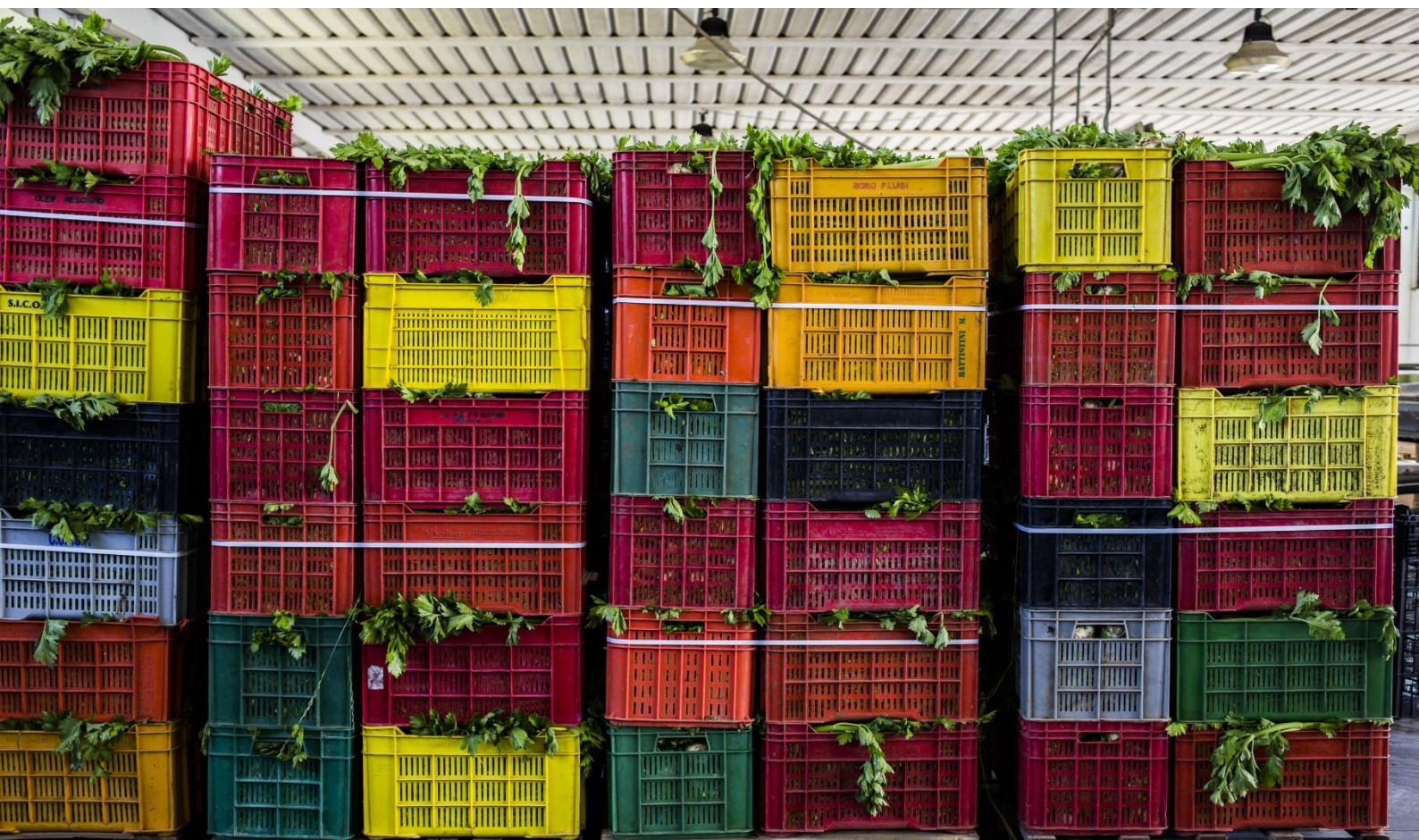




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FAOSTAT ANALYTICAL BRIEF 44

Trade of agricultural commodities

2000–2020

HIGHLIGHTS

- The value* of global agricultural exports in 2020 is 3.7 times higher in nominal terms than it was in 2000, while the share of agriculture in total merchandise trade value went from 6.3 percent in 2000 to 8.5 percent in 2020.
- Fruit and vegetables accounted for 22 percent of the total value of food (excluding fish) exports in 2020, followed by cereals and preparations (16 percent) and meat and meat preparations (12 percent).
- The Americas is the largest net food exporter, and Asia is the largest net food importer. Europe became a net food exporter in 2013.
- Among the main traded commodities, the top three exporters account for at least 30 percent of the global export value. In most cases, the largest exporters are also the main producing countries.
- China ranks among the main importers of cereals and meat, due to the size of its domestic market.

* All values are measured in current prices.

FAOSTAT CROPS AND LIVESTOCK TRADE

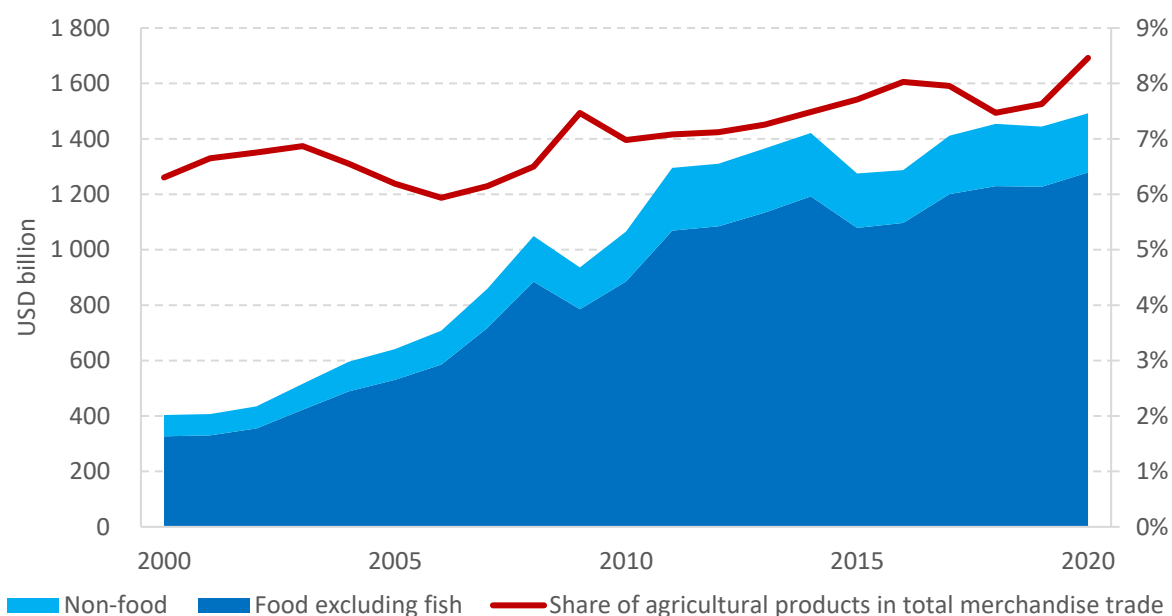
FOOD (EXCLUDING FISH)

The monetary value of global agricultural exports in 2020 (USD 1 492 billion) is 3.7 times higher in nominal terms than it was in 2000 (Figure 1). Food (excluding fish) accounted for most of this, and its share in the total agricultural trade increased during the same period, from 81 percent in 2000 (USD 327 billion) to 86 percent (USD 1 279 billion). Trends in the export value mirror to a large extent the international prices, which surged in 2007/2008 during the food security crisis that saw in particular the price of cereals reach record levels, and remained high between 2011 and 2014. The share of agricultural products in total merchandise trade value went from 6.3 percent in 2000 to 8.5 percent in 2020. Peaks in 2009 (7.6 percent) and 2020 in particular are due, respectively, to the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected global trade and resulted in a decrease of the overall value of merchandise traded due to reduced flows or price variations.

Fruit and vegetables accounted for 22 percent of the total value of food (excluding fish) exports in 2020, followed by cereals and preparations (16 percent) and meat and meat preparations (12 percent) (Figure 2). The United States of America was the largest exporter of food (excluding fish) in 2020 with USD 124 billion (10 percent of the total), followed by the Netherlands (USD 79 billion, or 6 percent) and Brazil (USD 73 billion, or 6 percent).

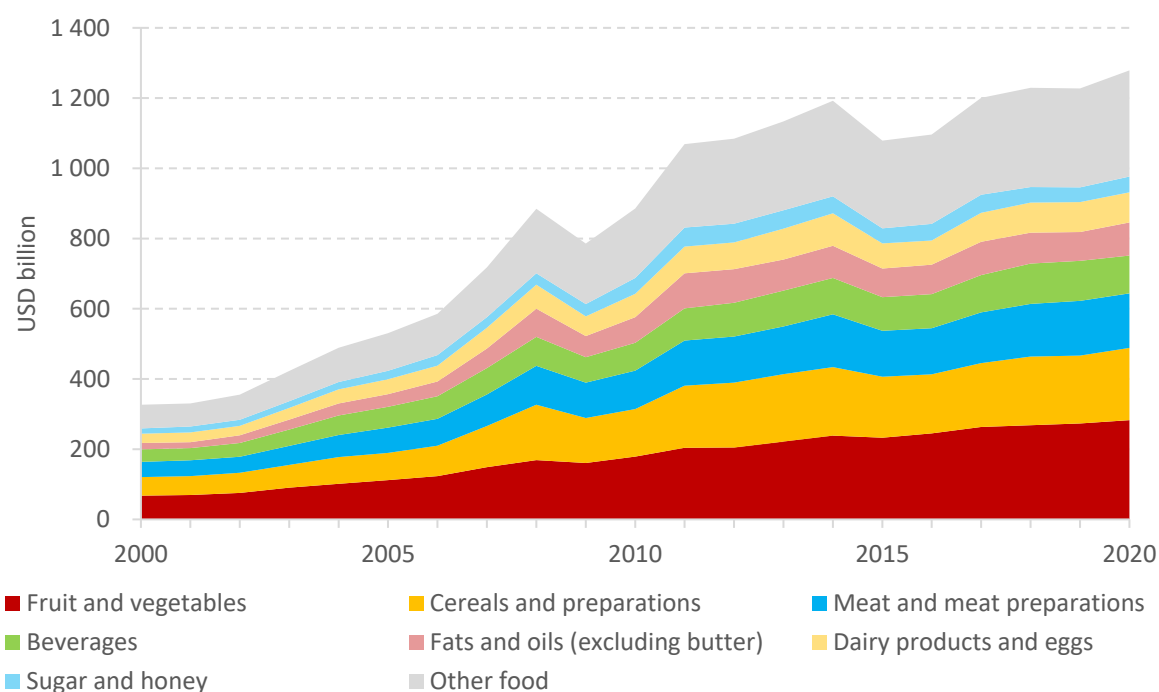


Figure 1: Value of world agricultural products exports by group and share in total merchandise trade



Source: FAO. 2021. Trade: Crops and livestock products. In: FAO. Rome. Cited April 2022. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TCL>

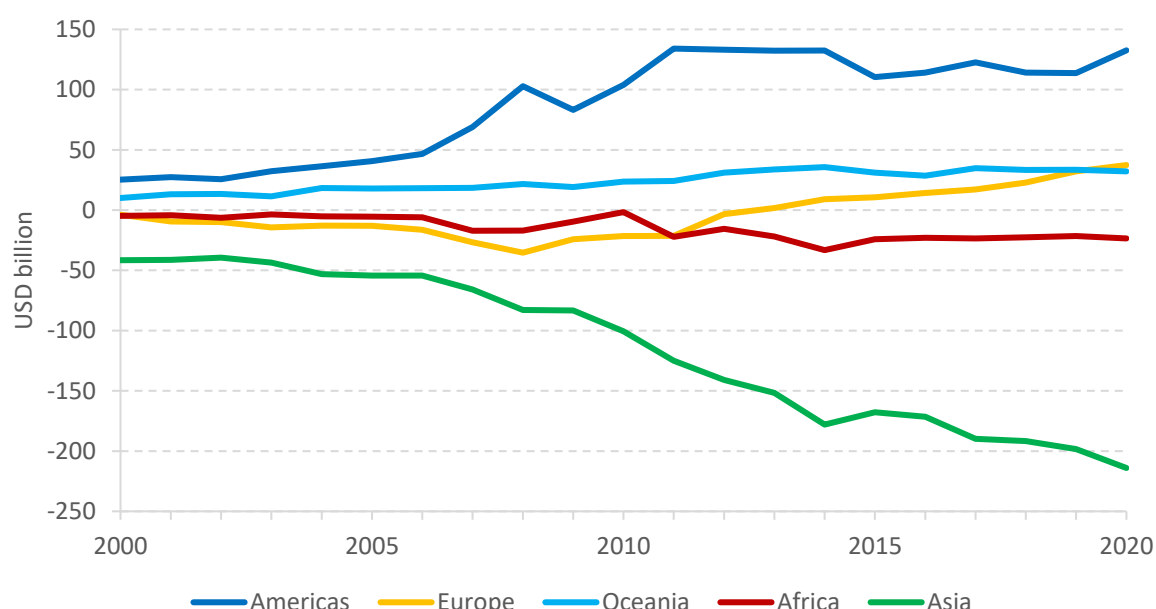
Figure 2: Value of global food (excluding fish) exports by group



Source: FAO. 2021. Trade: Crops and livestock products. In: FAO. Rome. Cited April 2022. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TCL>

Two regions stand out in terms of net trade (defined as the nominal value of exports minus that of imports): the Americas as the largest net exporter with a USD 133 billion surplus in 2020, and Asia as the largest net importer, posting a USD 214 billion deficit in 2020 (Figure 3). Importantly, these values exclude intra-regional trade: for example, the values for Asia include only Asian countries' imports from and exports to countries outside the region. Oceania remained a net exporter of food during the 2000–2020 period and Africa a net importer. While the Americas' and Oceania's surplus, as well as Africa's and Asia's deficit increased between 2000 and 2020, Europe, a net importer of food (excluding fish) during most of the period, became a net exporter in 2013 and overtook Oceania in 2020. The largest net exporting countries in 2020 are Brazil (+USD 64 billion), Spain (+USD 25 billion) and Argentina (+USD 21 billion). Brazil's top export is soybeans (39 percent of the country's total food (excluding fish) export value), Spain's is pig meat (7 percent) and Argentina's is maize (25 percent). The largest net importing countries in 2020 are China (-USD 117 billion), Japan (-USD 39 billion) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (-USD 31 billion). China's top import is soybeans (24 percent of the country's total food (excluding fish) import value), Japan's is pork meat (10 percent) and the United Kingdom's is wine (8 percent).

Figure 3: Food (excluding fish) net trade by region



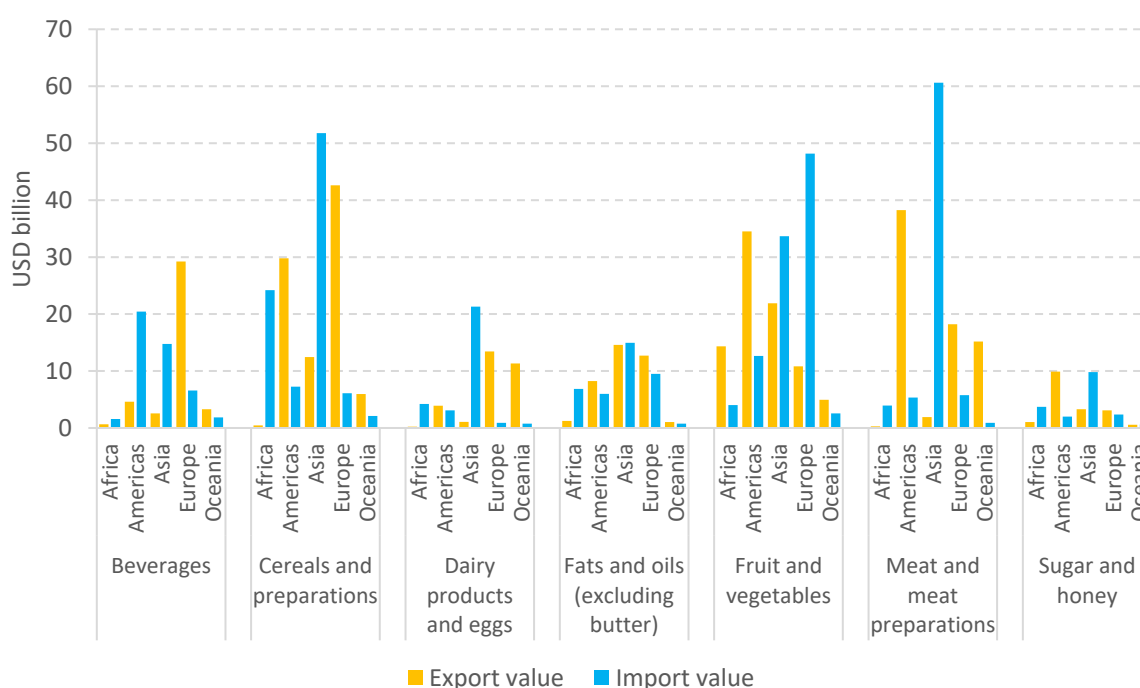
Source: FAO. 2021. Trade: Crops and livestock products. In: FAO. Rome. Cited April 2022.
<https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TCL>

Note: Excludes intra-regional trade.

Trade flows vary considerably between regions and commodity groups (Figure 4). The largest individual flows in 2020 are observed for meat and meat preparations (Asia's imports, at USD 61 billion), and cereals and preparations (Europe's exports, at USD 43 billion). Asia was the largest importer for cereals and preparations, dairy products and eggs, fats and oils, meat and meat preparations, and sugar and honey; for beverages, the largest importer was the Americas, and for fruit and vegetables it was Europe. The largest exporter of beverages, cereals and preparations, and dairy and eggs was Europe; the Americas led the exports of fruit and vegetables, meat and meat

preparations, and sugar and honey, while Asia was the largest exporter of fats and oils. The Americas, Europe and Oceania were net exporters of all commodity groups but one. Except for Oceania, that particular sector showed significant net imports: -USD 16 billion for beverages in the case of the Americas, and -USD 37 billion for fruit and vegetables in the case of Europe. Asia is a net importer of all commodity groups, and Africa is a net exporter of only fruit and vegetables.

Figure 4: Food (excluding fish) imports and exports by main categories and region (2020)

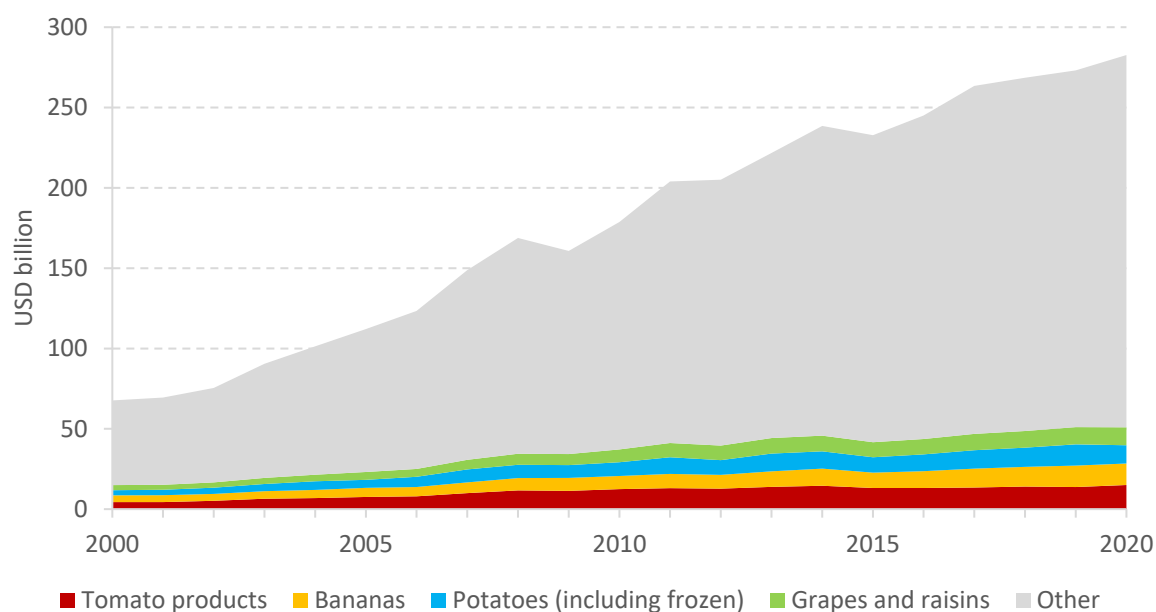


Source: FAO. 2021. Trade: Crops and livestock products. In: FAO. Rome. Cited April 2022. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TCL>

Note: Excludes intra-regional trade.

As seen in Figure 2, fruit and vegetables were the commodity group with the largest export value in 2020: USD 283 billion, up 318 percent from USD 68 billion in 2020. The top four items (aggregated to the extent possible by their base product) are tomato products (USD 15 billion, or 5.3 percent of the fruit and vegetables total), bananas (USD 13 billion, or 4.7 percent), potatoes (USD 11 billion, or 4 percent) and grapes (USD 11 billion, or 3.9 percent) (Figure 5). The relatively low individual shares are in part due to the large number of products (more than 100) included in the fruit and vegetables aggregate. All four items grew by 200–260 percent between 2000 and 2020, which is equivalent to around 6–6.5 percent on average per year. In 2020, the top three exporters accounted for a significant share of the global exports: 46 percent for tomato products, 47 percent for bananas, 52 percent for potatoes and 35 percent for grapes and raisins. In particular, Ecuador alone represented 27 percent of the world exports of bananas. The combined share of the top three importers tends to be lower (between 24 and 42 percent), and the United States of America is the leading importer of the main fruit and vegetables products. With the exception of China for grapes, the largest producers of a product are not necessarily the largest exporters, due to the size of their domestic markets.

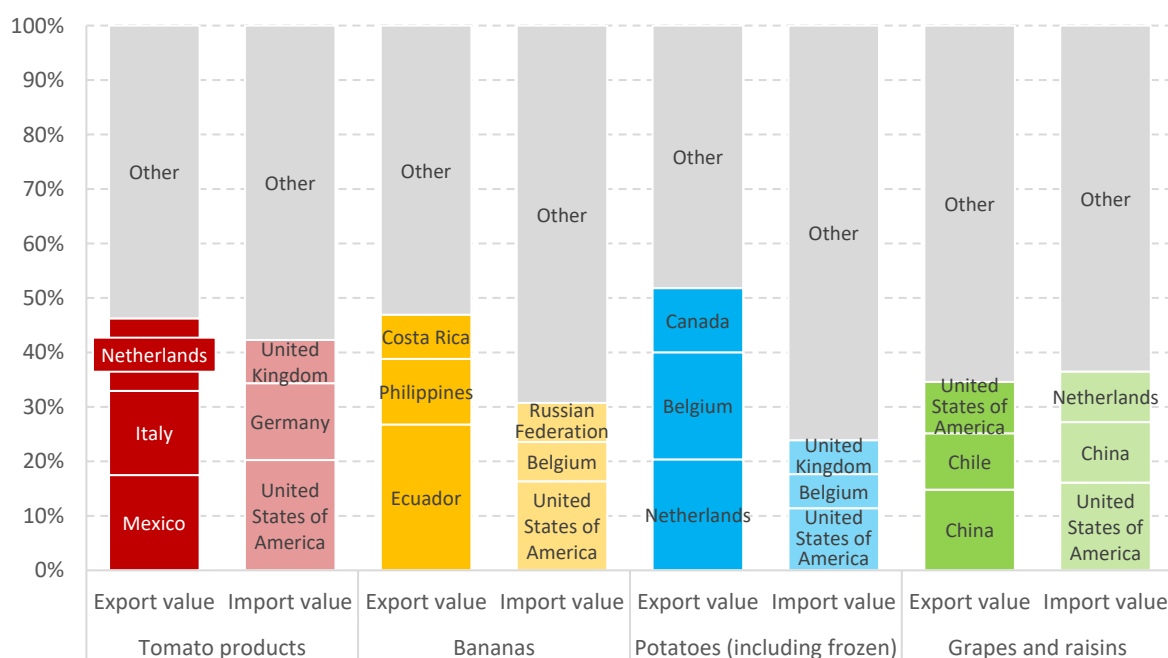
Figure 5: Value of global fruit and vegetables exports by commodity



Source: FAO. 2021. Trade: Crops and livestock products. In: FAO. Rome. Cited April 2022.
<https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TCL>

Note: Tomato products include tomatoes; tomatoes, paste; tomatoes, peeled; and juice, tomato.

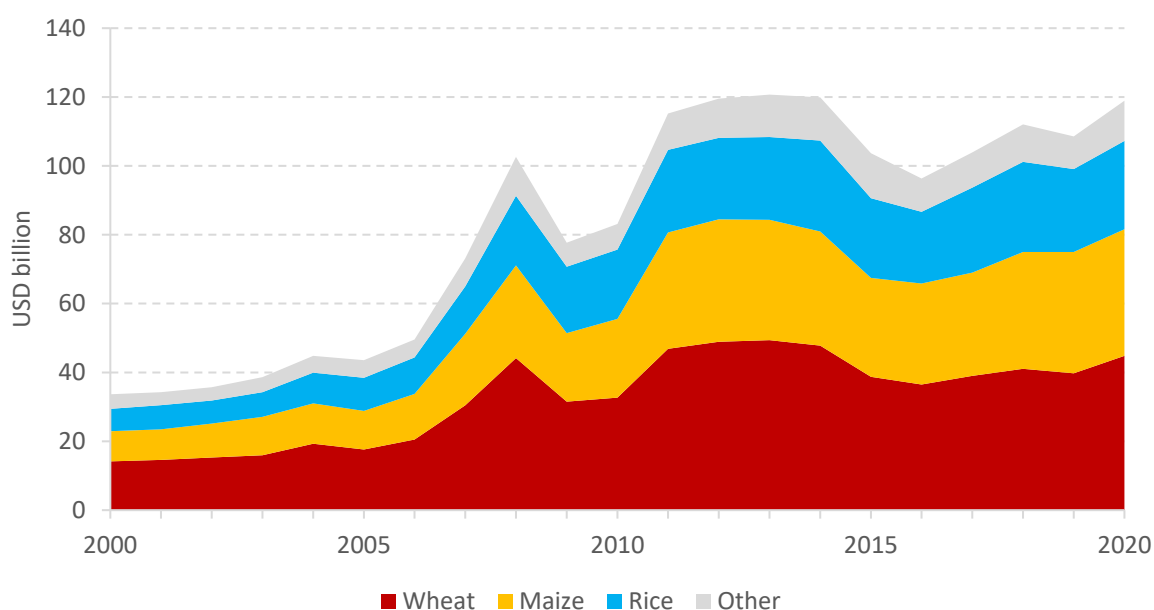
Figure 6: Global trade of main fruit and vegetables, main importers and exporters (2020)



Source: FAO. 2021. Trade: Crops and livestock products. In: FAO. Rome. Cited April 2022.
<https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/TCL>

The export value of cereals went up 253 percent between 2000 and 2020, from USD 34 billion to USD 119 billion (Figure 7), while the export quantities went up 88 percent over the same period. The overall value surged in 2007/2008 during the food security crisis that saw the price of cereals reach record levels (especially rice and wheat), and fluctuated around USD 115–120 billion between 2011 and 2014 as prices remained high during that period. Three crops accounted for 90 percent of the total cereals export value in 2020: wheat (38 percent, at USD 45 billion), maize (31 percent, at USD 37 billion) and rice (22 percent, at USD 26 billion). The relative shares of these crops in the total did not change much compared to 2000. For each of the main traded cereals in 2020, the main exporters accounted for significant shares of the total export value: 46 percent for wheat, 58 percent for maize and 56 percent for rice. The largest exporter of wheat in 2020 was the Russian Federation (18 percent of the global value); for maize it was the United States of America (26 percent of the global value), and India ranked first for rice (31 percent of the global value). The top three importers accounted for 16 to 24 percent of the total imports for these commodities. The main producers tend to feature among the main exporters, especially for wheat and maize. China stands out as a major producing country focusing on its domestic market since its exports are fairly small compared to its production; it was also the largest importer of rice in 2020.

Figure 7: Value of global cereals exports by commodity



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