



ZIMBABWE-CHINA

TRADE BRIEF



Energising Zimbabwe's Export Growth

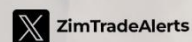


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1. China Overview

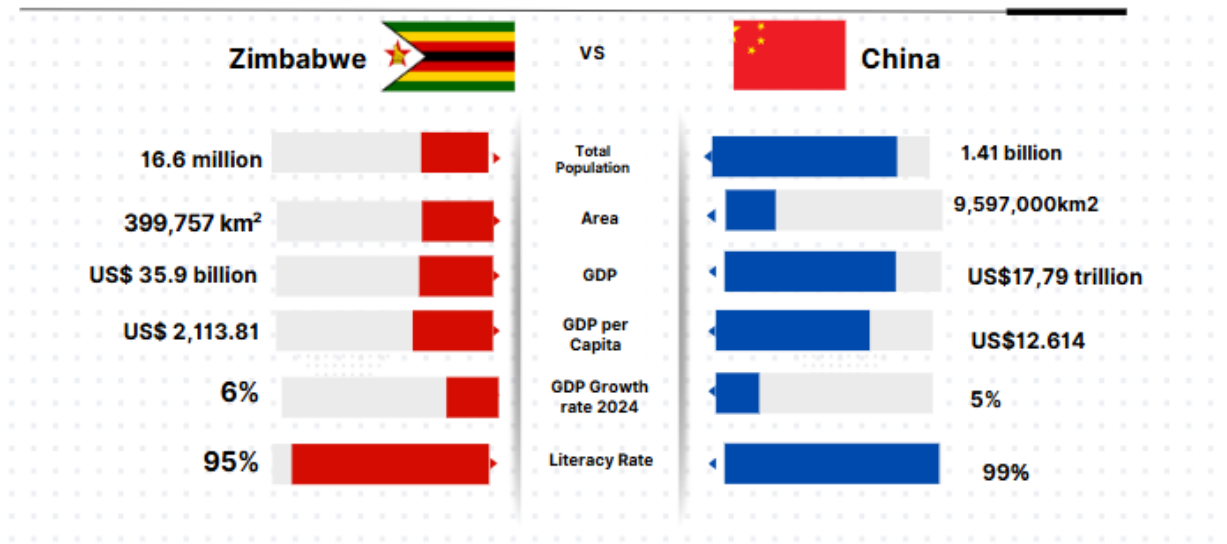
With a population of 1.4 billion people, China is the world's second-largest economy by gross domestic product (GDP) and has held this position since 2010. China is the number one exporter and number two importer globally, with a trade balance of \$81.7 billion in September 2024. The country's industries are shifting towards advanced technology, manufacturing, and financial services. China is one of Zimbabwe's key trading partners in terms of both exports and imports.

Through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or One Belt One Road Initiative, China has been on an infrastructure development drive since 2013, whose aim is to connect China with the rest of the world through land and sea routes, reviving the ancient Silk Road trade routes.

2. Key Economic Indicators

- **GDP:** US\$17.79 Trillion (World bank 2023)
- **GDP per capita:** US\$12,614 (2023)
- **Population** 1.41 billion people
- **Major Industries:** Mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and services
- **Currency:** Chinese yuan renminbi
- **Key Trade Partners:** United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, and Russia

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

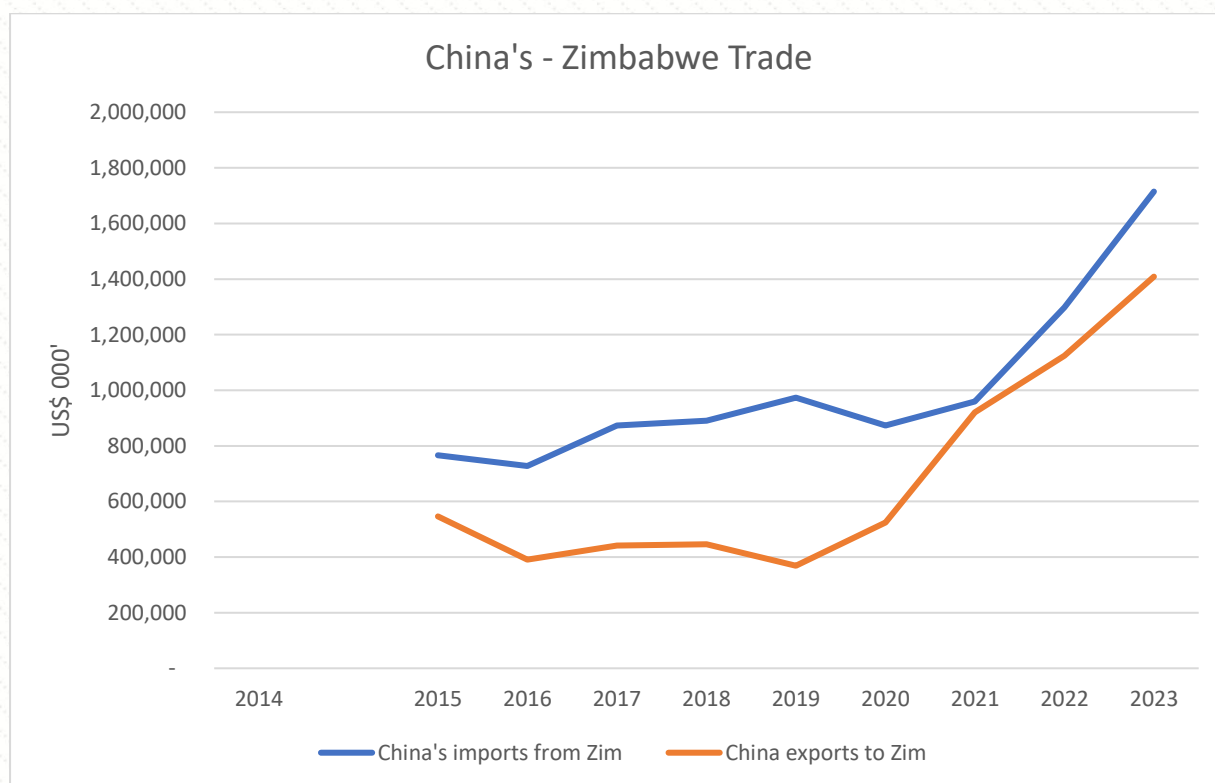


3. Zimbabwe – China Trade

China has emerged as a significant economic partner for Zimbabwe, particularly in recent years. The bilateral relationship, underpinned by mutual respect and cooperation, has fostered increased trade and investment flows between the two nations.

China is Zimbabwe's third largest export market with exports amounting to US\$1.71 billion in 2023, up from US\$835 million recorded in 2014, translating to 105% increase over the past 10 years.

China has also been a key source market for Zimbabwe, recording imports of US\$ 1.4 billion in 2023, up from US\$403 million recorded in 2014 translating to 248% increase. Zimbabwe mainly imports machinery, vehicles, and articles of steel from China.

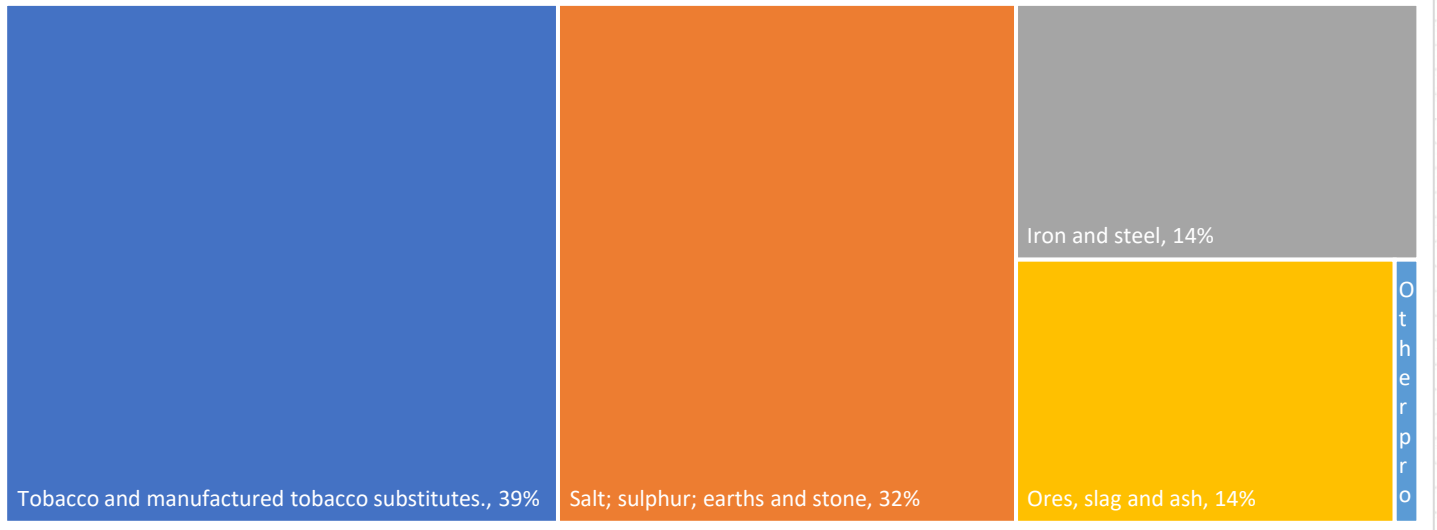


Source: Trademap

4. China's Imports from Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean exports to China have largely been tobacco and minerals, constituting over 85% of exports. In an endeavour to improve the product diversification to China, the two governments are working on the requisite regulatory framework to increase the trade of other products such as horticulture products and processed lithium. (Refer to Annex 1)

China's Imports from Zimbabwe

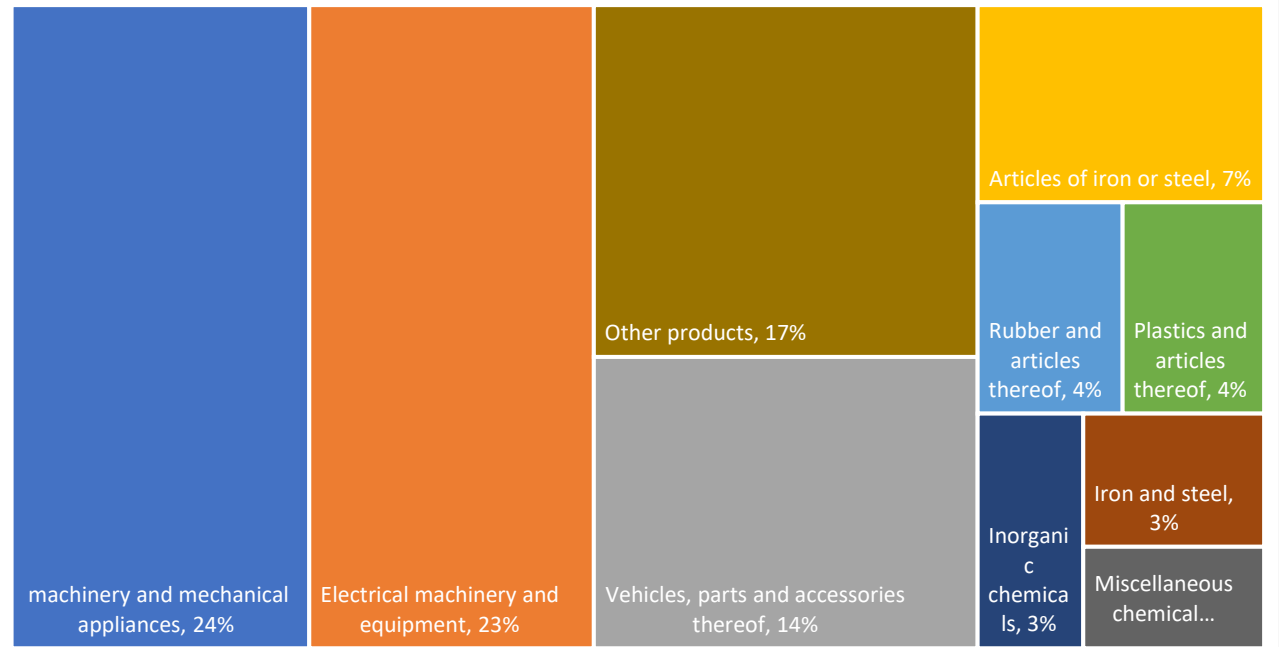


Source: Trademap

5. China's exports from Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's imports from China are mainly mechanical machinery and appliances constituting 24% (US\$334 million), Electrical machinery 23% amounting to US\$319 million of imports and vehicles 14% amounting to US\$195 million. (Refer to Annex 2)

China's Exports to Zimbabwe



Source: Trademap

6. Zimbabwean Products with an Export Potential to China

There is a great scope for minerals value addition in the country, which include on products such as lithium, diamonds, chrome and gold. On top of trading in value added minerals, there is also scope for the supply of Zimbabwean agro products to China, which have a growing demand. The agro products with potential are as follows:

a. Citrus

Trend: Since 2019, China's imports of citrus from Africa have been averaging between US\$240 million to US\$280 million. Total imports of citrus into China amounts to US\$3.4 billion, showing a strong demand for the product in China.

Opportunity: In 2022, Zimbabwe and China signed a Citrus protocol paving way for the country to supply the citrus to China. Zimbabwe can competitively supply citrus to China as it is also supplying markets in Europe where there are also strict import requirements. There are new plantations in Zimbabwe at farms such as Bishopstone Estates, Nottingham Estates, Dodhill and Tineo that can effectively tap into the market.

b. Macadamia Nuts

Trend: China has a growing middle class with increasing disposable income, leading to higher demand for high-quality, healthy food products like macadamia nuts. Imports of Macadamia nuts in China amounts to over US\$220 million and there is a strong demand for the product, which is treated as a super food.

Opportunity: Farmers in Manicaland producing macadamia nuts are actively looking for markets and China is one such potential market. Zimbabwe's macadamia nut exports to China have been steadily increasing in recent years, making it a significant contributor to the country's agricultural exports. In 2023, China imported macadamia nuts worth over US\$7 million from Zimbabwe, and this trend is expected to continue on an upward trend.

c. Sesame Seeds

Trend: China imports over US\$1.1 billion of sesame seeds from Africa out of total imports of US\$1.9 billion, meaning that Africa is supplying over 57% of China's Sesame seeds requirements.

Opportunity: ZimTrade has a sesame seeds cluster, which can look for offtakers in China and explore the vast market.

d. Coffee, Tea, Maté, and Spices

Trend: China imports over US\$ 204 million worth of coffee, tea, mate and spices from Africa out of a total bill of US\$5.7 billion.

Opportunity: Zimbabwe has been introducing a new range of indigenous offerings like zumbani and moringa that could capture interest within this niche. Given the emergence of demand for new, health-oriented teas and herbal products, positioning these as immune-boosting and wellness-enhancing alternatives can differentiate

Zimbabwean exports from common products like black tea. Strategic partnerships with specialty tea importers or direct-to-consumer branding can boost their appeal in the herbal tea segment.

e. Industrial Hemp

Zimbabwe has legalized the cultivation of industrial hemp, recognizing its potential for economic growth and diversification. This move has opened up new opportunities for the country, particularly in the agricultural sector.

- **Hemp Fiber:** Used in textiles, paper, and construction materials.
- **Hemp Seed:** A nutritious food source rich in protein and omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Hemp Oil:** Used in cosmetics, food, and medicine.
- **Cannabidiol (CBD) Oil:** A non-psychoactive compound with potential medicinal benefits. There is also scope increase tobacco exports currently being done from Zimbabwe and encourage exports of medicinal tobacco. (Refer to Annex 3 & 4)

7. China's Trade performance

China's total exports amounted to US\$3.89 trillion in 2023, making the country, the largest exporter in the world. Over the past 10 years, the country recorded a 45% increase in exports from US\$2.34 trillion recorded in 2014. The country mainly exports Machinery, vehicles, Plastics and articles thereof. (Refer to Annex 3)



Source: Trademap

China's total imports amounted to US\$2.56 trillion in 2023 up from US\$1.96 trillion recorded in 2014 translating to 31% increase over the decade. This shows that China's exports are growing more than the imports. Major imported products include (refer to Annex 4)

8. Issues to consider

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Diversify Export Products:**
- There is need for Zimbabwe to diversify its export basket to China beyond primary commodities.
- **Improve Product Quality:** Enhance product quality to meet Chinese standards as China requires all food exporters to register with General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China.
- **Market Research:** Conduct market research to identify products with a potential in China.
- **Trade Agreements:** There is a need to negotiate for an Economic Partnership kind of Trade Agreement with China, to reduce tariffs as currently Zimbabwean products are treated under MFN rates.
- **Simplify Trade Procedures:** Streamline trade procedures, reduce bureaucracy, and increase transparency as exporting to China can be cumbersome.
- **Increase Chinese Backward Investment:** Encourage Chinese investment in Zimbabwe's priority sectors with intention for exporting to China as what has been done in tobacco financing.
- **Develop Infrastructure:** Upgrade transportation infrastructure (air, land, and sea) to facilitate trade.
- **Capitalise on the trade protocol** signed with China on avocados. There is also need for concerted cooperation to begin trading by organising B2B meetings for companies.
- **Speed up** proposed trade protocol negotiations for blueberries, chillies, sesame seeds, butternuts and peas.

9. Conclusion

China has made significant investments in the country, which forms a basis for transformed trade relations between the two countries. There is need for continued investment by the Chinese companies into the value chains of these products thereby adding value to some of the products being exported to China. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities, Zimbabwe and China can continue to forge strong economic ties and contribute to mutual prosperity.

10. Annexes

Annex 1 – China's Imports from Zimbabwe

Product label	China's imports from Zimbabwe			
	Value in 2020	Value in 2021	Value in 2022	Value in 2023
	US\$ 000'			
All products	872,724	960,121	1,298,454	1,714,625
Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes;	606,118	519,449	650,716	670,868
Salt; sulphur; earths and stone; plastering materials, lime and cement	13,540	18,646	155,809	555,776
Iron and steel	86,556	168,110	329,471	240,417
Ores, slag and ash	151,315	234,332	153,068	233,152
Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons	11,000	13,903	5,811	8,992
Cotton	1,755	2,514	389	2,138
Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad ...	593	1,431	361	888
Wood and articles of wood; wood charcoal	461	171	439	571
Copper and articles thereof	933	-	73	491
Raw hides and skins (other than furskins) and leather	15	759	640	336

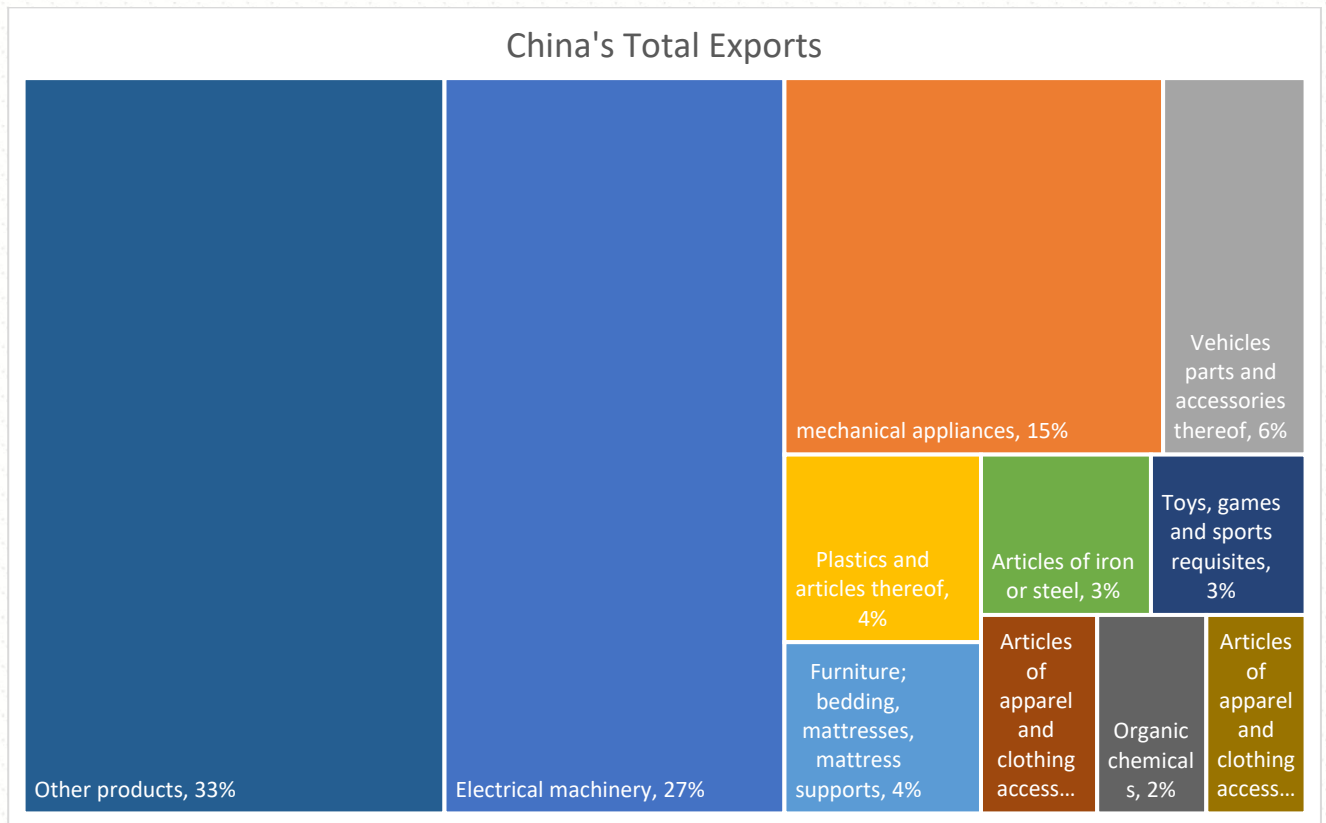
Source: Trademap

Annex 2: – China's exports to Zimbabwe

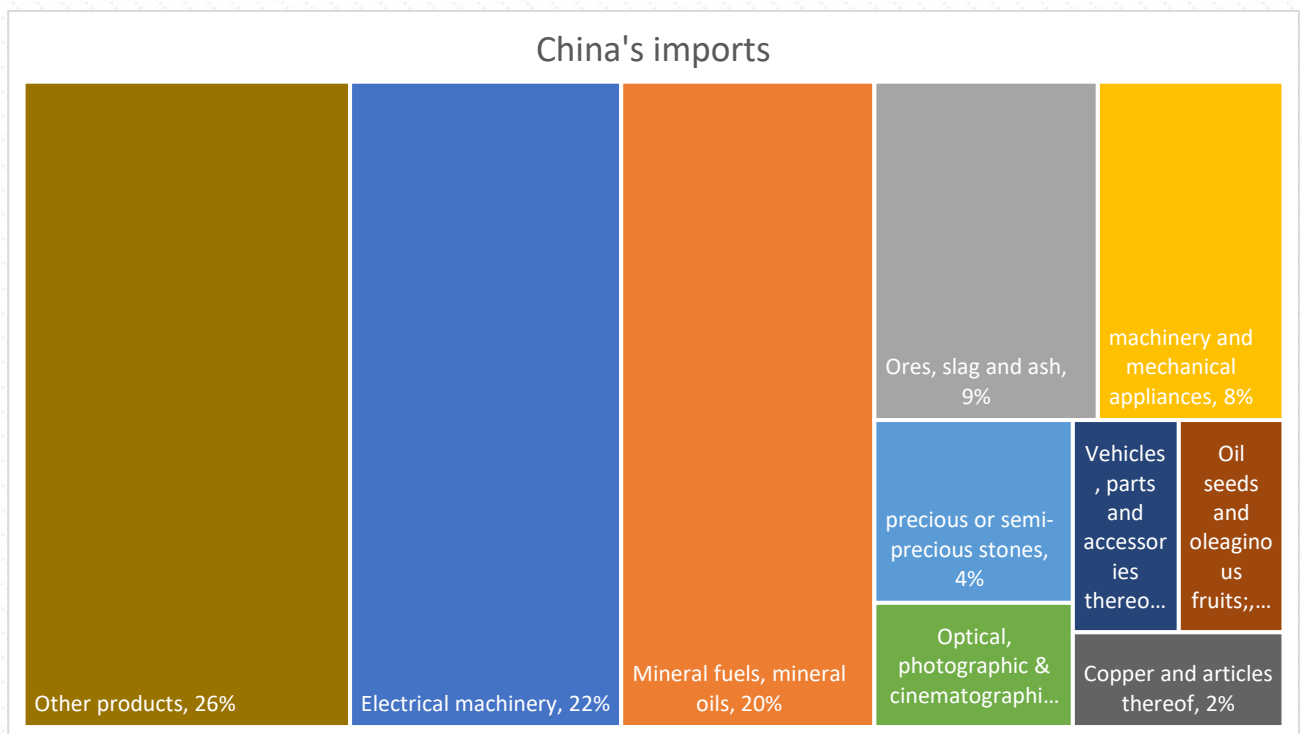
	Value in 2020	Value in 2021	Value in 2022	Value in 2023
	US\$ 000'			
All products	524,709	920,006	1,124,587	1,408,645
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	139,258	173,223	276,616	334,842
Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television ...	80,244	135,920	223,548	319,950
Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof	39,241	78,127	138,145	195,513
Articles of iron or steel	53,977	57,618	78,176	98,828
Rubber and articles thereof	27,003	38,607	36,035	53,567
Plastics and articles thereof	26,885	48,244	46,870	52,257
Inorganic chemicals; organic or inorganic compounds of precious metals, of rare-earth metals, ...	16,071	22,179	26,623	43,290
Iron and steel	11,071	22,195	30,366	42,174
Miscellaneous chemical products	17,047	33,904	33,297	32,069

Source: Trademap

Annex 3: China's Total Exports



Annex 5: China Total imports



Annex 7: China's Growing markets in Africa

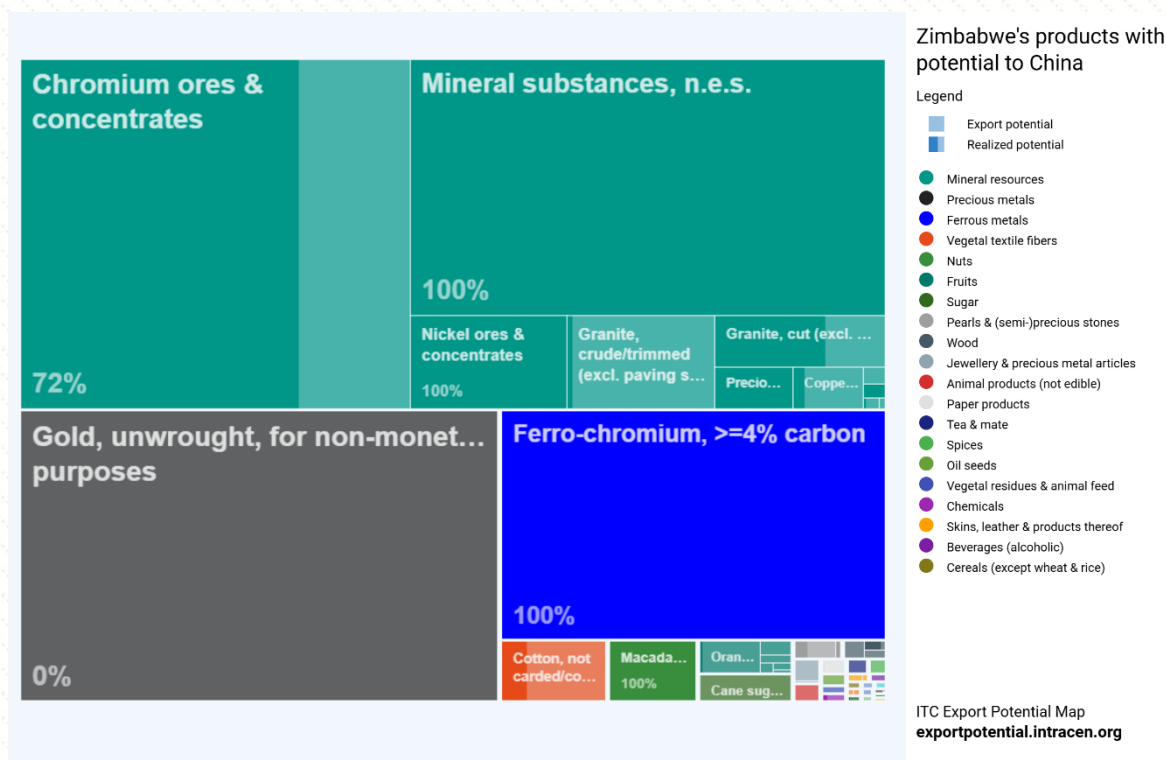
Exporters	Imported value in 2014	Imported value in 2023	% Change
	US\$ 000		
Guinea	41,345	6,438,216	15,472%
Djibouti	1,685	119,218	6975%
Chad	108,342	813,068	650%
Senegal	47,019	341,426	626%
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	2,811,558	14,310,517	409%
Côte d'Ivoire	216,268	1,070,523	395%
Niger	79,123	311,732	294%
Libya, State of	726,370	2,201,303	203%
Kenya	77,039	227,088	195%
Madagascar	118,076	282,185	139%
Botswana	213,879	507,887	137%
Namibia	317,341	746,518	135%
Lesotho	12,081	26,564	120%
Zimbabwe	835,714	1,714,625	105%

Source: Trademap

Annex 9: China's Growing Export Markets in Africa

Importers	Exported value in 2014	Exported value in 2023	% Change
	US\$ 000'		
Africa Aggregation	105,849,379	173,586,048	64%
Liberia	1,711,333	9,836,870	475%
Zimbabwe	403,801	1,408,645	249%
Côte d'Ivoire	1,220,079	4,246,596	248%
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	1,362,183	4,504,762	231%
Senegal	1,650,233	5,290,286	221%
Djibouti	1,112,181	3,393,628	205%
Guinea	1,101,459	2,675,206	143%
Ghana	4,134,566	9,316,937	125%
Morocco	2,962,993	6,477,166	119%
Tanzania, United Republic of	3,843,566	8,157,518	112%
Cameroon	1,877,578	3,748,199	100%
Mozambique	1,968,740	3,751,641	91%

Annex 10: Zimbabwe Export Potential to China



The products with greatest export potential from Zimbabwe to China are Gold, unwrought, for non-monetary purposes, Chromium ores & concentrates, and Mineral substances, n.e.s.. Gold, unwrought, for non-monetary purposes shows the largest absolute difference between potential and actual exports in value terms, leaving room to realize additional exports worth \$233 million.

Annex 11: Indicative Growing window periods - Zimbabwe

Product	Window Period
Blueberries	May – Oct
Citrus (Lemons, oranges)	Mar – Aug
Avocadoes	Nov – Jun
Macadamia nuts	Oct – May
Cucumbers, bananas	Sep – May
Mange tout, mushrooms	May – Oct
Peas, sugar snaps,	Jun – Sep
Onions	May – Jul; Oct – Dec
Pine apples	Nov – Feb, Jun - Jul
Butternuts	May - Sep
Garlic & ginger	Jun - Sep

Zimbabwe has been developing its horticulture sector with a target of US\$1 billion exports by 2030. This ambitious target requires concerted efforts to open new markets and linkages.

Annex 12: Current Zimbabwe Horticulture Production capacity

Below is the information received from the Horticulture Development Council pertaining to the production capacities for the export of various products.

Crop	2023 Volume (Tonnes)	2024 Volume (Tonnes)	Seasonality
Citrus	69,552	64,949	May - September
Tea	12,633	10,856	All year
Avocadoes	7,723	5,108	November - June
Macadamia nuts	7,495	5,213	March - June
Berries	4,582	5,172	April - September
Produce	7,482	5,110	May - September
Seed & Beans	1,220	2,483	April - September
Flowers	2,033	1,324	May - September
Spices	702	604	All year
Flower Cuttings	319	261	May - September
Essential Oils	203	203	All year
Coffee	119	203	All year
Deciduous Fruits	149	55	April - September
Jams	297	0	All year
Potatoes	15	23	April - September

Source: Horticultural Development Council of Zimbabwe