



Trade data

ECONOMICS | SOUTH AFRICA

The trade balance returned to a surplus in November

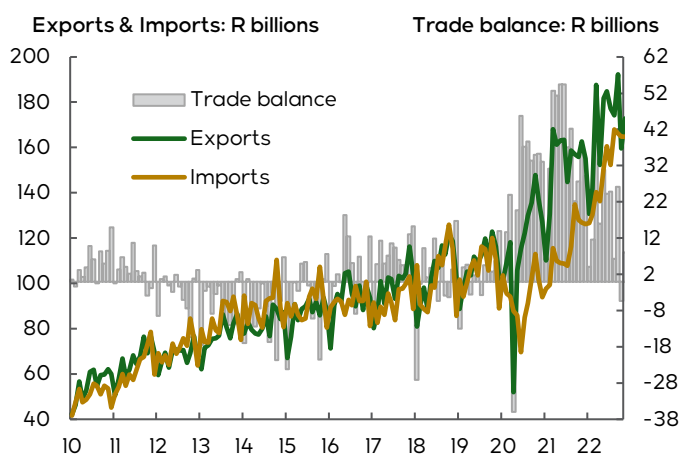
- The trade balance reverted to a surplus of R8 billion in November 2022. This after slipping into a deficit of R5.3 billion (revised down by R1 billion) in October. Exports increased by 8.2% mom after the disruption caused by the Transnet strike resulted in a contraction of 17% in the previous month. At the same time, imports declined further, shrinking by 0.1% mom. Imports tend to decline over the final months of the year as most companies tend secure stocks well ahead of the festive season.
- Imports remained strong on an annual basis, increasing by 29.7% in November compared to 28.6% in October. The prices of key imports have continued to trend at historically high levels resulting in an elevated import bill. Exports were up by 6.1% yoy compared with 2.4% in October. For the year to date, the cumulative trade surplus was R187.8 billion.
- Most exports increased during the month, except precious metals and stones and paper. The main drivers for the improvement included 'base metals', 'electrical equipment', 'vehicles and equipment' and 'chemical products', which increased by 37.5%, 32%, 7.3% and 13.2%, respectively in November. On the import side 'mineral products' drove the decline, falling by 19.5% while 'electrical equipment', 'chemical products', and 'plastics and rubber' increased by 7.3%, 8.5% and 19.6%, respectively.
- Trade conditions will remain subdued in 2023 as global growth forecasts continue to be downgraded due to the persistence of geopolitical tensions, sticky inflation, high energy prices and tight financial conditions. High-frequency data also indicate a moderation in trade conditions, with new export orders in both advanced and emerging economies remaining at contractionary levels.

Table 1: Trade Data (R million)

	Nov	Mom (%)	Yoy (%)	Oct
Trade balance	8 015.5			-5 274.6
Exports	172 703.6	8.2	6.1	159 589.1
Imports	164 688.1	-0.1	29.7	164 863.7

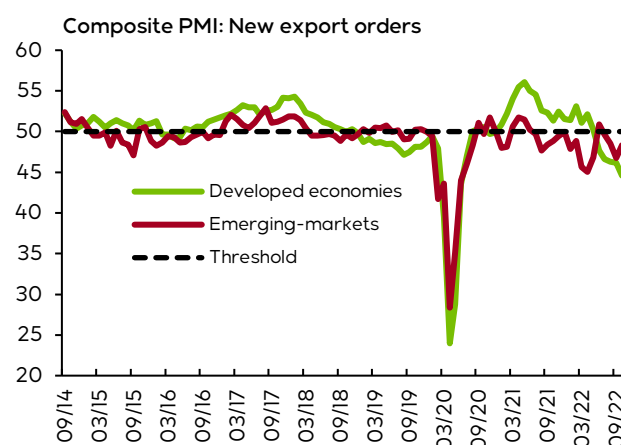
Source: South African Revenue Service

Chart 1: Trade balance reverts to surplus



Source: South African Revenue Service

Chart 2: Exports will remain subdued



Source: S&P Global

Table 2: Breakdown of trade data

November 2022							
Imports	% of total	mom (%)	yoy (%)	Exports	% of total	mom (%)	yoy (%)
Agricultural products	6.6	7.3	8.2	Agricultural products	10.1	3.5	21.8
Animal products	1.2	19.3	1.1	Animal products	1.1	22.8	12.3
Vegetable products	1.6	-10.8	19.5	Vegetable products	4.5	-9.5	44.3
Fats and oils	1.0	93.7	12.1	Fats and oils	0.5	34.6	38.7
Food	2.7	-1.7	4.0	Food	3.9	13.9	4.1
Mineral products	21.3	-19.5	63.3	Mineral products	26.8	1.5	23.1
Chemical products	11.9	8.5	13.6	Chemical products	7.2	13.2	27.4
Plastics and rubber	4.2	19.6	19.9	Plastics and rubber	2.3	23.3	40.3
Leather	0.3	9.4	36.5	Leather	0.3	10.0	20.4
Wood	0.4	11.0	5.2	Wood	0.6	28.8	23.8
Paper	2.9	7.6	36.4	Paper	1.8	-14.3	25.8
Textiles	3.4	17.3	15.2	Textiles	1.4	26.8	4.1
Footwear	0.9	-11.5	9.7	Footwear	0.3	16.5	28.7
Stone and glass	1.0	11.9	23.6	Stone and glass	0.5	35.1	6.1
Precious metals and stones	1.6	-1.6	5.2	Precious metals and stones	20.7	-5.0	-28.9
Base Metals	5.2	4.9	12.1	Base Metals	11.6	37.5	2.6
Electrical equipment	21.3	7.3	21.3	Electrical equipment	9.0	32.0	33.4
Vehicles and equipment	8.9	-0.4	62.4	Vehicles and equipment	10.4	7.3	15.9
Optical and medical equipment	2.4	14.6	18.7	Optical and medical equipment	0.6	6.1	34.6
Miscellaneous	1.2	-2.3	-2.0	Miscellaneous	0.6	13.2	18.2
Arts and antiques	0.1	197.1	188.8	Arts and antiques	0.1	115.1	20.2
Unclassified	0.1	-1.3	15.7	Unclassified	0.6	369.7	580.7
Special classification	6.3	4.8	55.3	Special classification	0.0	2.7	45.8
Grand total	100.0	-0.1	29.7	Grand total	104.9	8.2	6.1

Source: South African Revenue Service

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