
TIPS/AUSAID SADC Trade Database

Simple Download Guide for UN Comtrade Database

Date: April 2010

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Classification,	<p>Refers to commodity classification systems. UN Comtrade currently classifies data according to three systems, the Harmonised System (HS), the Standard International Trade Classification and the Broad economic Categories (BEC).</p> <p>The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (Harmonized System, or HS), or extended versions based on HS, such as the Combined Nomenclature used by the countries that are members of the European Union provide such details. Classification using these nomenclatures is based on the nature of the commodity. However, for analytical purposes, such a division of products is not the most appropriate.</p> <p>Commodity categories more suitable for economic analysis are provided by the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3 (SITC, Rev.3), which classifies commodities according to their stage of production.</p> <p>The BEC is a three-digit classification, which groups commodities according their main end use, introduced by the United Nations in 1970, also suitable for the general economic analysis of international merchandise trade data.</p>
Commodities,	Refers to products traded. In “Express” mode, commodities can be aggregated to different levels. AG0 refers to the most aggregated level corresponding to “total” trade. AG2,4 and 6 correspond to less aggregated data levels.
Record	Relates to a singular trade value corresponding to a particular reporters trade with a given partner in a particular year or period.
Reporter	Refers to the originating country or region recording trade transactions.
Partner	Refers to the corresponding country or region with which trade occurs.
Year	Refers to the calendar year from 1 January to 31 December. If a reporter uses a different base for the year, this would be reflected in the meta-data. Please see Date of recording for more precise information regarding the recording of transactions

Source; UN Comtrade (<http://comtrade.un.org/db/mr/rfGlossaryList.aspx>)

Overview

The UN Comtrade database contains over 1 billion trade records for countries since 1962. Comtrade offers free access to **Guest Users** and the search engines is restricted. Guest users have **limited** browsing options compared to users with subscriptions: for instance, guests have access to up to **1,000 records** for SDMX-downloaded **per day** and have no direct data downloading capability. **Registered users** however have access to the database with **full capabilities**, this is available for an **annual fee**. This document serves as an easy download manual for both types of users, offering simple directions on accessing the data available on the UN Comtrade database.

Login

Upon entering the website, users are identified as **“Comtrade Guest”**. **Users with subscriptions** (and accounts) must log in to access all the features of the database. The **“Fast Track”** menu is a short cut menu to the many options available on the database. Users not using the free service will require a **username** and **password** acquired upon registration.

United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics

Home Data Query Data Availability Metadata & Reference Subscription & Support **Fast tracks**

Home > Login

Comtrade Access

Welcome to UN Comtrade!
You are identified as Comtrade Guest.

Login as individual user:

User Name

Password

Remember me

Login

Forget your password? Just type your e-mail below:
 Recover

Fast tracks menu items:
Login
Data Query
Data Availability
Reference Tables
Commodity List
Country List
Knowledge Base

Checking Data Availability

Prior to searching for data, a user may wish to check the availability of data. The Comtrade database has a useful add-on of having this feature – “**Data Availability**”. Users can check the availability of data by reporter, commodity, year or date of loading onto the database.



This feature is exemplary in that it allows users to identify whether or not the data that is being queried is actually available. Also, users can examine the depth of data available for particular **countries**, particular **commodities** or particular **years**. In doing so, users do not have to waste time searching data which may not be available.

It is highly recommended that users first check the availability of data prior to commencing data queries.

Metadata and References

Another useful function on the Comtrade database is the availability of **Metadata** and **Reference** materials. As highlighted in below, these include **reference tables**, a **commodity list**, a **country list**, **explanatory** and **publication notes** and a **glossary**.



Reference tables include: **HS Classification by Sections**, **UN Comtrade References**, and Information on the **correlation** of **ISIC** and **SITC** codes.

The **commodity list** lists the different **commodity names** and **corresponding codes**. This list can be tailored according to the three classifications available, namely **SITC**, **HS** and **BEC**. The **country list** lists and defines **287 countries** including the country's full and abbreviated **names**, years for which **data** is **available** and includes a **snap shot** with an accompanying **ITC country profile**.

Explanatory and publication notes accompany different countries data. Specifically, they relate to any **added information** which **relates** to a particular year's data or supplementary comments added when the **data** was uploaded. These are notes which should be noted when working with or analysing said data.

This section of the Comtrade database serves as a supplement to complement use of the database. Users seeking more clarity about data and data anomalies should consult these notes accordingly. Other queries should be directed to UN Comtrade staff at comtrade@un.org.

Data Queries (Options)

Once data availability is confirmed, data queries can take place. As can be seen in the screen shot below, there are four query methods for finding data. This guide only focuses on the three most prevalent and widely used methods: **shortcut queries**, **basic queries** and **express queries**.



Shortcut Query

The **shortcut query** is the **simplest**, requiring the **least** amount of query **details** namely: trade flow, commodity, years, reporter, partner and classification (see glossary for explanations).



The shortcut query is a **simple** and fast manner in which to query data. It allows for the search of data using the **minimum requirements** from the user, but as such it is limited in the scope of the results this type of query will return. However (as shown in the above illustration) this method allows the users to easily enter the search parameters.

This method is **suggested** for very **narrow data queries** i.e. queries pertaining to a bilateral trade, around a particular commodity.

Basic Query

The **basic query** is slightly more **advanced** than the shortcut query. Critically, this query mode allows for more parameters to be entered when querying data from the Comtrade database.

The basic query has several more **advantages** in that it allows for **queries** to be **saved** for future reference, however this only applies for users with subscriptions. Also the **higher** number of qualifying **parameters** allows users to be more specific in their data search. As can be seen below, the basic query has options for editing **classification**, **commodities**, **reporters**, **partners**, **years** and **other options**.

The screenshot displays the 'Basic Query' interface with the following components:

- Navigation:** Home, My Account, **Data Query**, Data Availability, Metadata & Reference, Subscription & Support, Fast tracks. Breadcrumbs: Home > Data Query > Basic Selection.
- Step 0. Load Saved Query (optional):** -- Select Saved Query to Load -- (dropdown) and Load button.
- Step 1. Select Classification:** HS: As reported, 92, 96, 02, 07, BEC. SITC: As reported, Rev.1, Rev.2, Rev.3, Rev.4.
- Step 2. Enter Selection Items:** Tabs for Commodities, Reporters, Partners, Years, and Others. A red arrow points to the 'Others' tab.
- Commodities Section:**
 - Enter Commodity Codes
 - Step 1. Select Source: Commodities Search (dropdown)
 - Step 2. Select Items: Search / Select then Add. Includes a search box, 'in HS2007' dropdown, Search button, and checkbox for 'All commodities'.
 - Buttons: Add, Remove, Remove All, Exclude.
 - Save selections to favorites button.
- Step 3. Save Query (optional):** Enter query name and Set Notification Option. [Help](#). Save Query, Save As Default buttons. Enable Notification: No (dropdown), Enable AutoBatch: No (dropdown), Update Type: Incremental (dropdown).
- Bottom Buttons:** Submit Query, Go to Comtrade Explorer, Submit to Batch Processing.

This query mode is **suggested** for **larger data** searches, especially queries relating to **multiple commodities, reporters and partners**. However, queries for data over 1000 records will only be downloadable for users with subscriptions.

Express Query (Recommended)

The **express selection** is the most **recommended** query mode. The express selection allows for slightly more parameters than the basic query.

Step 0. Load Saved Query (optional)

-- Select Saved Query to Load --

Step 1. Select Classification

HS: As reported 92 96 02 07 BEC

SITC: As reported Rev.1 Rev.2 Rev.3 Rev.4

Step 2. Enter Commodities, Reporters, Partners, Years and Select Trade Flow

Basic Items **Advanced Items**

Enter Commodity Codes / Text

Special Codes : *All, AGO, AGI, .. AG6* (aggregate level) and *LF* (leaf).
Use - to exclude. Wild characters : * (Any string of zero or more characters) and ? (Any single character)

Along similar lines as the basic query, the **express** selection **allows** users to either **save or upload** previously saved **queries** for download. Also, similarly to the basic query, users have the option to **lookup** and **save** the **different query parameters**. Users can **customize** and **save selection** groups for future use.

Enter Reporters Codes / Text

Separated by comma. Special code: *All*. Minus sign is not applicable.

Enter Partners Codes / Text

Separated by comma. Special code: *All*. Minus sign is not applicable.

Enter Years

Separated by comma. Special code: *All*. Minus sign is not applicable.

Select Trade Flow

Exports figures always include Re-exports; Re-exports should be used only to distinguish between Domestic exports and Re-exports.

Import Export re-Export re-Import

Step 3. Save Query (optional)

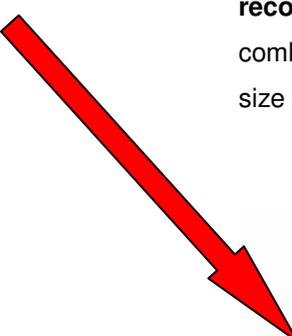
Enter query name and Set Notification Option

Enable Notification: Enable AutoBatch: Update Type:

Firstly, users can **search** and **save** different **commodity codes**. As the data is presented in differing aggregate levels, a user can save the most frequently used codes. Also, users can **search** and **save reporters**. In this option users can group countries or regions according to their regular use. For example, a user can group all the SADC member states into a singular grouping which can be recalled every time a new query is established. Secondly, **similar steps** can be done for **trading partners** and **trade years** to be **queried**.

Data Query Results

Data queries will return query **results**. These results display the **availability**, **size** and **number of records**. As illustrated below, a query for SADC members states trade (for all commodities combined i.e. aggregate level zero “AG0”) with “ALL” partners returns 3089 records with a file size of 0.38mb. The data request is now ready for download.



Home My Account Data Query Data Availability Metadata & Reference Subscription & Support Fast tracks

Home > Data Query > Express Selection > Query Result

Basic Query Results: [Help](#)

The query will return **3089** records.
It's not recommended to view it on screen (1000 records limit).
Please modify your query (or select additional selection from below) or click download (not applicable for guest user).

* To improve performance, Direct Download ignore any defined sort order.
* Estimated file size: **0.38** MB.

Please select additional selection from the following:
Commodity: [TOTAL](#)
Partner: [World](#)

Quick filter

Selected classification: HS as reported
Selected commodities: AG0
Selected reporters: [Angola](#), [Botswana](#), [Dem. Rep. of the Congo](#), [Lesotho](#), [Madagascar](#), [Malawi](#), [Mauritius](#), [Mozambique](#), [Namibia](#), [Seychelles](#), [South Africa](#), [Swaziland](#), [United Rep. of Tanzania](#), [Zambia](#), [Zimbabwe](#)
Selected years: [2007](#), [2008](#)
Selected partners: All
Selected trade flows: Import

Using the above result, it is noticeable that the query was for “TOTAL” trade as opposed to “ALL” products. This is important in that “ALL” products would have significantly altered the query

results as all product lines would have been included as records for each reporter, unlike total trade which only takes one record.

Such nuances are critical to consider when crafting a **query**, as they **impact** the **results**. So try **different query formulations** until the **desired data** is produced.

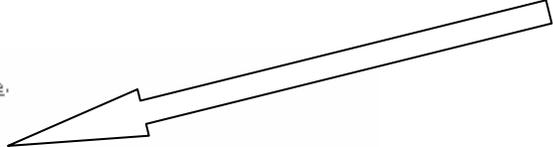
Data Downloads

Upon verification of the availability of searched data, download options are presented.

Three options are available as highlighted below, “SDMX download”, “direct download” and batch submission”. **Guest users** can **only** use the **SDMX download** option, which is a MS **Excel compatible file** format.

The **direct download** option allows a **registered user** to download and save the requested dataset in a particular format. The formats available for direct downloads are CSV, another Excel compatible format.

Don't like the default download format? Set your own format at [here](#).
[Modify Selection](#) [View Graph & Map](#) [View Explanatory Notes](#) [SDMX Download](#)
[Direct Download](#) [Batch Submission](#) [Save Query](#) [View Not-Available-Data](#)
Estimated quantity/netweight shown in italics
Flag refers to quantity/netweight estimation:
0 = no estimation, 2 = quantity, 4 = netweight, 6 = both quantity and netweight



The “**batch submission**” option is also only applicable to **registered users**. This option allows a user to submit a **batch request** for the requested data. UN Comtrade downloads the data for the user and a “ready” **email is sent** to the email corresponding to the user account. Users need only click the link from this batch email to **immediately download** and save the “batch” of data requested. This option is more readily used for **larger data files** which are cumbersome to download directly.

Once the **data** is **saved**, it can now be **utilised**.

For **more manuals** on using the UN Comtrade Database **visit** <http://comtrade.un.org/db/default.aspx>.