

Foreign Exchange Summary

as at August 28, 2020

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.76	1.34	1.19
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.55	2.70	2.41
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.55	2.70	2.41
Guyana (GYD)	218.00	161.04	280.18	250.67
Haiti (HTG)	118.21	90.14	149.56	139.90
Jamaica * (JMD)	149.63	115.25	196.91	179.87
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.07	3.59	3.22
Suriname (SRD)	7.52	5.69	10.03	8.97
T&T (TTD)	6.75	5.39	9.43	8.45

*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

Business News In Brief

Back-to-school VAT holiday for The Bahamas

The Bahamas has launched its back-to-school VAT (value-added tax) holiday scheduled for August 31 to September 20, 2020. It's an extension of the originally proposed two-week VAT holiday that was announced in May and now includes virtual learning supplies as well as locally purchased school supplies, including uniforms, clothing, backpacks, electronic book readers and school snacks. The tax exemption will only apply to items purchased locally and not those that are imported directly. All merchants who are VAT registrants and are licensed to sell back-to-school supplies will be required to participate. Consumers will benefit from the VAT savings at the cash register. [\(NG\)](#)

World Bank suspends publishing Doing Business Report

The World Bank has suspended publication of its Doing Business Report (DBR) to probe alleged irregularities in the underlying data impacting the DBR 2018 and DBR 2020. Published since 2003, the report ranks 190 economies based on how easy it is to do business there, taking into account trading regulations, property rights, contract enforcement, investment laws, the availability of credit and a number of other factors. The World Bank is auditing data collection processes and is reviewing changes that occurred after the institutional data review process for the last five Doing Business reports, the multilateral lender said. [\(Bloomberg\)](#)

Belize economy contracts by 23.3%

According to the Statistical Institute of Belize, the economy declined by 23.3% during the second quarter, April to June 2020 relative to the 2nd quarter of 2019. GDP during the period was estimated at \$558.6 million, down by \$169.9 million from \$728.5 million produced during the same 3 months of 2019. This marked the country's fifth consecutive quarterly economic contraction, with the latest estimate being the largest decline to date. Economic activity declined significantly across all 3 sectors, as the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with extended dry weather conditions, continued to severely impact the economy. Led by a 14% decline in sugar-cane production, the primary sector contracted by 12.2% during the reference period, from \$80.6 million to \$70.8 million, relative to same period in 2019. Manufacturing and Mining' industry saw output fall by 22.5% which influenced the 19.5% decline in the Secondary sector. The services sector, which comprises almost two-thirds of Belize's economy, recording a 23.2% decline in output with decreases in 'Wholesale and Retail Trade' and 'Hotels and restaurants' together accounting for a half of the overall reduction [\(SIB\)](#)

Corporate Movements

⇒ Mayberry Investments Limited (MIL) has advised of the appointment of Damali Morgan as Senior Manager – Risk and Portfolio Strategy, effective August 10, 2020

Barbados lauded by IMF on economic reform

Barbados has been lauded for its implementation of its economic reform program, while expanding critical investments in social protection. That the result of an IMF staff visit via videoconferencing between August 25-28, 2020, to discuss implementation of Barbados' Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) plan. The Fund noted that all indicative targets for end-June under the EFF were met, with reserves now exceeding US\$1 billion. The targets for international reserves, net domestic assets and the primary balance were met with some margin, which bodes well for meeting the end-September EFF targets. "Good progress also continues to be made towards implementing structural reform under the EFF. The two structural benchmarks for end-June 2020, related to tax and customs administration, were both met. A revised central bank law is expected to be ready to be sent to Parliament in September," noted the IMF. [\(IMF\)](#)

Stock Market Summary

as at August 28, 2020

Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 42 stocks of which 17 advanced, 18 declined and 7 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 59,567,739 units valued at over J\$313,340,083.03. Carreras Ltd was the volume leader with 40,150,858 units (67.4%). Index declined by 775.38 points (0.21 %) to close at 366,050.38.

Jamaica Junior Stock Exchange

Overall market activity resulted from trading in 25 stocks of which 8 advanced, 11 declined and 6 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 1,802,587 units valued at over J\$6,948,536.08. Index closed at 2,531.26.

Barbados Stock Exchange

1 security traded firm as 102,260 shares traded valued at \$58,288.20. Eppley Carib. Property Fund SCC – Value Fund was the sole security trading. Index closed at 2,748.92.

Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 15 securities of which 5 advanced, 4 declined and 6 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 409,158 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$2,911,772.61. JMMB Group Limited was volume leader with 296,275 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$519,330.91. The All T&T Index advanced by 1.09 points to close at 1796.29. The Composite advanced by 0.65 points to close at 1324.11 and the Cross Listed Index advanced by 0.03 points to close at 115.08.

Guyana Stock Exchange

3 stocks increased and 1 traded firm as 189,394 units traded. Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) was volume leader with 92,451 shares traded. The LSI closed at 641.14 .

Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

There were no trades reported on the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange this week. Index closed at 160.71.

CARICOM Business is a weekly newsletter produced by the Directorate of Trade & Economic Integration.

Editorial Manager: Joseph Cox ; Email: tei.info@caricom.org

Business News In Brief

Jamaica's imports, exports decline for January - May 2020

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) has reported that the country's imports for the period January to May was valued at US\$1,965.2 million - 29.4% below the US\$2,784.6 million spent in the similar period last year. STATIN further outlined that revenue from exports amounted to US\$510.6 million, 31.7% lower than the US\$747.9 million earned in the comparative period last year. For the January to May period, imports from CARICOM were valued at US\$103.1 million. This was 21.6% below the US\$131.5 million spent last year. Total exports to CARICOM was also valued at US\$30.2 million, 12.6% below that seen in the period last year. Re-exports for the period also fell by 22.4%. ([JO](#))

News Highlights

- [US\\$1.4B Real estate development to transform Guyana](#)
- [The Impact of COVID-19 on the Nature of Work](#)
- [IDB: COVID-19 The Caribbean Crisis](#)

OECD countries report unprecedented fall in GDP

Following the COVID-19 pandemic-containment measures around the world, real gross domestic product in OECD countries has suffered an unprecedented 9.8% fall in the second quarter of this year. The provisional estimates indicated the steepest drop ever recorded, significantly larger than the 2.3% decline in the first quarter of 2009, at the height of the financial crisis. Among G7 countries, the world's seven largest economies, GDP fell most dramatically by 20.4% in the UK., France declined by 13.8%, Italy (-12.4%), Canada (-12%), Germany (-9.7%) and Japan (-7.8%). In the US, where many states introduced 'stay-at-home' measures in late March, second-quarter GDP contracted by 9.5%. Year-on-year GDP growth for the OECD area dropped by 10.9% in the second quarter of 2020, with the UK recording the sharpest annual fall of 21.7%. ([CC](#))

International Oil Prices as at August 28, 2020

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change %
WTI Crude	US\$42.93	-0.09	-0.21
Brent Crude	US\$45.08	-0.05	-0.11
OPEC Basket	US\$45.81	-0.24	-0.52
Natural Gas	US\$2.65	+0.07	+2.71