020 amounted to \$19.8 million, down 22.9 percent or \$5.9 million when compared to exports for February 2019, which were valued at \$25.7 million (see Figure 1).

**DECREASING CATEGORIES:** A decrease in earnings from sugar and citrus products were the primary reasons for the drop in total exports during the month. Revenues from sugar were down from \$4.8 million in February of 2019 to only \$0.2 million in February 2020. This was due to differing shipping schedules between last year and this year since there was a small bulk shipment of sugar exported in February of last year, while there were no bulk shipments of this commodity in February 2020. Earnings from citrus products decreased from \$5.6 million to \$4.1 million, as there were no exports of grapefruit oil and reduced sales of grapefruit concentrate in February 2020 compared to the same month last year. Exports of bananas also declined during the month, although only minimally, from \$6.6 million in February 2019 to \$6.5 million in February 2020. Among the country's other exports, earnings from animal feed decreased from \$1.7 million to \$0.8 million (see Figure 3).

**INCREASING CATEGORIES:** On the other hand, earnings from marine products rose by a modest \$0.4 million, from \$3.7 million in February 2019 to \$4.1 million in February 2020, due to improved sales of lobster tails. Among other exports, red kidney beans increased by \$1.7 million during the second month of the year, from \$0.3 million to almost \$2 million (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Composition of Domestic Exports by Type; February 2019 and February 2020**



**MAJOR DESTINATIONS:** Export earnings from the United Kingdom declined by a little over \$3 million during the month, from \$7.2 million in February 2019 to \$3.9 million in February 2020, since no bulk sugar was exported to this country during the month. Exports to other European countries fell from \$6.3 million to \$3.7 million, due to decreased exports of citrus products and lobster meat. Earnings from the CARICOM market declined by almost \$1 million, from \$4.7 million in February 2019 to \$3.7 million in February 2020, due also to decreased exports of sugar (see Figure 4).

**FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE YEAR:** Merchandise exports for the period January to February 2020 totaled \$35.8 million, down 45.3 percent or \$29.7 million from the same period of last year.

**DECREASING CATEGORIES:** A substantial decrease in export earnings from sugar was the primary reason for the considerable drop during the period. Revenues from sugar fell sharply by \$20.7 million, from \$22.2 million in the first two months of 2019 to \$1.5 million in the first two months of this year, largely due to varying schedules for the shipment of bulk sugar from one year to the next. While exports for the period of January to February 2019 consisted mainly of bulk sugar, exports for the same period in 2020 consisted of only bagged sugar. Variation in the schedule for shipments of crude petroleum was also the main cause of the drop in export earnings from this commodity during the first two months of the year. While the first two months of 2019 saw earnings of \$6 million from crude petroleum exports, there were no shipments for the same period of 2020. Exports of citrus products decreased from \$8.2 million to \$6.5 million, due mainly to a drop in exports of grapefruit oil and grapefruit concentrate. In addition, earnings from banana exports decreased slightly from \$12.6 million to \$12.2 million. Among other exports, animal feed experienced a drop of \$2.1 million, from \$3.2 million in 2019 to \$1.1 million in 2020.

**INCREASING CATEGORIES:** Notwithstanding the overall decrease in total domestic exports, some commodities did have a notable showing in the period of January to February 2020. Marine exports experienced a growth of \$1.1 million, from \$7.4 million to \$8.5 million attributed to improved sales of lobster tails. Among other exports, red kidney beans increased by \$1.5 million, from \$0.7 million in 2019 to \$2.2 million in 2020.

**Figure 4: Composition of Exports by Destination; February 2020 (Millions of BZ Dollars)**

