

In terms of commodity groups, exports of agricultural and vegetable products, animals and animal products, non-ferrous metals, chemicals and miscellaneous commodities were all higher in value in 1958 than in 1957. Lower export values were recorded for fibres, textiles and products, wood, wood products and paper, iron and its products and non-metallic minerals. Notwithstanding a small decline, forest products were still the largest commodity group by a considerable margin and accounted for about 30 p.c. of the total. Newsprint paper, the leading export commodity, declined by somewhat more than the group as a whole and most other leading commodities in this group, with the exception of planks and boards and shingles, also declined. Non-ferrous metals accounted for more than 20 p.c. of the export total and as a group were second in importance only to forest products. An increase of some 3 p.c. in the group total was largely accounted for by higher exports of uranium, the increase in which more than offset declines in exports of aluminum, brass, copper, lead, nickel and zinc. Agricultural products increased by about 7 p.c. and were responsible for something under 20 p.c. of the total. Increases in exports of wheat, wheat flour, barley, fruit and vegetables more than compensated for considerable reductions in the export of oil cake, vegetable oils and seeds. The increase in the export of aircraft was sufficient to raise the total of miscellaneous commodities as a whole and the higher level of cattle exports was reflected in the 32-p.c. increase in animals and animal products. A significant increase in the export of fish also contributed to the latter and was caused mainly by the combination of an unusually large catch of salmon and the removal of British quota restrictions thereon.

Among the groups that declined, the largest absolute and relative reductions were recorded for iron and steel goods and for non-metallic minerals. The decline in the iron group was widespread but was most influenced by a reduction of about one-third in the export of iron ore (by far the most important commodity in the group) and would have been greater but for an increase of some 28 p.c. in the export of farm implements and machinery. Exports of petroleum and products, the leading category among non-metallic minerals, were more than halved and this contributed greatly to the over-all reduction. In this group there were also marked declines in exports of asbestos and abrasives, and the only significant increase was in gas exported by pipeline.

Most import groups declined in 1958 as compared with 1957. The largest relative and absolute decline was recorded in iron and steel goods, which nevertheless formed the dominant group and accounted for more than one-third of all imports. Non-farm machinery, the leading import category which was responsible for about one-quarter of all iron and steel imports, was particularly affected and declined by about one-sixth as a reflection of the domestic economic situation. Other leading commodities in this group which were also significantly affected by the decline were rolling-mill products, pipes, tubes and fittings, iron ore and farm implements and machinery. Non-metallic minerals, second in importance to iron and steel goods, were reduced by around 14 p.c. mainly as a result of considerable reduction in imports of petroleum products and coal. Significant increases in fruit and cocoa imports were not quite sufficient to offset declines in the imports of other agricultural and vegetable products, particularly of sugar, coffee and rubber. The only import groups to increase in 1958 were animals and animal products, wood, wood products and paper, and miscellaneous commodities.

Imports of fibres and textiles were reduced in value mainly as a result of a fall in the imports of raw wool (which was greatly reduced in price) and wool products. Among non-ferrous metals the most significant decline was in imports of electrical apparatus, but imports of aluminum products, precious metals (except gold) and clocks and watches were also reduced. Imports of a wide range of chemical products declined and the reduction in the group total would have been greater but for an increase in imports of plastics. Of the three commodity groups for which an increase was recorded in 1958, animals and animal products, and wood, wood products and paper are not greatly significant in the import total; miscellaneous commodities, which accounted for about 10 p.c. of all imports, comprise a very heterogeneous selection. The increase in all three groups was relatively small.