



# Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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## ***International trade slowing down***

In May the value of the exports of goods was up 7% on May last year, to over 46 billion guilders (21 billion euro). Imports increased by 4% to 42 billion guilders, according to the latest preliminary figures by Statistics Netherlands. These are the lowest growth rates since August 1999. The growth rate in imports and exports has been falling for a number of months. This is partly because prices are not rising as fast as before. The growth rate in May this year was about half that of last month.

The value increase of exports is still higher than that of imports, meaning that the trade balance for 2001 still increases. The first five months yielded a positive trade balance of more than 21 billion guilders.

## ***Trade balance with Belgium rising fast***

In May the trade balance with Belgium increased rapidly in comparison with May last year. The positive trade balance was 1,7 billion guilders in May, 70% more than in May 2000. Belgium is the second largest trade partner for the Netherlands after Germany, representing almost 12.5% of the total export value of goods. The increase is mainly caused by an above average growth of exports, of 11%, and a 4% drop in imports. The value of exports in gas, chemical products and electrical machinery and equipment increased in particular. The import dip in May was mainly the result of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. In comparison with last year the imports of live animals, meat and dairy products from Belgium were much lower.

## ***Imports from China substantial***

The value of imports from China increased substantially, by 19% in May to 1.6 billion guilders. The imports of electrical machinery and equipment contributed most to this increase. This brought China at the same level as Japan, which is usually the largest Asian trade partner. Almost a fifth of total goods imports comes from Asia. Compared to May 2000 there was a 6% increase in the value of goods imported from Asia, bringing the total to almost 9 billion guilders.

Dutch exports to China amounted to less than 0.5% of total exports. The trade balance deficit is therefore growing very fast, and is the second largest trade balance deficit behind that with the USA.

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**Table 1. Imports and exports, totals 1999-2001 (in billion GULDERS)**

	Imports	Exports	Trade balance
	billion guilders		
1999	393.8	415.6	21.8
2000*	472.2	506.8	34.6
January	33.6	35.6	2.0
February	36.7	39.0	2.3
March	40.5	43.7	3.2
April	36.3	38.1	1.7
May	40.5	43.4	2.8
June	39.4	41.5	2.1
July	36.8	39.7	2.9
August	37.2	41.0	3.8
September	40.7	45.2	4.5
October	43.6	46.2	2.6
November	45.3	48.7	3.4
December	41.5	44.6	3.1
2001*			
January	41.4	45.0	3.5
February	39.4	43.9	4.5
March	43.5	48.7	5.2
April	39.7	43.4	3.7
May	42.0	46.3	4.3

**Table 2. Imports and exports, totals 1999-2001 (in billion EURO's)**

	Imports	Exports	Trade balance
	billion euro		
1999	178.7	188.6	9.9
2000*	214.3	230.0	15.7
January	15.3	16.2	0.9
February	16.7	17.7	1.1
March	18.4	19.8	1.5
April	16.5	17.3	0.8
May	18.4	19.7	1.3
June	17.9	18.8	1.0
July	16.7	18.0	1.3
August	16.9	18.6	1.7
September	18.5	20.5	2.0
October	19.8	21.0	1.2
November	20.5	22.1	1.6
December	18.8	20.2	1.4
2001*			
January	18.8	20.4	1.6
February	17.9	19.9	2.0
March	19.7	22.1	2.4
April	18.0	19.7	1.7
May	19.1	21.0	2.0

\* preliminary figures

**Sourcer: Statistics Netherlands**