



Energising Zimbabwe's Export Growth



ZIMBABWE-UNITED KINGDOM

TRADE BRIEF



ZimTrade Zimbabwe



ZimTradeAlerts

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United Kingdom Overview

The United Kingdom, with a GDP of approximately US\$3.38 trillion, and at US\$49,463.90 per capita (as at 2023), is one of the world's largest and most advanced economies. Its imports are dominated by machinery, vehicles, mineral fuels, and pharmaceuticals, reflecting its reliance on global supply chains.

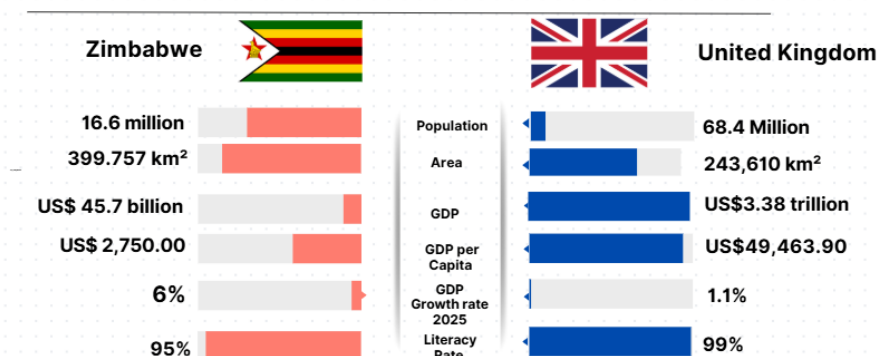
In 2024, the UK's total trade in goods and services was valued at over US\$1.3 trillion, and its largest trading partners include the European Union, the United States, and China. Post-Brexit, the UK has been working to establish new trade

agreements and strengthen existing ones. In 2024, Zimbabwe exported US\$17.2 worth of goods to the UK, a decline from US\$21.4 million in 2023. This primarily consisting of tobacco, ferro-alloys, and fresh produce such as citrus fruits and vegetables. Zimbabwe has opportunities to expand its exports to the UK by focusing on high-demand sectors like ethically sourced tobacco, organic produce, and niche agricultural products. Challenges such as meeting stringent UK and EU standards, improving supply chain efficiency, and navigating post-Brexit trade dynamics

Key Economic Indicators

- **United Kingdom GDP:** US\$3.38 trillion
- **GDP Per Capita:** US\$ 49,463.90
- **Population:** 68.4 million
- **Major Industries:** financial services, pharmaceuticals, automotive manufacturing, aerospace, and technology
- **Currency:** Pound Sterling £ (US\$ 1: £ 0.80)
- **Key Trade Partners:** Germany, United States of America, Netherlands, China, France, Japan, Italy, India
- **Key Trade Agreements:** UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, UK/EU-EPAs (*African, Caribbean and Pacific countries*), Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) (*Japan, Singapore, Chile, New Zealand, Vietnam, Peru, Malaysia, Brunei, Australia*)

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW



With populations of 68 million and 16.6 million respectively, the United Kingdom's landmass (244,376 km²) is significantly smaller than Zimbabwe's (399,757 km²), yet the UK's GDP is an impressive US\$3.38 trillion compared to Zimbabwe's US\$35.9 billion. This disparity translates to GDP per capita figures of US\$49,463.90 for the UK and US\$2,113.81 for Zimbabwe, underscoring the UK's status as a highly developed economy against Zimbabwe's emerging one.

Despite this economic gap, Zimbabwe's GDP growth rate of 2% in 2024 demonstrates notable expansion compared to the UK's 1.1%, presenting an opportunity for Zimbabwe to build on its growth momentum to strengthen trade relations.

The UK's economy is driven by advanced industries, including finance, technology, and manufacturing, while Zimbabwe's economy relies heavily on agriculture, mining, and informal trade. However, Zimbabwe has demonstrated potential in niche export markets, such as horticulture (e.g., citrus, blueberries, and flowers) and minerals like ferrochrome. Conversely, the UK exports industrial goods, vehicles, and high-value services to Zimbabwe. This complementary dynamic creates opportunities for the two countries to expand bilateral trade. Addressing trade barriers, such as supply chain inefficiencies in Zimbabwe and streamlining access to UK markets means both nations could enhance their economic partnership, fostering growth and mutual benefit.

Zimbabwe – United Kingdom Trade

The United Kingdom has consistently maintained a trade deficit in recent years, with imports surpassing exports annually from 2014 to 2023. In 2023, the UK imported goods and services worth US\$816 billion while exporting US\$513 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of US\$303 billion. In contrast, Zimbabwe has also operated under a persistent trade deficit, though on a much smaller scale. In 2024, Zimbabwe imported goods worth US\$9.5 billion while exporting US\$7.43 billion, leading to a deficit of US\$2 billion. This disparity highlights the difference in economic scales and trade dynamics between the two nations.

Bilateral trade between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom is modest relative to their overall trade profiles. UK's imports from Zimbabwe include horticultural products like blueberries, citrus fruits, and

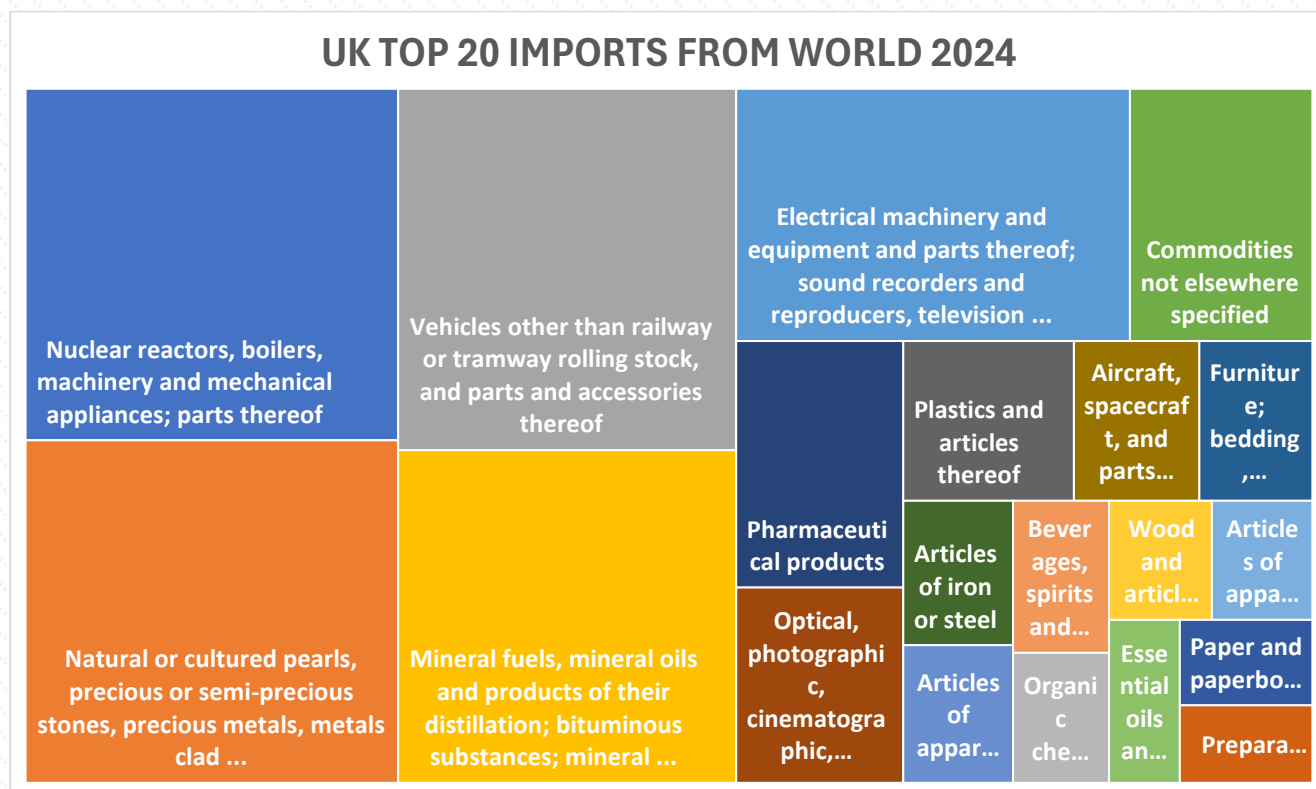
tobacco, alongside minerals such as ferrochrome, with total exports to the UK valued at US\$17.2 million in 2024.

Conversely, the UK primarily exports machinery, vehicles, and industrial goods to Zimbabwe, contributing to a trade value of around US\$45 million in the same year. This imbalance suggests opportunities for Zimbabwe to diversify its export portfolio by focusing on value-added agricultural products and mineral beneficiation to meet the UK's market demands. Simultaneously, the UK remains a critical supplier of industrial inputs essential for Zimbabwe's economic growth and infrastructure development.

Enhancing bilateral trade through targeted policies and addressing logistical challenges could significantly benefit both nations.

(Refer to Annexes 1, 2 & 3)

United Kingdom Top Imports from World (2024)



Source: Trade Map

These top 20 import categories constitute a significant portion of the UK's total imports and point to an economy that is deeply integrated into global supply chains. Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery, and mechanical appliances constitute 11.68% of the total imports, underscoring the UK's significant dependence on complex industrial machinery and related equipment for manufacturing and infrastructure.

Closely following are natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, and precious metals, accounting for 11.37%, illustrating that the UK is a major hub for the jewelry and luxury goods markets, as well as potentially for financial instruments involving precious metals.

Vehicles (excluding railway and tramway rolling stock) are the third-largest import, contributing 10.89%, reflecting the UK's strong automotive market and potentially a reduced domestic manufacturing capacity post-Brexit. Similarly, mineral fuels, oils, and related products form 10.02%, showing the UK's ongoing reliance on energy imports to meet its national demand.

Electrical machinery and equipment, including sound and video equipment, make up 8.85%, indicating robust demand for electronics, both consumer and industrial. Among other notable categories, pharmaceutical products represent 3.68% of imports, which aligns with the UK's needs for medicines and health-related goods, either for direct healthcare provision or pharmaceutical manufacturing. Optical, medical, and precision instruments

account for 2.91%, reinforcing the importance of the healthcare and scientific research sectors. Zimbabwe has significant trade opportunities within the UK market, particularly in horticulture and high-value niche products. As a major European hub for fresh produce, the UK presents a promising avenue for expanding exports of items like blueberries, citrus

fruits, and avocados. Moreover, the rising preference for sustainably sourced goods and specialty products, such as exotic fruits and decorative plants, highlights an untapped market for Zimbabwe to explore and grow its export footprint.

(Refer to Annex 4)

Top Suppliers to the United Kingdom

China (12.5%) is the largest exporter to the UK, highlighting the UK's strong reliance on Chinese goods, particularly in sectors like electronics, machinery, and consumer products. The United States accounts for 11.9% follows closely, reflecting the importance of transatlantic trade, likely driven by pharmaceuticals, machinery, and aerospace products. EU member countries collectively make up a significant portion of UK imports, with Germany (9.4%) leading as the UK's primary European supplier, focusing on automotive and industrial products. France (5.1%), Italy (3.8%), Netherlands (3.4%), Spain (3.3%), Ireland (2.6%), Poland (2.4%), and Belgium (2.3%) reflect the UK's ongoing trade relationship

with its European neighbours, despite Brexit. Norway (4.1%) is a key exporter, likely due to its supply of natural resources, such as oil and gas.

Türkiye (2%), though relatively smaller, still plays a role in sectors like textiles and automotive parts.

Zimbabwe's exports to the United Kingdom are negligible as the country ranks at 0% of total imports, indicating minimal or no measurable trade volume with the UK. Zimbabwe holds significant untapped potential, especially in niche markets aligned with the growing global demand for natural and organic products.

(Refer to Annex 5)

Zimbabwean products with potential in the United Kingdom

The products with greatest export potential from Zimbabwe to United Kingdom are gold, peas, diamonds. Gold, shows the largest absolute difference between potential and actual exports in value terms, leaving room to realize additional exports worth US\$15 million.

1. Peas "*Pisum sativum*", fresh

Trend: Fresh peas are a seasonal crop, with imports typically peaking during the UK growing off-season (autumn and winter). The UK often imports peas from countries with complementary growing seasons to meet year-round demand. The increasing focus on health and plant-based diets has likely driven demand for vegetables like

fresh peas. The UK's focus on reducing carbon footprints may impact the source countries of fresh peas. Importers favour countries with sustainable farming practices or closer proximity to reduce transportation emissions. Domestically grown peas and alternative vegetables might affect import demand. However, imports usually fill supply gaps or cater to quality or specific variety preferences. Price fluctuations, driven by agricultural yields in exporting countries, logistics challenges, or global market conditions, can also affect trends in UK imports of fresh peas.

Zimbabwe exported US\$10 million worth of peas in 2024, up from US\$2.8 million worth of peas in 2023. The UK imported US\$51.6 million worth of peas in total from around the world in 2024, up from US\$ 45 million in 2023.

Opportunity: Zimbabwe's climatic conditions allow for the cultivation of fresh peas during the UK's off-season, providing a critical opportunity to fill the supply gap. By targeting times when domestic UK production is low, Zimbabwe can position itself as a reliable supplier. UK consumers increasingly prioritize ethically sourced and environmentally sustainable products. Zimbabwe's ability to produce peas with lower environmental impacts, coupled with ethical labour practices, can give it a competitive edge in the UK market.

Short-term: Ensure consistent supply to meet growing demand, potentially negotiating long-term contracts.

Long-term: Invest in value addition (e.g., canned peas in brine) and position Zimbabwe as a preferred supplier. (*Refer to annex 6*)

2. Diamonds

Trend: The UK has a well-developed jewellery industry and a robust luxury goods market, which could create demand for diamonds. Zimbabwe's diamonds, particularly from the Marange fields, are known for their quality and could appeal to UK-based manufacturers and retailers.

Opportunity: Zimbabwe can increase its competitiveness by exporting diamonds with value addition, such as partially polished stones, rather than raw unsorted diamonds, which may attract better prices in the UK market.

Short-term: Demonstrate compliance with the Kimberley Process and invest in traceability mechanisms to meet UK buyer expectations.

Long-term: Investing in local diamond polishing and cutting industries would allow Zimbabwe to export higher-value products rather than raw, unsorted diamonds. (*Refer to annex 6*)

3. Fresh cranberries, bilberries, and other Vaccinium fruits

Trend: The UK market has seen a growing demand for nutrient-rich foods like cranberries and bilberries due to health-conscious consumer trends. These fruits are valued for their high antioxidant content and associated health benefits. Zimbabwe can take advantage of counter-seasonal production compared to the UK, supplying fresh berries during the UK's off-season (*late autumn and winter months*). This ensures a steady market during periods of low local production in the UK. Zimbabwe

has demonstrated success in exporting other horticultural products, such as blueberries, avocados, and peas, to European markets. Leveraging this experience can facilitate the expansion of Vaccinium export

Opportunity: Zimbabwe can scale up cranberry and Vaccinium fruit exports by:

Short-term: Fast-track GLOBALG.A.P. and other required certifications for growers to meet the UK's stringent quality and phytosanitary standards.

Partner with international certification bodies for cost-sharing or subsidized programs to onboard small-scale farmers.

Long-term: Prioritize building cold storage facilities near farms and key logistics hubs to ensure freshness during export. Collaborate with logistics companies to implement efficient refrigerated transport systems. *(Refer to annex 6)*

4. Avocados

Trend: UK imports of avocados rose from US\$261 million in 2022 to US\$288 million in 2023, however, imports from Zimbabwe declined from US\$2,6 million to US\$1,26 million within the same period. Demand for avocados in the United Kingdom remains strong, particularly for premium varieties like Hass, fuelled by their popularity in health-conscious diets.

Opportunity:

Short Term: Leveraging its seasonal advantage to supply the UK market during periods of low European production and enhancing post-harvest handling to reduce losses and maintain quality.

Long-term: Developing processing capabilities to produce value-added products such as avocado oil or frozen avocados, catering to demand in the UK and other European markets.

(Refer to annex 6)

5. Fresh cut flowers and ornamental buds (excluding roses, carnations, etc.)

Trend: The UK imported US \$271 million worth of flowers from around the world in 2024. This reflects sustained demand for niche ornamental flowers in the United Kingdom.

Opportunity: The UK's appetite for flowers offers Zimbabwe an avenue to:

Short-term: Differentiate its offering by focusing on unique, high-value native species and expanding volumes.

Long-term: Establish joint ventures with UK flower auction companies for better market penetration and explore value addition such as preserved or dried flowers for decorations. *(Refer to annex 6)*

6. Fresh tamarinds, passion fruit, and other exotic fruits

Trend: Export values have declined over the years, dropping from US\$178 million in 2022 to US\$156 million in 2023, suggesting untapped potential. Zimbabwe has minimal contribution to UK imports of this category.

Opportunity: Zimbabwe can revitalize this segment by:

Short-term: Partnering with UK importers to position niche fruits like tamarinds and passion fruit as premium products. Emphasize high-quality packaging and branding tailored to appeal to health-conscious consumers.

Long-term: Establish processing facilities to produce exotic fruit juices or dried fruits, expanding product offerings and increasing export value. (Refer to annex 6)

United Kingdom export performance

UK exports generally fluctuated over the years, with a notable decline between 2014 and 2016 (from US\$511.1million to US\$411.5million), with a dip in imports in 2020 (US\$630.9million) likely due to pandemic-related disruptions, but they sharply increased in subsequent years, peaking in 2022 (US\$816.3million). The widening trade deficit in recent years, especially in 2022, may reflect external factors such as increased demand for imports, supply chain costs, or exchange rate effects. Despite improvements in exports in 2022, the inability to match the growth in imports highlights structural trade challenges. Fluctuations in the exchange rate, particularly following the Brexit referendum in 2016, may have impacted both exports and imports since a weaker pound made UK exports cheaper in foreign markets, but this did not lead to sustained export growth, potentially due to structural trade barriers or lack of competitiveness. Imports, on the other hand, became more expensive, contributing to the widening trade deficit as the UK remains reliant on foreign goods.

In 2023, the UK's trade performance is marked by a diverse range of export

sectors, showcasing the breadth of its industrial base and the global demand for various products. The top exports are dominated by high-value, high-tech, and industrial goods, alongside significant contributions from commodities and pharmaceuticals.

UK exports however, declined from US\$530million in 2022 to US\$520million in 2023, with nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances for 16.6% of exports. Precious stones contribute 15.6% of exports valued at US\$81million down from US\$98,5million in 2022. The United States remains the largest export destination for UK goods, receiving 13.7% of total exports, and Germany accounting for 7.7%. The Netherlands and Switzerland are important export markets for the UK, accounting for 7.2% and 6.8% of total exports, respectively.

Ireland's proximity to the UK ensures steady demand for a variety of goods, including machinery, mechanical appliances, and luxury products. China's market for UK exports continues to grow, particularly in high-end and luxury sectors, such as gemstones and industrial machinery.

South Africa (US\$2 billion) and Angola (US\$292 million) are the UK's largest export destinations within SADC, accounting for 60% and 40% respectively. Zimbabwe's contribution is negligible.

In 2023, top exports to SADC from United Kingdom included boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances (US\$758 million), vehicles (US\$655 million), Electrical machinery and equipment (US\$311 million), medical instruments and equipment

(US\$158million), Beverages, spirits and vinegar (US\$126million), and Pharmaceutical products (US\$121 million).

Zimbabwe's US\$52million worth of imports from UK, includes imported vehicles (US\$31,7 million), Machinery and mechanical equipment (US\$4,7million), electrical machinery and equipment (US\$4,7 million), and Beverages, spirits and vinegar (US\$2,8 million)

(Refer to annexes 3,7&8)

Issues to Consider

1. Regulatory Compliance

- Ensure products meet UK and EU standards for quality, safety, and labelling, particularly for food products, organic produce, and industrial goods.
- Obtain certifications like GlobalGAP., Fairtrade, or organic labels for agricultural products to enhance market access.
- Familiarization with UK import regulations, customs procedures, and required documentation, including invoices, certificates of origin, and health certificates for food items.

2. Tariffs and Trade Agreements

- Leveraging trade agreements such as the UK-Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Economic Partnership Agreement, which allows tariff-free access for many Zimbabwean products.
- Ensuring compliance with rules of origin to qualify for preferential tariffs under trade agreements.

3. Logistics and Supply Chain

- Accounting for shipping, freight, and logistics costs, including port handling fees and insurance.
- For perishable goods, maintenance of an unbroken cold chain to ensure freshness and compliance with UK standards.
- Building reliable and efficient supply chains to meet UK buyers' expectations for timely deliveries.

4. Market Demand and Preferences

- Researching UK consumer preferences and demand trends, such as a growing interest in organic, sustainable, and ethically sourced goods.
- Tailor marketing strategies to align with UK cultural expectations and consumer behaviour.
- Understanding the competitive landscape and position your products, accordingly, highlighting unique selling points like quality, sustainability, or fair trade.

5. Sustainability and Ethical Standards

- Adopting sustainable practices to align with the UK's increasing focus on environmental responsibility, including carbon footprint reduction and eco-friendly packaging.
- Ensuring adherence to ethical labour practices to meet UK consumer and regulatory expectations.

6. Currency and Financial Considerations

- Mitigating currency fluctuations by using hedging strategies or transacting in stable currencies.
- Negotiating favourable payment terms with buyers and establish secure payment methods to avoid defaults.
- Understanding the UK's VAT system and tax implications for imported goods.

7. Market Entry Strategy

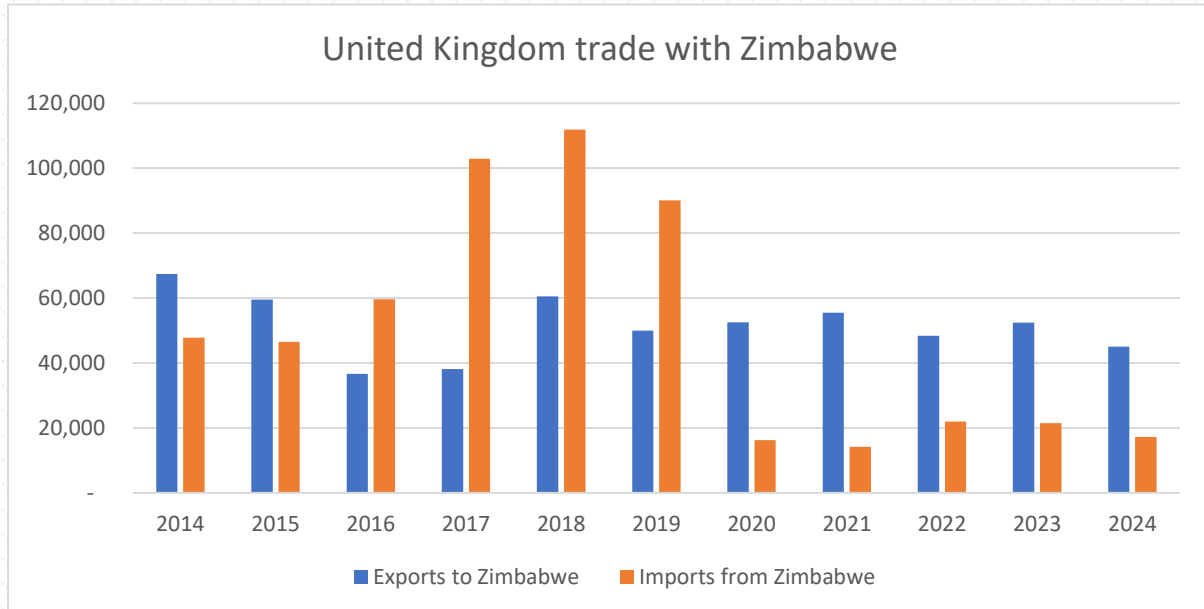
- Choosing the right channels, whether through direct export, partnerships with UK importers, or online marketplaces.
- Investing in branding and marketing to stand out in a competitive market, emphasizing quality and origin.
- Participating in trade fairs, exhibitions, and UK-based trade representatives to build relationships and expand market access.

8. Brexit Implications

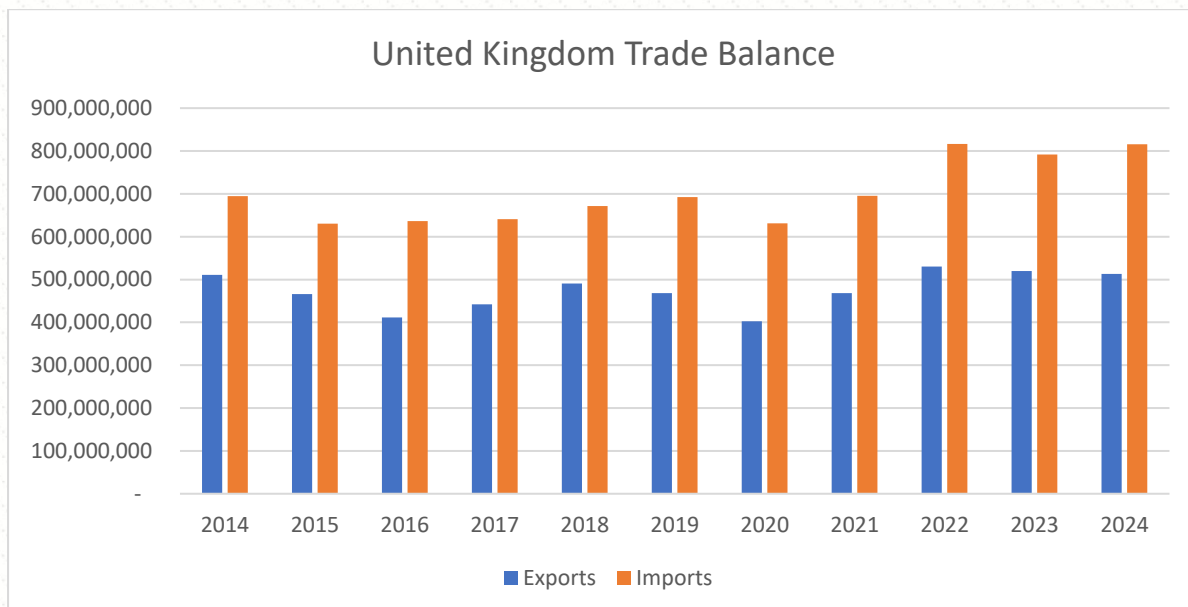
- Monitoring changes in UK regulations that differ from the EU, especially post-Brexit.
- Understanding specific rules if exporting via Northern Ireland, as it may involve EU customs procedures.

Annexes

Annex 1: Zimbabwe's Trade Performance with United Kingdom

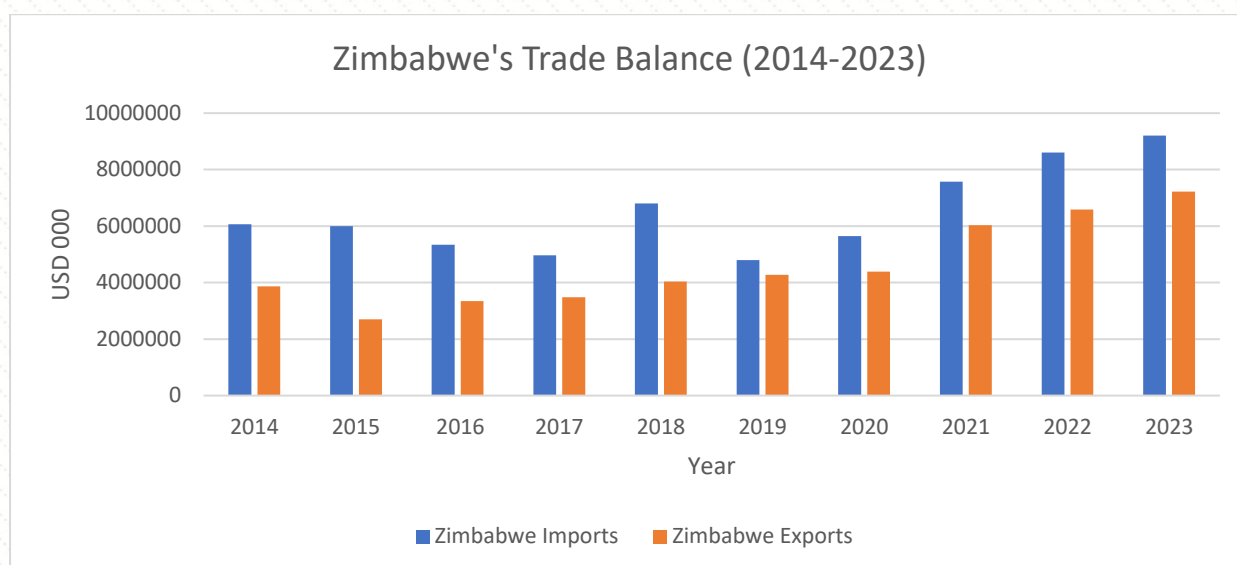


Annex 2: United Kingdom Trade Balance



Source: Trade Map

Annex 3: Zimbabwe Trade Balance



Source: Trade Map

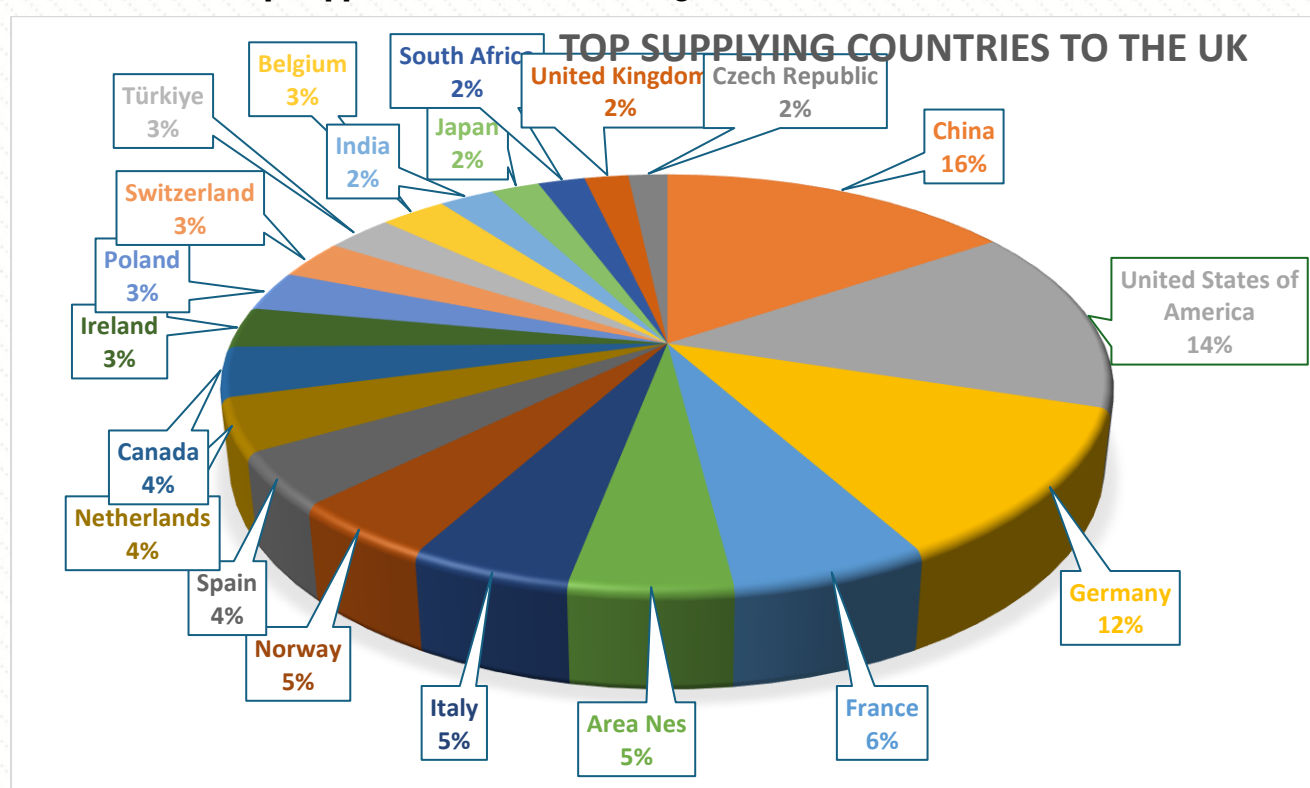
Annex 4: United Kingdom imports from Zimbabwe (USD'000)

Product label	United Kingdom's imports from Zimbabwe									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
All products	46,480	59,573	102,867	111,898	90,072	16,203	14,154	21,939	21,422	17,197
Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons	4,723	2,551	4,019	5,526	6,086	5,219	4,862	7,240	3,619	5,313
Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad ...	19,698	38,570	79,335	83,083	67,559	498	1,250	789	3,386	2,861
Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	8,792	9,735	7,793	10,060	7,812	5,925	3,984	2,272	2,632	2,509
Works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques	543	568	494	860	332	312	455	403	335	1,867
Iron and steel	-	155	1,231	-	-	-	311	7,243	8,223	1,802
Live trees and other plants; bulbs, roots and the like; cut flowers and ornamental foliage	2	-	42	133	152	-	-	1,147	987	790
Coffee, tea, maté and spices	8,530	2,898	3,549	8,329	4,662	3,138	1,965	1,626	1,156	550
Beverages, spirits and vinegar	63	59	94	101	111	273	286	268	323	368
Footwear, gaiters and the like; parts of such articles	26	54	157	74	55	36	12	51	104	218
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	-	52	19	17	39	18	26	24	2	149
Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; ...	-	2	-	-	2	3	43	27	28	97
Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastrycooks' products	27	20	20	26	22	53	72	69	59	91
Commodities not elsewhere specified	558	384	330	316	255	114	212	168	123	84
Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten	10	70	23	39	14	1	5	3	1	63
Essential oils and resinoids; perfumery, cosmetic or toilet preparations	-	-	-	5	3	8	2	27	59	53

Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television ...	19	368	8	10	41	74	4	49	14	45
Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants	15	9	8	3	20	33	65	39	3	44
Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit; industrial or medicinal ...	24	5	27	38	4	19	96	68	52	43
Miscellaneous edible preparations	5	-	4	4	10	18	48	33	15	37
Miscellaneous articles of base metal	103	188	311	263	224	83	60	28	26	34

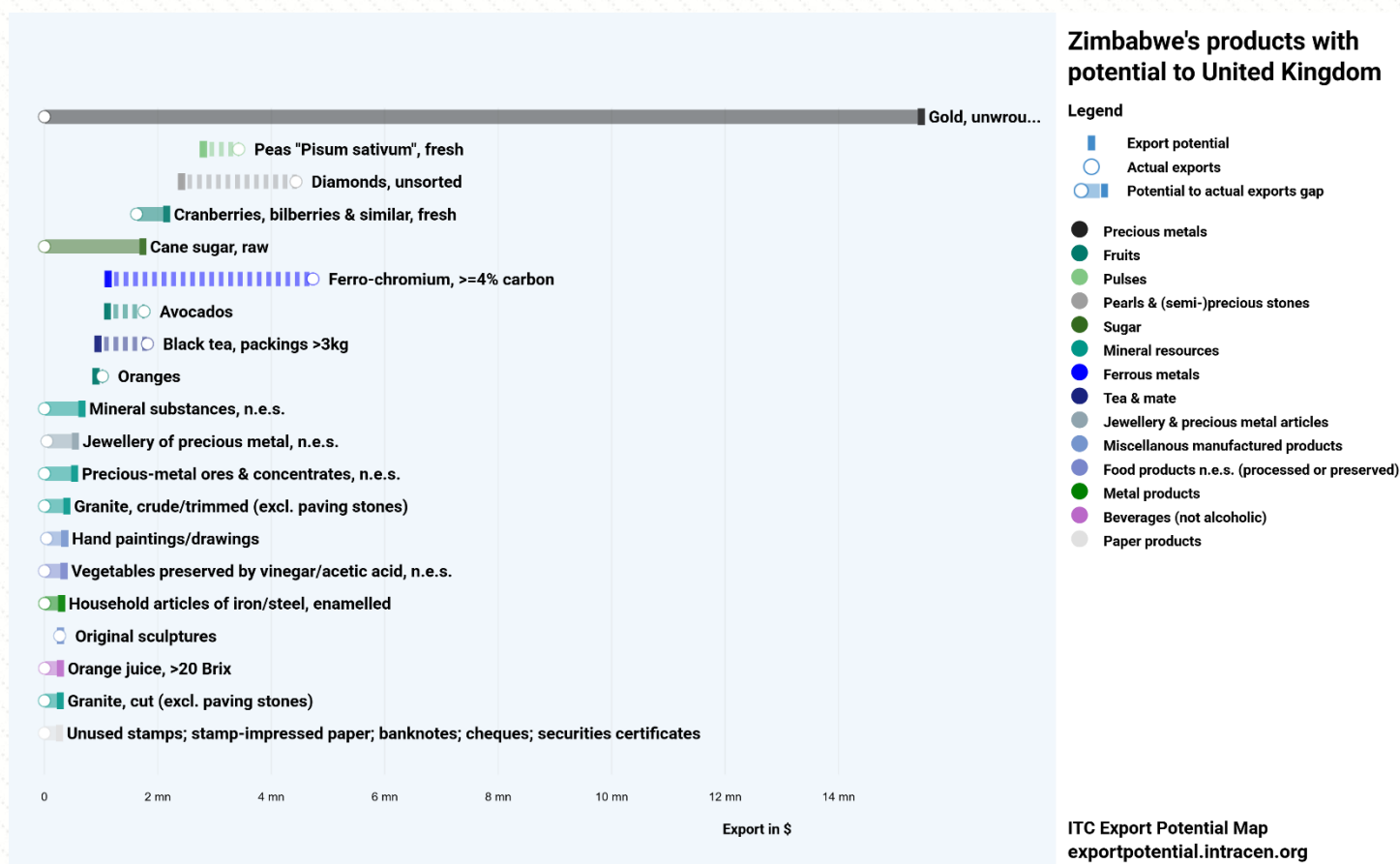
Source: Trade Map

Annex 5: Top suppliers to the United Kingdom



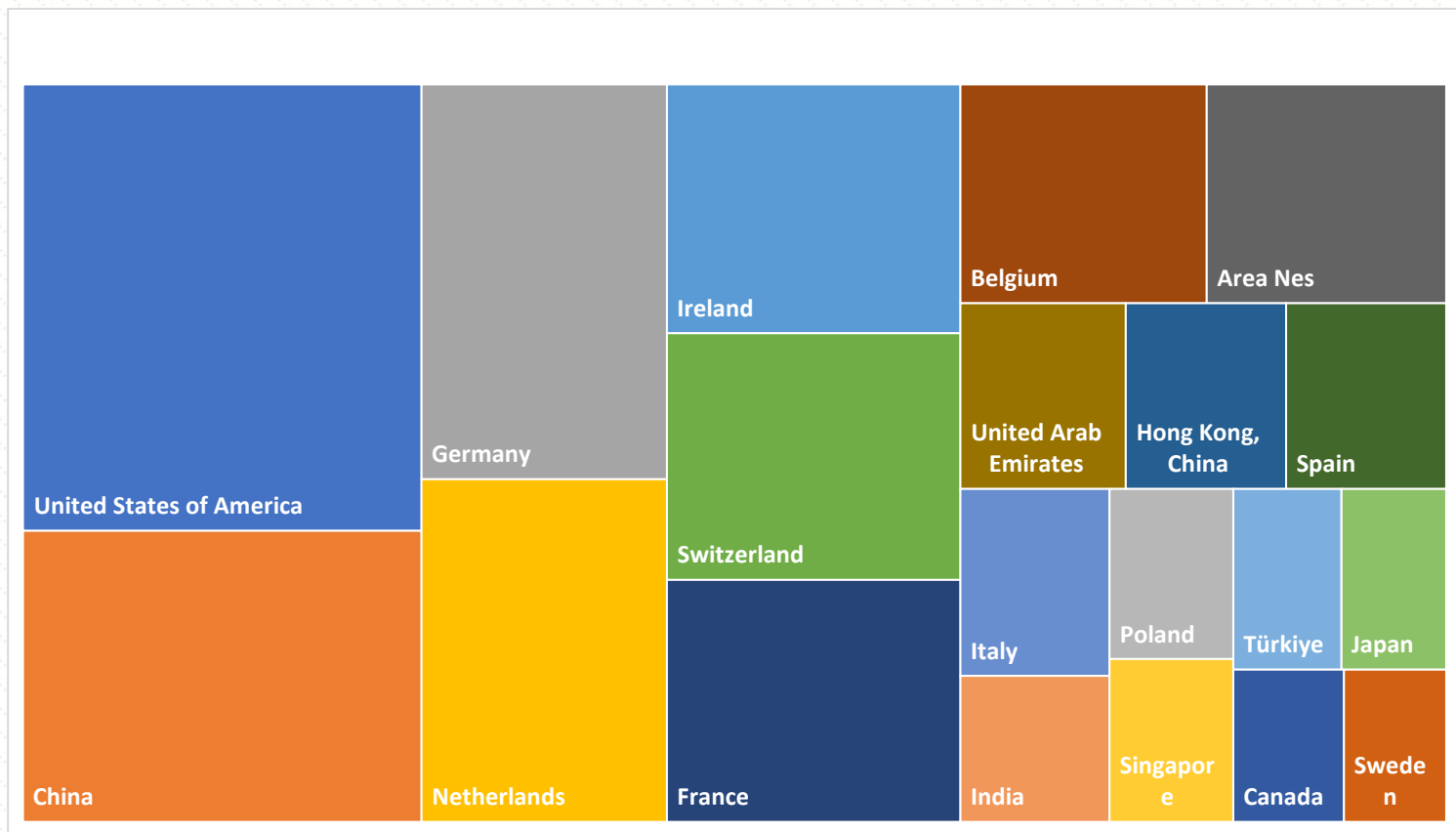
Source: Trade Map

Annex 6: Zimbabwean products with potential in United Kingdom



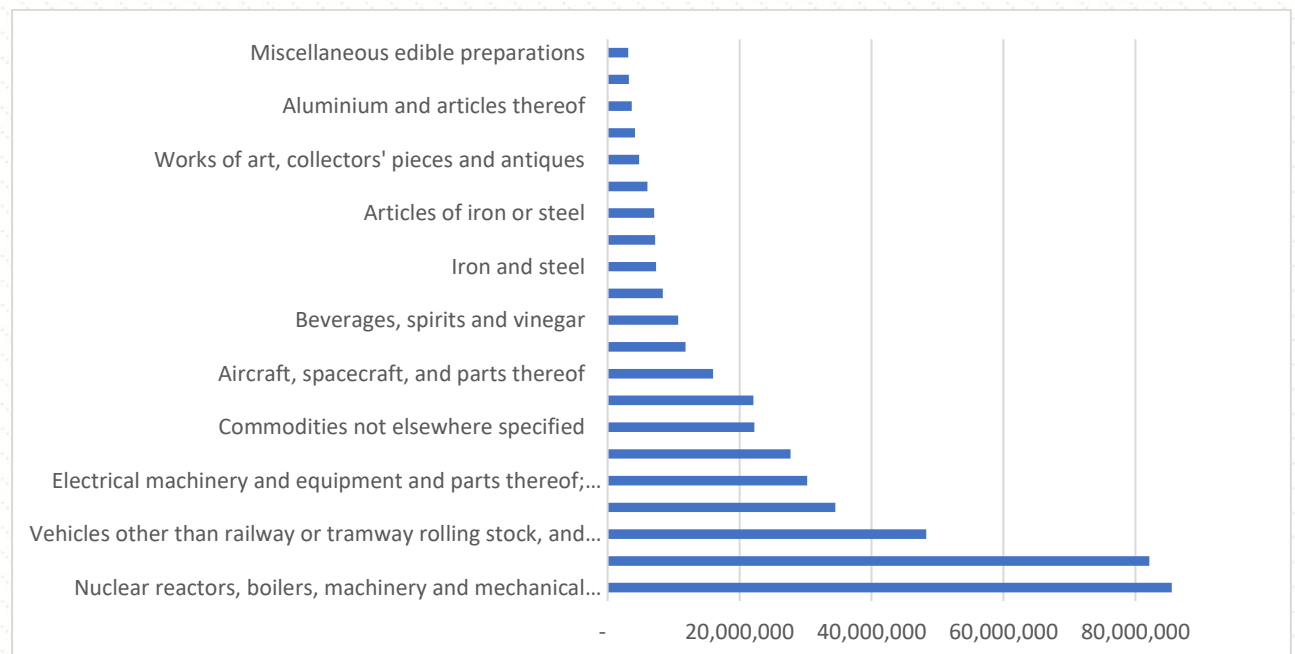
Source: Trade Map

Annex 7: Top destination Markets for United Kingdom products



Source: Trade Map

Annex 8: United Kingdom's top exported products (Top UK Exports 2024)



Source: Trade Map



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