KNBS
KENYA NATIONAL
BUREAU OF STATISTICS
Keeping you informed

2025 Informal Cross Border Trade Survey Report



Preface and Acknowledgement

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and the State Department for Trade have been undertaking the Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) surveys at the main border stations in the country since 2011. The main objective of the ICBT surveys is to obtain information on magnitude and direction of the unrecorded international trade in goods between Kenya and her neighbours. In addition, the surveys aim at measuring the contribution of informal trade to total international merchandise trade. Hence, the ICBT survey aims at recording accurately intra-regional trade to measure economic gains accruing from the integration process. The statistical data from ICBT surveys is also crucial in improving the quality of other macroeconomic statistics that are used to inform policy and decision-making.

Comprehensive coverage of all sectors of the economy is a fundamental requirement in the compilation of economic statistics, consistent with international best practices. Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT), although frequently unrecorded, constitutes a significant component of the economy and an important source of livelihood. ICBT contributes to macroeconomic stability and social development by enhancing food security and generating income, particularly for rural populations. When effectively harnessed, it has the potential to complement Africa's ongoing efforts towards poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth.

The report presents the findings from two cycles of the ICBT surveys conducted in December 2024 and June 2025. The surveys collected information on informal cross border trade between Kenya and her neighbours not recorded by the Customs Department of the KRA. The report provides detailed information on the nature, values and quantities of goods, and direction of informal international trade, as well as the characteristics and operational dynamics of traders, transporters and border stations.

On behalf of the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), I wish to express my profound appreciation to the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), and the State Department for Trade for their invaluable partnership and support throughout the implementation of the Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) surveys.

I further acknowledge, with gratitude, the dedication and professionalism of the technical team involved in the design, implementation, and compilation of this report. The team comprised Mr. Simon Gaitho, Mr. William Etwasi, Ms. Gladys Mbaluku, Ms. Pauline Kamau, Mr. Anthony Makau, Mr. Peter Kamau, Mr. Cruyff Matunde, Mr. Milton Tonui, and Mr. Pascal Owiti from KNBS; Mr. Isaac Kiprop and Ms. Dorothy Wobenjo from Customs and Border Control, KRA; Mr. Tobias Odongo from the State Department for Trade; and Mr. James Maina and Mr. Paul Kamondo from the CBK. Special recognition is extended to Mr. Benjamin Muchiri, Director of Macroeconomic Statistics, for his invaluable guidance and oversight during various stages of the survey implementation.

In addition, KNBS extends its sincere appreciation to the traders and transporters operating across Kenya's border stations for their cooperation and valuable input during the survey interviews. The success of this exercise was also made possible through the support of Immigration officers, Informal Cross Border Trade Association officials, and Security personnel stationed at various border points. Their contribution to the successful completion of this survey is deeply appreciated.

In conclusion, I wish to encourage all of us to make use of the information available in this report and to provide any feedback to improve our services of informing evidence-based decision-making using quality statistics.

Macdonald George Obudho, PhD, EBS, MBS
Director General,
Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BOP	Balance of Payments
CAP	Chapter (of the Laws of Kenya)
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews
COMESA-STR	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa's Simplified Trade Regime
EAC	East African Community
IMTS	International Merchandise Trade Statistics
MSITS	Manual on Statistics International Trade in Services
ICBT	Informal Cross Border Trade
CBK	Central Bank of Kenya
C&BCD	Customs & Border Control Department
HS	Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KRA	Kenya Revenue Authority
KSh	Kenya Shillings
NSS	National Statistical System
RA	Research Assistant
SED	Single Entry Declaration
SDD	Single Declaration Document
SDT	State Department for Trade
SITC	Standard International Trade Classification
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

Background
External trade statistics facilitate regional economic integration, support the resolution of trade disputes, and aid in the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements. They are key input into the compilation Balance of Payments (BOP) and National Accounts. While Kenya's formal trade data are collected through customs systems managed by the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), a substantial volume of trade occurs outside official channels through Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT). These unrecorded transactions result in gaps in official trade statistics and an underestimation of Kenya's intra-regional trade and economic activity.

To address this gap, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), the State Department for Trade, and the Kenya Revenue Authority, conducted ICBT surveys in December 2024 and June 2025. The surveys aimed to estimate the magnitude, direction, composition, and value of informal trade flows between Kenya and her neighbouring countries, and to generate data for improving the coverage of Kenya's International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS).

The surveys were conducted over two randomly selected weeks in each reference month and covered selected major border stations with Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Data collection relied on direct observation and brief interviews with traders and transporters, supported by Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). The survey findings provide important insights into informal trade dynamics and patterns.

Border Characteristics and Dynamics
Informal trade activities were dominated by male, with men accounting for 77.2 per cent and 79.7 per cent of respondents in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively. Most traders were aged 25 to 44 years, had primary or secondary education, and were mainly married, indicating the sector's role as a source of livelihood, especially for communities living along the border of Kenya and her neighbours. Motorbikes were the predominant means of transport across both periods, used by more than 40 per cent of traders and transporters who were interviewed, followed by head/hand carriage and bicycles. The growing use of motorized means of transport reflects gradual formalization of logistics in informal trade activities.

Informal Trade Findings
The results indicate a general slowdown in informal trade between the two survey periods of December 2024 and June 2025, largely attributed to seasonal fluctuations in agricultural commodities and reduced cross-border market activities. The total volume of informal trade declined by 16.7 per cent, from KSh 299.0 million to KSh 249.1 million. This resulted from a 22.3 per cent decrease in the value of Informal exports and a 10.2 per cent decline in expenditure on informal imports. The different rate of decline in informal trade flows shifted the informal trade balance from a surplus of KSh 20.4 million in December 2024 to a deficit of KSh 1.1 million in June 2025.

Ethiopia and Uganda were the leading destinations for informal exports, while Tanzania was the main source of informal imports. In December 2024, Ethiopia accounted for 36.1 per cent of total informal imports, followed by Uganda at 31.7 per cent. In June 2025, Tanzania overtook all other countries as the top source of informal imports, contributing 47.2 per cent, mainly consisting of food and live animals.

Moyale border station was the leading corridor for informal exports, recording informal exports worth KSh 63.8 million in December 2024 and KSh 51.9 million in June 2025. Suam and Mandera (Ethiopia) border stations emerged as key alternative routes, while Namanga, Malaba, and Isebania were the main entry points for informal imports.

Food and live animals dominated informal trade, accounting for 28.3 per cent of informal exports and 67.3 per cent of informal imports in December 2024, rising to 37.9 per cent and 78.5 per cent, respectively, in June 2025. Other key categories included crude materials, animal and vegetable oils, and miscellaneous manufactured goods, reflecting persistent demand for essential commodities across border regions.

In conclusion, despite the observed contraction, informal cross-border trade remains key for Kenya's food security and household income. The findings underscore the need for enhanced data integration, simplified trade facilitation, and continued monitoring to improve coverage of external trade statistics and support inclusive, evidence-based regional trade policy.

Table of Contents

Preface and Acknowledgement....i
Abbreviations and Acronyms....ii
Executive Summary....iii
Table of Contents....iv
List of Tables....v
List of Figures....v
Chapter 1: Background....1
Introduction....2
Objectives of the Survey....2
Statement of the Problem....2
Significance of the Survey....2
Legislative, Regulatory and Institutional Framework....2
Chapter 2: Methodology....3
Scope and Coverage of the Survey....3
Data collection....4
Data Collection Techniques....4
Uprating of results....5
Survey Limitations....5
Chapter 3: Survey Findings....6
Overview....6
Sex composition and dynamics of Respondents....7
Distribution of Respondent Roles....7
Transport Means among Traders and Transporters....8
Transport Means across Border Stations....9
Respondents Country of Residence....10
Distribution of Traders by Age and Sex....11
Traders' Age Distribution by Border Station....12
Traders' Education Level by Border Station....13
Traders' Marital Status by Border Station....14
Informal Trade Balance....15
Informal Trade by Border Station....15
Informal Trade by Country....16
Informal Trade by Means of Transport....16
Informal Export Commodities....17
Informal Export Commodities by Border Station....17
Informal Import Commodities....20
Informal Import Commodities by Country....20
Chapter 4: Comparative analysis of Formal and Informal Trade....23
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Policy Implications....27
Annex....29

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Number of Respondents by Sex and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....7
Table 3.2: Number of Respondents by Type and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....8
Table 3.3: Number of Respondents by Type and Means of Transport, December 2024 and June 2025.....9
Table 3.4: Distribution of Respondents by Means of Transport and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....10
Table 3.5: Number of Respondents by sex and Country of Residence, December 2024 and June 2025.....11
Table 3.6: Number of Respondents by Type and Country of Residence, December 2024 and June 2025....11
Table 3.7: Number of Traders by Age and Sex, December 2024 and June 2025.....12
Table 3.8: Distribution of Traders by Age Group and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....13
Table 3.9: Distribution of Traders by Education and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....14
Table 3.10: Distribution of Traders by Marital Status and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025....14
Table 3.11: Balance of Informal Trade, December 2024 and June 2025.....15
Table 3.12: Value of Informal Trade by Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....16
Table 3.13: Value of Informal Trade by Country, December 2024 and June 2025.....16
Table 3.14: Value of Informal Trade by Means of Transport, December 2024 and June 2025.....17
Table 3.15: Value of Informal Exports by Commodity Group and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....18
Table 3.16: Value of Informal Exports by Commodity Group and Country, December 2024 and June 2025 20
Table 3.17: Value of Informal Imports by Commodity Group and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025.....21
Table 3.18: Value of Informal Exports by Commodity Group and Country, December 2024 and June 2025 22
Table 4.1: Analysis of Formal and Informal Trade by Trade Flow, December 2024 and June 2025.....24
Table 4.2: Analysis of Formal and Informal Trade by Total Trade, Trade Balance and Country, December 2024 and June 2025.....25
Table 4.3: Formal Trade through Land Border Points and Informal Trade by Trade Flow and Country, December 2024 and June 2025.....25
Table 4.4: Comparative analysis of Formal[1] and Informal[2] Trade by Trade Flow and Commodity Groups, December 2024 and June 2025.....26

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Age Distribution of Informal Cross-Border Traders, December 2024 and June 2025.....12

Annex

Annex I: Top 5 Informal Trade Commodities by Country and Period.....29

Chapter 1: Background

External trade statistics are essential for monitoring the movement of goods and resources across international boundaries. They form a critical component in the compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS), the Balance of Payments (BOP) and National Accounts statistics. In addition, trade data are vital for assessing the performance of the trade sector and formulating policies that support sustainable development. These indicators also facilitate regional economic integration, support the resolution of trade disputes, and aid in the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements, among other uses.



1.2. The United Nations (UN) framework for international merchandise trade statistics mandates the recording of all goods entering or leaving a country, with exception of goods in transit. In Kenya, the formal collection of this data is managed by the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) Customs Department, which utilizes documentation such as the Single-Entry Declaration (SED) and F88 forms, typically completed by clearing agents. However, there still exists trade that occurs outside these formal channels through informal cross-border arrangements. These Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) transactions are predominantly unrecorded, creating a gap in the national trade data despite their importance in enhancing the comprehensiveness of trade statistics.

1.3. Informal Cross Border Trade is defined as the commercial exchange of goods across economic territories that are not formally recorded by customs authorities. Within this framework, merchandise crosses border in quantities ranging from small consignments to bulk shipments. Although the physical nature of the goods renders these transactions both visible and potentially traceable, they frequently remain unrecorded. A principal factor driving this preference for informal channels, particularly among small-scale traders, is the avoidance of custom duties.

1.4. This report details estimates derived from ICBT surveys conducted in December 2024 and June 2025. The surveys tracked informal trade flows of goods between Kenya and its neighbouring countries. The number of border stations covered varied between the two survey cycles, mainly due to differences in trade volumes, security concerns, and logistical considerations.

Objectives of the Survey

Overall Objective

1.5. The overall objective of the ICBT surveys is to collect data on the magnitude, direction, and value of unrecorded trade between Kenya and her neighbouring countries. These surveys are designed to enhance the completeness of official external trade statistics.

Specific Objectives

1.6. The specific objectives of the ICBT surveys are to:

- Determine the demographic and economic characteristics of informal cross-border traders.
- Identify the composition of traded commodities.
- Establish the direction of trade, including countries of origin and destination.
- Estimate the value and quantity of ICBT flows.
- Assess the transport costs incurred by informal cross-border traders.
- Provide comparative analyses of formal and informal trade, including trade balances; and
- Generate estimates to support the compilation of International Merchandise Trade, Balance of Payments, and National Accounts statistics.

Statement of the Problem

1.7. Significant informal cross-border trade takes place between Kenya and her neighbouring countries, yet much of it remains unrecorded. The omission of these transactions renders official external trade statistics incomplete, leading to underestimation of Kenya's actual intra-regional trade levels.

Significance of the Survey

1.8. The ICBT surveys are designed to capture data on informal trade transactions that fall outside official customs records. The information generated is critical for monitoring sector performance and developing evidence-based trade policies. By enhancing the coverage and accuracy of Kenya's external trade statistics, these surveys directly improve the quality of data used for national economic planning and policy formulation.

Legislative, Regulatory and Institutional Framework

1.9. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) is mandated under the Statistics Act, CAP 112, Laws of Kenya [Revised 2022] to collect, analyse, and disseminate official statistics and to coordinate the National Statistical System (NSS). In accordance with Sections 20 and 21 of the Act, KNBS is empowered to collect data from individuals, households, and enterprises for official purposes, while guaranteeing confidentiality.

1.10. Section 6(2) of the Act further mandates the Board of KNBS to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, both within and outside Kenya. Pursuant to this provision, the ICBT survey is conducted in partnership with key national institutions whose technical expertise is vital, including the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), the State Department for Trade, and the Kenya Revenue Authority.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Scope and Coverage of the Survey

The survey targeted the major border stations, which formed the sampling frame for selecting survey sites. Selection of border stations was guided by factors such as the volume of informal trade recorded in the past surveys, strategic location, presence of supporting government institutions (e.g., immigration, customs, and security offices) and accessibility.



Although a complete census of the 35 gazetted border points would have been ideal, it was impractical due to various constraints, largely arising from inadequate financial resources and insecurity across various border stations The selected border stations were:

i. Kenya - Uganda border: Busia, Malaba, Suam, and Lwakhakha
ii. Kenya - Tanzania border: Isebania, Namanga, Taveta, Lunga Lunga, and Loitokitok
iii. Kenya - Ethiopia border: Moyale, Mandera (Ethiopia) and Rhamu
iv. Kenya - Somalia border: Mandera (Somalia)-Border Point 1

Data collection

2.2. Data was collected in December 2024 and June 2025, for two weeks which were randomly selected in each survey cycle.
Data Collection Techniques

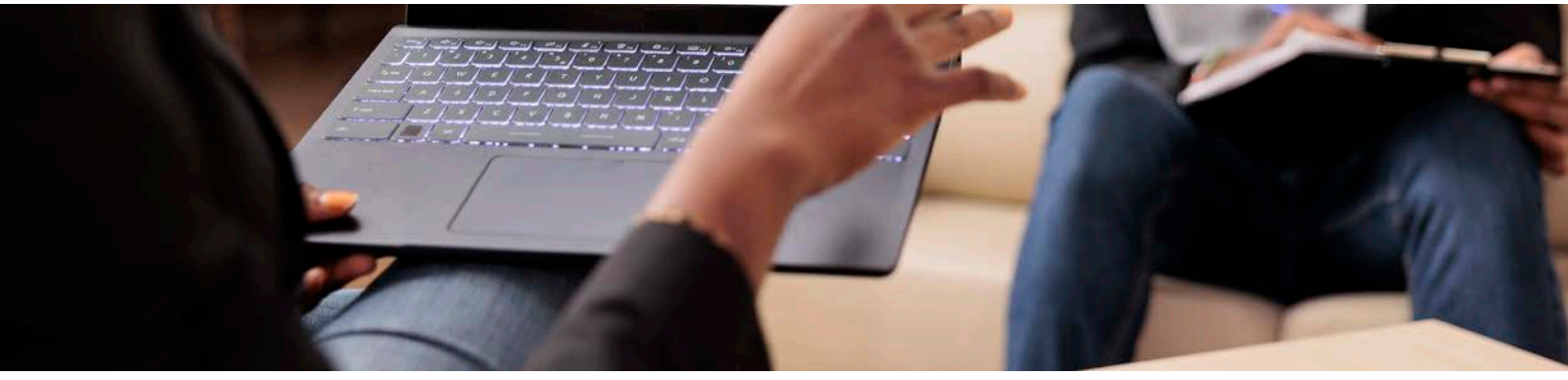
2.3. Direct observation and personal interview methods were employed as the most practical and cost-effective approaches under prevailing border conditions. Research Assistants stationed at selected borders recorded all goods entering or leaving the country through observation and, where necessary, brief interviews with traders. Daily transactions were captured using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI).

Uprating of results

2.4. The survey findings presented in Chapter 3 were based on actual data collected for the 14 days in the month of December 2024 and June 2025. However, uprating was done to generate estimates for the whole month of December 2024 and June 2025, as presented in Chapter 4. The generated estimates were used to compare with formal trade for the same period. The December 2024 and June 2025 estimates were used to derive monthly ICBT figures for 2024 and 2025, respectively. These estimates will be used to update the ratios used in estimation of trade data for the compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS), Balance of Payments (BOP) and National Accounts statistics.

2.5. To generate estimates from data collected during the two-week survey period, uprating was done based on the following assumptions:

v. Supply and demand patterns for the entire months of December 2024 and June 2025 mirror those observed during the 14 days of data collection.
vi. Supply and demand patterns for all other months follow trends similar to those recorded in the formal trade data captured by the Customs and Border Control Department of the KRA.



The Uprating Model

The total value of commodity over 14-year survey day is:

$$\mu_i = \sum_{j=1}^{14} \omega_{ij} \text{ , for } i = 1,2, \dots, \text{N} \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where;

- N = number of commodities traded informally across all border stations
- ω_{ij} = the daily value of the i^{th} commodity traded on the j^{th} day

The total estimated value of commodity i in the survey month s is estimated as:

$$\alpha_{is} = \delta\mu_i \text{ , for } i = 1,2, \dots, \text{N} \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where $\delta = \begin{cases} 2.21, & \text{if the month has 31 days} \\ 2.14, & \text{if otherwise} \end{cases}$

Finally, the total estimated value α_{ik} of commodity i for any month other than the survey month, say the k^{th} month, is estimated as;

$$\alpha_{ik} = \theta_k \alpha_{ikF} \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

Where; $\theta_k = \frac{\alpha_{is}}{\alpha_{iF}}$

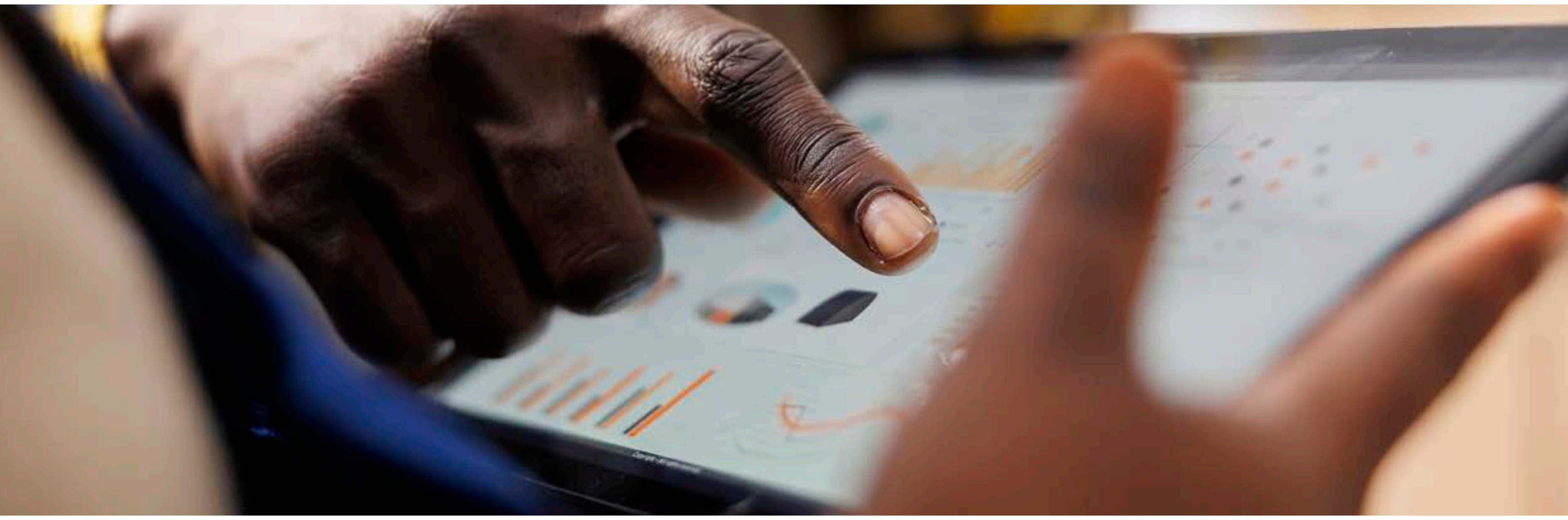
α_{iF} = total value of commodity i from customs data in the survey month

α_{ikF} = total value of commodity i from customs data for the k^{th} month

Survey Limitations

2.6. The ICBT surveys encountered several limitations such as data collection for two weeks instead of four weeks in a month which affected proper estimation of informal trade and establishing the content and value of assorted goods, bulk goods and goods in non-transparent packages due to fast movement of traders and goods across the border stations.

2.7. The other limitation was the expansiveness of some borders which made it difficult to collect data in the sampled exit and entry points. Most border stations had several unofficial routes which required additional personnel. Some of the selected border stations operated for 24 hours yet ICBT data collection was confined during the day. In some cases, majority of the persons transporting goods were hired and did not know the prices or quantities or even refused to cooperate with the survey personnel.



Chapter 3: Survey Findings

Overview

This Chapter presents survey findings for the December 2024 and June 2025 data collection periods.



Sex composition and dynamics of Respondents

3.2. Table 3.1 presents a comparative analysis of respondents across 13 border stations, disaggregated by sex. The total number of recorded respondents were 17,957 in December 2024 and 13,146 in June 2025, indicating a general reduction in cross border movements in June 2025. This reduction was observed at the Busia border station, where the number of respondents were 3,669 in December 2024 and 1,887 in June 2025. Other major stations which had reduced cross borders activities were Isebenia, Loitokitok and Namanga.

3.3. Across both survey rounds, male respondents consistently dominated cross-border activities in all stations. In December 2024, males accounted for 77.2 per cent of all respondents, and this proportion increased slightly to 79.7 per cent in June 2025. Although female participation decreased from 4,086 to 2,663 over the two periods, some stations particularly Lwakhakha and Taveta recorded relatively higher female respondents in June 2025 compared to other locations.

Table 3.1: Number of Respondents by Sex and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024			Jun-2025		
Border Station	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
Busia	734	2,935	**3,669**	316	1,571	**1,887**
Isebania	1,214	1,853	**3,067**	655	1,432	**2,087**
Loitokitok	308	861	**1,169**	143	524	**667**
Lunga Lunga	58	307	**365**	60	251	**311**
Lwakhakha	276	731	**1,007**	424	828	**1,252**
Malaba	555	1,629	**2,184**	333	1,685	**2,018**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	203	403	**606**	62	216	**278**
Mandera (Somalia)	21	860	**881**	58	222	**280**
Moyale	67	1,479	**1,546**	59	1,443	**1,502**
Namanga	414	1,159	**1,573**	169	1,065	**1,234**
Rhamu	92	479	**571**	23	271	**294**
Suam	65	545	**610**	86	408	**494**
Taveta	79	630	**709**	275	567	**842**
Total	**4,086**	**13,871**	**17,957**	**2,663**	**10,483**	**13,146**

Distribution of Respondent Roles

3.4. Table 3.2 shows the distribution of respondents by type (trader or transporter) and border station for December 2024 and June 2025 periods. Traders accounted for the majority of respondents at 65.8 per cent in December 2024 and 59.0 per cent in June 2025.

3.5. The number of traders declined from 11,815 in December 2024 to 7,753 in June 2025, although their proportional dominance remained evident at almost all stations. The number of transporters reduced from 6,142 to 5,393, over the same period, though some stations such as Malaba and Moyale exhibited shifts in their composition with a higher number of transporters. Meanwhile, stations such as Mandera Somalia showed a notable shift, with transporters sharply declining from 728 in December 2024 to 32 in June 2025. At the Lwakhakha border, the number of traders increased by 30.0 per cent, while the number of transporters rose by 13.5 per cent. This points to increased cross-border activities along the Lwakhakha's border.

Table 3.2: Number of Respondents by Type and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024			Jun-2025		
Border Station	**Trader**	**Transporter**	**Total**	**Trader**	**Transporter**	**Total**
Busia	2,975	694	**3,669**	1,432	455	**1,887**
Isebania	2,814	253	**3,067**	1,758	329	**2,087**
Loitokitok	972	197	**1,169**	436	231	**667**
Lunga Lunga	207	158	**365**	198	113	**311**
Lwakhakha	659	348	**1,007**	857	395	**1,252**
Malaba	1,115	1,069	**2,184**	826	1,192	**2,018**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	525	81	**606**	147	131	**278**
Mandera (Somalia)	153	728	**881**	248	32	**280**
Moyale	388	1,158	**1,546**	300	1,202	**1,502**
Namanga	903	670	**1,573**	701	533	**1,234**
Rhamu	530	41	**571**	173	121	**294**
Suam	236	374	**610**	152	342	**494**
Taveta	338	371	709	525	317	842
Total	**11,815**	**6,142**	**17,957**	**7,753**	**5,393**	**13,146**

Transport Means among Traders and Transporters

3.6. Table 3.3 presents the number of respondents by type (trader or transporter) and means of transport for December 2024 and June 2025 periods. Motorbikes, head/hand, and bicycles remained the predominant means of transport by both traders and transporters.

3.7. Motorbikes were the most common means of transport in the two survey periods with 37.4 per cent and 43.5 per cent of the total respondents reported to have used them for transportation in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively, underscoring their important role as a flexible and accessible transport option, at the border stations. Head/hand carriage followed closely at 33.0 per cent and 24.9 per cent, over the same period, reflecting the high volume of pedestrian and small-scale trade activity. Bicycles/wheelchairs also featured prominently, with 2,095 (11.7%) and 1,502 (11.4%) respondents reporting to have used them as means of transport in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively.

3.8. Transporters showed a stronger reliance on motorbikes, with the proportion of transporters who used motorbikes to ferry goods across borders rising from 56.9 per cent in December 2024 to 61.8 per cent in June 2025. Vehicle, tuktuks and push/hand carts were the other means of transport preferred by transporters to traders. This growth mainly stemmed from transporters, indicating a move toward motorized transport options. Traders relied more on head/hand and bicycle/wheelchair transport to move their goods across the border in December 2024 and June 2025.



Table 3.3: Number of Respondents by Type and Means of Transport, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024			Jun-2025		
Means of Transport	**Trader**	**Transporter**	**Total**	**Trader**	**Transporter**	**Total**
Animal	115	717	**832**	267	41	**308**
Bicycle/Wheelchair	1,379	716	**2,095**	1,039	463	**1,502**
Boat/Canoe	826	106	**932**	315	250	**565**
Head/Hand	5,573	359	**5,932**	3,025	245	**3,270**
Motorbike	3,211	3,496	**6,707**	2,380	3,333	**5,713**
Donkey/Oxcart	24	5	**29**	2	3	**5**
Push/Hand Cart	189	263	**452**	97	181	**278**
Tuktuk	84	278	**362**	216	352	**568**
Vehicle	123	170	**293**	184	469	**653**
Walking Livestock	231	22	**253**	172	20	**192**
Wheel Barrow	60	10	**70**	56	36	**92**
Total	**11,815**	**6,142**	**17,957**	**7,753**	**5,393**	**13,146**

Transport Means across Border Stations

3.9. Table 3.4 compares transportation means used across different border stations in December 2024 and June 2025, highlighting trends in cross-border movement and logistics.

3.10. In December 2024, Busia border station recorded the highest number of respondents undertaking cross border trade activities at 20.4 per cent, out of which 46.4 per cent and 33.0 per cent used head/hand carriage and bicycle/wheelchair, respectively, as means of transportation at the border. At Isebania border station, more than half of respondents used head/hand carriage to transport goods across the border during both data collection periods.

3.11. Over the same period, Taveta, Moyale, Suam and Malaba border stations recorded high usage of motorbikes compared to other means of transport. Across the two reference periods, motorbikes remained the primary means of transport at both the Malaba and Moyale border stations. Boat/Canoe was reported as the commonly used means of transport in the Mandera-Ethiopia border and Rhamu, while more than 93.0 per cent of those interviewed at the Mandera-Somalia border preferred Donkey as the means of transport.



Table 3.4: Distribution of Respondents by Means of Transport and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024											
Border Station	**Donkey**	**Bicycle/ Wheelchair**	**Boat/ Canoe**	**Head/ Hand**	**Motorbike**	**Donkey/ Oxcart**	**Push/ Hand Cart**	**Tuktuk**	**Vehicle**	**Walking Livestock**	**Wheel Barrow**	**Total**
Busia	0	1,212	0	1,701	673	0	55	4	4	16	4	**3,669**
Isebania	0	194	0	2,138	685	0	20	9	6	5	10	**3,067**
Loitokitok	2	69	0	220	802	1	12	2	0	32	29	**1,169**
Lunga Lunga	1	83	0	48	222	0	0	3	0	8	0	**365**
Lwakhakha	1	169	0	623	200	1	7	2	0	2	2	**1,007**
Malaba	0	334	0	450	1,247	0	110	2	2	37	2	**2,184**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	2	0	561	28	0	0	0	1	0	13	1	**606**
Mandera (Somalia)	822	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	11	40	3	**881**
Moyale	3	0	0	33	1,201	0	0	222	50	23	14	**1,546**
Namanga	0	12	0	408	685	0	244	98	73	49	4	**1,573**
Rhamu	0	0	366	147	1	27	4	0	9	16	1	**571**
Suam	1	1	1	50	411	0	0	2	138	6	0	**610**
Taveta	0	21	0	86	579	0	0	17	0	6	0	**709**
Total	**832**	**2,095**	**932**	**5,932**	**6,707**	**29**	**452**	**362**	**293**	**253**	**70**	**17,957**

	Jun-2025											
Border Station	**Donkey**	**Bicycle/ Wheelchair**	**Boat/ Canoe**	**Head/ Hand**	**Motorbike**	**Oxcart**	**Push/ Hand Cart**	**Tuktuk**	**Vehicle**	**Walking Livestock**	**Wheel Barrow**	**Total**
Busia	0	867	0	519	423	5	62	3	3	0	5	**1,887**
Isebania	0	170	0	1,154	698	0	25	10	8	17	5	**2,087**
Loitokitok	2	29	0	56	525	0	23	18	7	3	4	**667**
Lunga Lunga	0	79	0	55	173	0	1	3	0	0	0	**311**
Lwakhakha	0	90	0	857	289	0	15	1	0	0	0	**1,252**
Malaba	0	197	0	225	1,494	0	56	0	0	40	6	**2,018**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	0	0	277	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	**278**
Mandera (Somalia)	262	0	0	7	8	0	0	1	2	0	0	**280**
Moyale	34	0	0	70	860	0	0	292	152	64	30	**1,502**
Namanga	7	52	0	181	430	0	94	140	223	68	39	**1,234**
Rhamu	3	0	288	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	**294**
Suam	0	0	0	18	221	0	0	0	255	0	0	**494**
Taveta	0	18	0	128	592	0	1	100	2	0	1	**842**
Total	**308**	**1,502**	**565**	**3,270**	**5,713**	**5**	**278**	**568**	**653**	**192**	**92**	**13,146**

Respondents Country of Residence

3.12. Table 3.5 presents the distribution of respondents by sex and country of residence in December 2024 and June 2025 survey periods. There was an overall decline in the total number of respondents across all countries, with residents of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania jointly accounting for 87.3 per cent and 91.4 per cent of all respondents undertaking informal cross border activities in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively. There was a sustained predominance of male respondents at 77.2 per cent in December 2024 and 79.7 per cent in June 2025, suggesting that cross-border trading and transport activities remain largely male-driven. Female participation, although lower, remained steady throughout the review periods.

Table 3.5: Number of Respondents by sex and Country of Residence, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024			Jun-2025		
Country of Residence	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
Congo DR	0	0	**0**	0	2	**2**
Ethiopia	214	1,625	**1,839**	75	990	**1,065**
Kenya	1,366	4,504	**5,870**	1,063	3,984	**5,047**
Somalia	16	428	**444**	6	56	**62**
South Sudan	2	1	**3**	2	2	**4**
Tanzania	1,299	2,961	**4,260**	730	2,388	**3,118**
Uganda	1,189	4,352	**5,541**	787	3,061	**3,848**
Total	**4,086**	**13,871**	**17,957**	**2,663**	**10,483**	**13,146**

3.13. Traders consistently dominated cross border trade activities in both the December 2024 and June 2025 survey periods, as shown in Table 3.6, at 65.8 per cent and 59.0 per cent, respectively. Kenyan, Ugandan, and Tanzanian traders formed the bulk of the traders in the two periods of data collection, while transporters of Ethiopian residence exceeded their trading counterparts across the two survey cycles. A similar case was observed in December 2024 for the Somalia residents, where those who engaged in transporting activities were more than those in trading activities, but the trend was reversed in June 2025 where the traders were more than transporters.

Table 3.6: Number of Respondents by Type and Country of Residence, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024			Jun-2025		
Country of Residence	**Trader**	**Transporter**	**Total**	**Trader**	**Transporter**	**Total**
Congo DR	0	0	**0**	2	0	**2**
Ethiopia	829	1,010	**1,839**	301	764	**1,065**
Kenya	3,940	1,930	**5,870**	2,950	2,097	**5,047**
Somalia	97	347	**444**	46	16	**62**
South Sudan	2	1	**3**	3	1	**4**
Tanzania	3,202	1,058	**4,260**	2,074	1,044	**3,118**
Uganda	3,745	1,796	**5,541**	2,377	1,471	**3,848**
Total	**11,815**	**6,142**	**17,957**	**7,753**	**5,393**	**13,146**

Distribution of Traders by Age and Sex

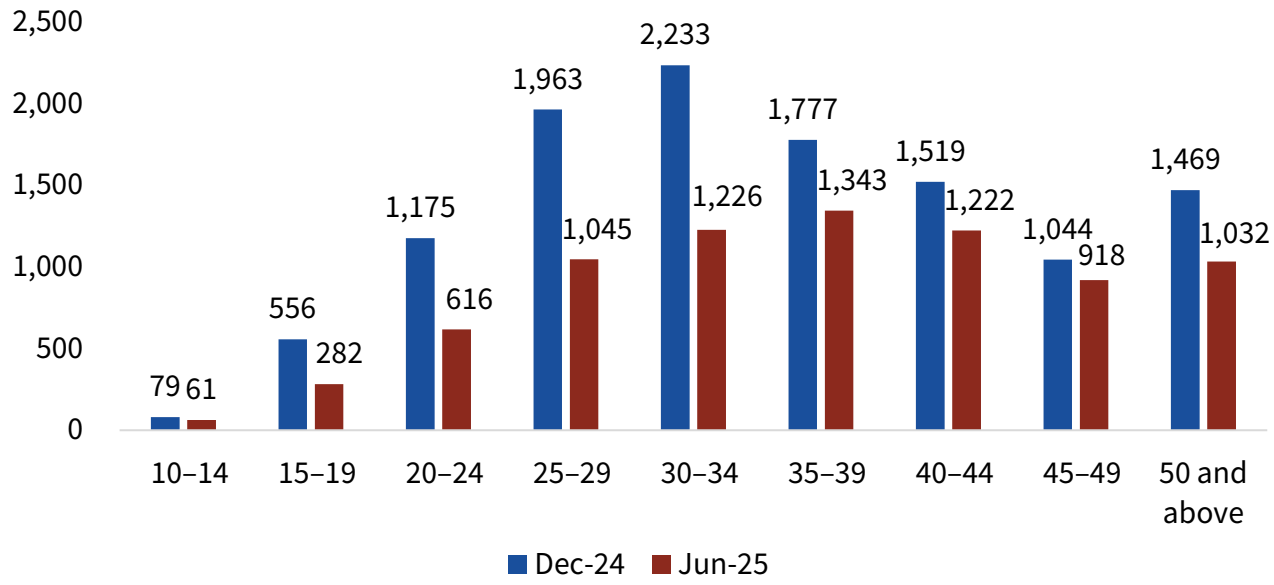
3.14. Table 3.7 and Figure 3.1 present the age distribution of informal cross-border traders by sex for the survey periods. Individuals aged 25 to 44 years formed the majority of traders in both survey periods, accounting for 63.4 per cent in December 2024 and 62.4 per cent in June 2025. Male dominance was evident across all age categories, with the highest proportion of both male traders (18.6%) and female traders (19.6%) being those in 30 to 34 years age bracket.

Table 3.7: Number of Traders by Age and Sex, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024			Jun-2025		
Age	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
10–14	28	51	**79**	25	36	**61**
15–19	104	452	**556**	61	221	**282**
20–24	304	871	**1,175**	142	474	**616**
25–29	599	1,364	**1,963**	321	724	**1,045**
30–34	773	1,460	**2,233**	368	858	**1,226**
35–39	667	1,110	**1,777**	432	911	**1,343**
40–44	503	1,016	**1,519**	391	831	**1,222**
45–49	388	656	**1,044**	377	541	**918**
50 and above	579	890	**1,469**	447	585	**1,032**
Not stated	0	0	**0**	2	6	**8**
Total	**3,945**	**7,870**	**11,815**	**2,566**	**5,187**	**7,753**

3.15. In December 2024, cross-border trade activities were undertaken by those aged between 30 to 34 years (18.9%), followed by those aged 25 to 29 years (16.6%). However, in June 2025, trade activities were observed to be undertaken by those aged between 35 to 39 years (17.3%) being the majority followed by those of 30 to 34 years (15.8%) suggesting a reduction in youth engagement, possibly due to school commitments.

Figure 3.1: Age Distribution of Informal Cross-Border Traders, December 2024 and June 2025



Traders' Age Distribution by Border Station

3.16. Across most borders, traders aged 25 to 44 years consistently formed the majority within the two cycles as shown in Table 3.8. However, Lwakhakha and Mandera (Ethiopia) border points consistently had traders aged 50 years and above dominating trade activities compared to the younger traders across the two data collection periods. At the busiest border points Busia and Isebania the majority of traders in both periods were aged 25 to 29 years. Traders aged 10–14 years were mainly recorded at the Busia and Isebania border points, totalling 67 individuals in December 2024. In June 2025, this age group was concentrated at Isebania and Lwakhakha, with a combined total of 47 traders.

Table 3.8: Distribution of Traders by Age Group and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024										Jun-2025										
Border Station	**10–14**	**15–19**	**20–24**	**25–29**	**30–34**	**35–39**	**40–44**	**45–49**	**50 and above**	**Total**	**10–14**	**15–19**	**20–24**	**25–29**	**30–34**	**35–39**	**40–44**	**45–49**	**50 and above**	**Not stated**	**Total**
Busia	44	250	422	618	528	428	323	156	206	**2,975**	4	85	223	296	260	234	126	101	102	1	**1,432**
Isebania	23	161	388	527	494	399	310	226	286	**2,814**	30	89	179	283	295	302	217	163	197	3	**1,758**
Loitokitok	0	29	113	147	178	116	136	88	165	**972**	0	2	25	31	80	101	46	53	98	0	**436**
Lunga Lunga	3	22	24	31	38	27	25	17	20	**207**	9	8	25	49	29	24	19	14	21	0	**198**
Lwakhakha	7	39	47	80	108	119	76	61	122	**659**	17	63	68	106	126	135	107	74	160	1	**857**
Malaba	2	17	31	126	282	213	171	112	161	**1,115**	0	4	27	58	100	153	195	160	129	0	**826**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	0	3	20	89	108	47	81	64	113	**525**	1	0	8	18	26	18	20	13	43	0	**147**
Mandera (Somalia)	0	1	5	14	20	27	45	28	13	**153**	0	0	0	20	68	50	68	21	21	0	**248**
Moyale	0	20	30	65	88	81	43	37	24	**388**	0	9	15	40	35	45	50	42	61	3	**300**
Namanga	0	6	32	130	176	182	152	112	113	**903**	0	8	30	91	102	141	133	107	89	0	**701**
Rhamu	0	1	12	50	91	53	84	78	161	**530**	0	0	0	0	4	22	100	39	8	0	**173**
Suam	0	3	25	30	59	33	23	31	32	**236**	0	2	8	20	33	35	23	15	16	0	**152**
Taveta	0	4	26	56	63	52	50	34	53	**338**	**0**	12	8	33	**68**	83	118	116	87	**0**	**525**
Total	**79**	**556**	**1,175**	**1,963**	**2,233**	**1,777**	**1,519**	**1,044**	**1,469**	**11,815**	**61**	**282**	**616**	**1,045**	**1,226**	**1,343**	**1,222**	**918**	**1,032**	**8**	**7,753**



Traders' Education Level by Border Station

3.17. Table 3.9 presents the distribution of traders by education levels in the survey periods. Traders with primary school level of education were the majority accounting for 45.7 per cent and 46.0 per cent of the total traders interviewed in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively. The share of traders with secondary school level of education increased from 28.8 per cent in December 2024 data collection cycle to 29.0 per cent in the June 2025 cycle and were the second largest group of traders. Traders with no education accounted for 22.2 per cent and 20.8 per cent of the total traders in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively.

Table 3.9: Distribution of Traders by Education and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024						Jun-2025					
Border Station	**None**	**Primary**	**Secondary**	**College/ University**	**Not stated**	**Total**	**None**	**Primary**	**Secondary**	**College/ University**	**Not stated**	**Total**
Busia	420	1,393	1,084	78	0	**2,975**	176	716	495	45	0	**1,432**
Isebania	360	1,677	695	81	1	**2,814**	180	1,015	479	84	0	**1,758**
Loitokitok	222	401	300	49	0	**972**	45	216	153	22	0	**436**
Lunga Lunga	48	106	44	7	2	**207**	56	92	40	8	2	**198**
Lwakhakha	43	412	174	29	1	**659**	318	370	138	31	0	**857**
Malaba	232	601	261	21	0	**1,115**	109	308	367	42	0	**826**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	328	90	78	29	0	**525**	96	25	23	3	0	**147**
Mandera (Somalia)	121	19	12	1	0	**153**	117	77	48	6	0	**248**
Moyale	197	124	59	8	0	**388**	169	100	28	3	0	**300**
Namanga	88	297	458	60	0	**903**	131	220	291	59	0	**701**
Rhamu	518	3	6	3	0	**530**	170	2	0	1	0	**173**
Suam	28	79	123	6	0	**236**	2	46	89	15	0	**152**
Taveta	21	195	103	19	0	**338**	43	381	94	7	0	**525**
Total	**2,626**	**5,397**	**3,397**	**391**	**4**	**11,815**	**1,612**	**3,568**	**2,245**	**326**	**2**	**7,753**

Traders' Marital Status by Border Station

3.18. Table 3.10 presents distribution of traders by marital status, for the periods of December 2024 and June 2025. The number of married traders accounted for more than three quarters of all interviewed traders while single traders accounted for 17.5 per cent on average across the two periods.

3.19. Lwakhakha and Taveta recorded increases in the number of informal traders, possibly due to seasonal trade. Mandera (Ethiopia) and Rhamu experienced declines in the number of informal traders, potentially linked to insecurity issues.

Table 3.10: Distribution of Traders by Marital Status and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

	Dec-2024						Jun-2025					
Border Station	**Divorced**	**Married**	**Separated**	**Single**	**Widowed**	**Total**	**Divorced**	**Married**	**Separated**	**Single**	**Widowed**	**Total**
Busia	13	2,077	38	803	44	**2,975**	6	1,021	25	366	14	**1,432**
Isebania	4	2,312	23	456	19	**2,814**	10	1,253	42	383	70	**1,758**
Loitokitok	5	721	9	222	15	**972**	1	374	18	35	8	**436**
Lunga Lunga	4	147	2	54	0	**207**	1	154	1	42	0	**198**
Lwakhakha	1	515	13	121	9	**659**	3	657	6	164	27	**857**
Malaba	2	992	9	101	11	**1,115**	2	673	27	99	25	**826**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	33	432	10	25	25	**525**	8	100	2	25	12	**147**
Mandera (Somalia)	1	129	2	19	2	**153**	4	228	2	4	10	**248**
Moyale	8	297	0	80	3	**388**	6	244	0	45	5	**300**
Namanga	2	770	15	98	18	**903**	4	585	11	85	16	**701**
Rhamu	15	478	0	26	11	**530**	0	170	1	1	1	**173**
Suam	1	211	0	19	5	**236**	0	125	4	18	5	**152**
Taveta	0	272	8	56	2	**338**	1	425	7	76	16	**525**
Total	**89**	**9,353**	**129**	**2,080**	**164**	**11,815**	**46**	**6,009**	**146**	**1,343**	**209**	**7,753**

Informal Trade Balance

3.20. Table 3.11 presents a comparative analysis of informal trade for December 2024 and June 2025, based on cumulative data for a 14-day period in each month. The results indicate a general slowdown in informal cross-border trade volume between the two periods, mainly attributed to seasonal variations in agricultural production and reduced cross-border market activities.

3.21. In the 14-day data collection period of December 2024, informal exports were valued at KSh 159.7 million, while informal imports stood at KSh 139.3 million resulting in a trade surplus of KSh 20.4 million. In contrast, for a similar number of days in June 2025, receipts from informal exports declined by 22.3 per cent to KSh 124.0 million, while expenditure on informal imports reduced to KSh 125.1 million. This resulted in a 16.7 per cent contraction in the total volume of informal trade from KSh 299.0 million to KSh 249.1 million, and a shift of informal trade balance from a surplus to a deficit of KSh 1.1 million over the two reference periods.

Table 3.11: Balance of Informal Trade, December 2024 and June 2025 **KSh '000s**

Trade Flow	Dec-2024	Jun-2025
Export	159,703.0	124,036.4
Import	139,314.1	125,109.1
Trade Volume	**299,017.1**	**249,145.5**
Trade Balance	**20,389.0**	**-1,072.7**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month		

Informal Trade by Border Station

3.22. There was a contraction in informal trade, with a more pronounced decline in informal exports across most border stations as shown in Table 3.12. In the December 2024 survey period, the highest informal export value was recorded at Moyale, Mandera (Somalia) and Busia border stations at KSh 63.8 million, KSh 27.0 million and KSh 16.8 million, respectively. In June 2025, Moyale remained the leading route of informal exports, recording exports of goods worth KSh 51.9 million. Suam and Mandera (Ethiopia) were the second and third leading export points at KSh 24.7 million and KSh 11.2 million, respectively.

3.23. The value of informal imports in December 2024 was highest at the Mandera (Somalia) border, which recorded goods worth KSh 44.2 million, followed by the Rhamu border with imports valued at KSh 33.3 million. In June 2025, Namanga registered the highest informal import value at KSh 27.6 million, while Moyale was second with imports worth KSh 19.1 million.

3.24. In terms of trade balances, Moyale and Suam border stations recorded the highest informal trade surpluses in both periods, while significant informal trade deficits were registered in Rhamu and Mandera (Somalia) border points for the December 2024 period, and Namanga, Malaba and Isebania for the June 2025 cycle, highlighting high informal import activities relative to informal exports.



Table 3.12: Value of Informal Trade by Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025 KSh '000s

Border Station	Dec-2024				June-2025			
	Export	Import	Trade Volume	Trade Balance	Export	Import	Trade Volume	Trade Balance
Busia	16,806.4	7,176.4	**23,982.9**	**9,630.0**	8,462.8	3,141.8	**11,604.6**	**5,321.1**
Isebania	8,008.8	8,634.5	**16,643.3**	**-625.8**	5,080.9	17,251.5	**22,332.5**	**-12,170.6**
Loitokitok	3,401.4	3,167.1	**6,568.4**	**234.3**	2,133.6	2,166.7	**4,300.3**	**-33.1**
Lunga Lunga	728.4	1,117.7	**1,846.0**	**-389.3**	438.4	1,107.6	**1,546.0**	**-669.2**
Lwakhakha	1,769.4	1,093.5	**2,862.9**	**675.9**	2,227.9	527.2	**2,755.1**	**1,700.6**
Malaba	2,318.9	10,548.2	**12,867.1**	**-8,229.3**	820.4	14,636.4	**15,456.8**	**-13,815.9**
Mandera (Ethiopia)	10,757.3	8,780.4	**19,537.6**	**1,976.9**	11,240.9	11,136.7	**22,377.6**	**104.2**
Mandera (Somalia)	26,962.4	44,161.6	**71,124.0**	**-17,199.2**	2,419.0	7,751.3	**10,170.3**	**-5,332.3**
Moyale	63,799.5	8,193.8	**71,993.3**	**55,605.6**	51,883.4	19,114.3	**70,997.7**	**32,769.1**
Namanga	8,271.3	7,456.4	**15,727.7**	**814.9**	10,360.3	27,591.4	**37,951.7**	**-17,231.2**
Rhamu	2.4	33,381.5	**33,383.9**	**-33,379.1**	4,145.2	8,887.6	**13,032.8**	**-4,742.3**
Suam	16,232.1	967.5	**17,199.6**	**15,264.6**	24,741.7	897.0	**25,638.7**	**23,844.8**
Taveta	644.9	4,635.5	**5,280.3**	**-3,990.6**	81.8	10,899.5	**10,981.3**	**-10,817.7**
Total	**159,703.0**	**139,314.1**	**299,017.1**	**20,389.0**	**124,036.4**	**125,109.1**	**249,145.5**	**-1,072.7**

Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month

Informal Trade by Country

3.25. As presented in Table 3.13 informal trade activity over the 14-day period in December 2024 and June 2025 declined primarily due to reduced export flows. Overall, there were significant informal trade flows across Kenya's neighbouring countries. Ethiopia and Uganda were the leading destinations for Kenya's informal exports, while informal import volumes from Tanzania and Somalia were observed to tilt informal trade against Kenya. This underscores the regional interdependence in informal trade and the sensitivity of trade patterns to changing markets.

3.26. Ethiopia accounted for the largest share of informal exports during both periods at KSh 74.5 million in December 2024 and KSh 67.0 million in June 2025. Uganda was the second highest destination, with informal exports valued at KSh 37.1 million and KSh 36.2 million during the December 2024 and June 2025 survey periods, respectively.

3.27. Conversely, informal trade was in favour of Somalia and Tanzania over the two-survey period with Kenya recording informal trade deficit of KSh 40.9 million with Tanzania and KSh 5.0 million with Somalia by June 2025.

Table 3.13: Value of Informal Trade by Country, December 2024 and June 2025 KSh '000s

	Dec-2024				June-2025			
Border Station	Export	Import	Trade Volume	Trade Balance	Export	Import	Trade Volume	Trade Balance
Ethiopia	74,509.1	50,358.2	**124,867.3**	**24,151.0**	66,965.8	39,138.1	**106,103.9**	**27,827.7**
Somalia	27,012.4	44,196.9	**71,209.2**	**-17,184.5**	2,811.7	7,773.9	**10,585.6**	**-4,962.2**
Tanzania	21,070.0	24,991.1	**46,061.2**	**-3,921.1**	18,105.0	58,989.7	**77,094.6**	**-40,884.7**
Uganda	37,111.5	19,767.9	**56,879.4**	**17,343.6**	36,153.9	19,207.4	**55,361.3**	**16,946.5**
Total	**159,703.0**	**139,314.1**	**299,017.1**	**20,389.0**	**124,036.4**	**125,109.1**	**249,145.5**	**-1,072.7**

Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month

Informal Trade by Means of Transport

3.28. Table 3.14 presents the distribution of informal trade by means of transport for the 14-day survey period for the months of December 2024 and June 2025. The results highlight that motorbikes and vehicles were the preferred transport means for informal trade due to their accessibility and capacity to handle medium-to-large consignments. Meanwhile, self-carriage and the use of animals, carts and bicycles continue to serve small-scale traders, particularly in border areas with several exit routes with limited infrastructure.

3.29. Motorbikes were the most dominant mode of transport for informal trade in the two survey periods. Informal exports via motorbikes accounted for 41.0 per cent and 32.7 per cent of the total informal exports in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively. Use of vehicles also facilitated informal export of goods worth KSh 24.2 million in December 2024 and KSh 37.1 million in June 2025.

3.30. Traders and transporters ferrying goods into Kenya on the other hand used various means with informal imports transported by animals and boat/canoe accounting for 56.4 per cent of the total value of informal imports in December 2024. In the June 2025 period, motorbikes and boat/canoe jointly transported goods worth KSh 62.5 million to Kenya through various border stations. The value of imported walking livestock i.e. animals moved on foot across borders rather than being transported by trucks or carts stood at KSh 22.5 million.

Table 3.14: Value of Informal Trade by Means of Transport, December 2024 and June 2025 KSh '000s

	Dec-2024				Jun-2025			
Means of Transport	**Export**	**Import**	**Trade Volume**	**Trade Balance**	**Export**	**Import**	**Trade Volume**	**Trade Balance**
Donkey	20,421.6	43,930.4	**64,352.0**	**-23,508.7**	2,371.7	7,643.2	**10,014.9**	**-5,271.5**
Bicycle/Wheel-chair	10,173.7	2,123.8	**12,297.5**	**8,049.9**	6,149.7	1,770.8	**7,920.5**	**4,378.9**
Boat/Canoe	10,035.0	34,595.2	**44,630.2**	**-24,560.2**	15,341.9	20,007.6	**35,349.5**	**-4,665.7**
Head/Hand	9,402.8	11,599.2	**21,002.0**	**-2,196.3**	4,056.5	5,499.3	**9,555.8**	**-1,442.8**
Motorbike	65,427.4	25,942.8	**91,370.2**	**39,484.6**	40,584.4	42,473.0	**83,057.4**	**-1,888.6**
Donkey/Oxcart	0.0	1,523.0	**1,523.0**	**-1,523.0**	11.1	30.6	**41.7**	**-19.5**
Push/Hand Cart	1,927.5	2,941.4	**4,868.8**	**-1,013.9**	776.4	1,938.9	**2,715.3**	**-1,162.5**
Tuktuk	14,514.5	2,148.8	**16,663.2**	**12,365.7**	9,365.3	6,351.4	**15,716.7**	**3,013.9**
Vehicle	24,213.1	3,101.8	**27,314.9**	**21,111.3**	37,099.8	16,602.7	**53,702.5**	**20,497.0**
Walking Livestock	3,366.7	11,120.8	**14,487.5**	**-7,754.1**	8,148.7	22,516.6	**30,665.3**	**-14,368.0**
Wheel Barrow	220.8	287.1	**507.8**	**-66.3**	130.9	274.9	**405.9**	**-144.0**
Total	**159,703.0**	**139,314.1**	**299,017.1**	**20,389.0**	**124,036.4**	**125,109.1**	**249,145.5**	**-1,072.7**

Informal Export Commodities

3.31. This section presents analysis of informal export commodities by border station and country for December 2024 and June 2025, based on data collected for 14 days each month. The findings reveal that informal exports were predominantly composed of food items, crude materials, and miscellaneous manufactured goods, reflecting the structure and nature of informal trade activities between Kenya and her neighbours.

Informal Export Commodities by Border Station

3.32. In December 2024, the leading category of informal exports was inedible crude materials except fuels accounting for 42.1 per cent of total informal exports as shown in Table 3.15. This was mainly through Moyale and Mandera (Somalia) stations, reflecting cross-border demand for agricultural goods. Other major categories included food and live animals, miscellaneous manufactured articles and; chemicals and related products at 28.3, 8.9 and 6.6 per cent. Suam, Busia and Namanga border stations were the main informal export corridors of food and live animals besides Moyale and Mandera (Somalia) stations.

3.33. Informal exports under the food and live animals' category was the leading export category, accounting for 37.9 per cent of total informal exports recorded in June 2025 followed by those of crude materials at 24.0 per cent. Moyale, Suam and Mandera (Ethiopia) were the main exit points of these items in the review period.

Table 3.15: Value of Informal Exports by Commodity Group and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

Dec-2024														
SITC Section	**Busia**	**Isebania**	**Loitokitok**	**Lunga Lunga**	**Lwakhakha**	**Malaba**	**Mandera Ethiopia**	**Mandera Somalia**	**Moyale**	**Namanga**	**Rhamu**	**Suam**	**Taveta**	**Total**
0:Food and live animals	6,623.8	913.9	1,511.9	142.5	821.9	1,046.6	3,272.8	6,523.2	9,453.3	5,129.7	2.4	9,507.0	319.4	**45,268.4**
1:Beverages and tobacco	395.6	0.3	4.9	0.0	48.4	74.4	1,065.5	169.8	434.0	26.4	0.0	2,003.8	0.0	**4,223.1**
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	2,467.0	1,028.9	570.0	372.9	56.9	247.2	899.2	13,558.3	46,579.6	81.2	0.0	1,103.9	210.9	**67,176.0**
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	168.6	0.0	123.7	0.0	243.2	12.5	0.0	240.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	301.2	0.0	**1,095.1**
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	596.2	784.6	69.0	103.8	45.4	55.3	400.0	438.6	909.9	2,559.4	0.0	602.4	8.1	**6,572.7**
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	2,658.0	176.9	55.3	3.9	251.8	250.8	4,084.2	973.0	628.2	190.4	0.0	1,259.4	14.4	**10,546.2**
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	1,274.2	1,262.2	320.9	63.3	42.0	81.6	457.0	2,428.9	1,647.5	209.8	0.0	881.9	2.7	**8,671.9**
7:Machinery and transport equipment	645.2	201.6	203.8	0.0	14.7	369.2	0.0	170.0	193.1	10.6	0.0	79.2	0.0	**1,887.4**
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	1,977.8	3,640.5	541.9	41.9	245.0	181.5	578.6	2,460.7	3,947.9	63.8	0.0	493.4	89.5	**14,262.3**
Total	**16,806.4**	**8,008.8**	**3,401.4**	**728.4**	**1,769.4**	**2,318.9**	**10,757.3**	**26,962.4**	**63,799.5**	**8,271.3**	**2.4**	**16,232.1**	**644.9**	**159,703.0**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month														

3.34. Ethiopia and Uganda were Kenya's leading destinations for informal exports mainly food and live animals, crude materials of vegetable origin, and miscellaneous manufactured articles as presented in Table 3.16.

KSh '000s

Jun-25														
SITC Section	Busia	Isebania	Loitokitok	Lunga Lunga	Lwakhakha	Malaba	Mandera Ethiopia	Mandera Somalia	Moyale	Namanga	Rhamu	Suam	Taveta	Total
0:Food and live animals	4,641.5	973.3	543.9	123.3	938.7	320.9	2,355.7	1,000.3	17,059.6	8,008.3	817.3	10,207.2	15.2	**47,005.1**
1:Beverages and tobacco	249.8	15.9	0.0	0.1	50.2	1.8	71.2	666.0	593.2	77.9	45.0	951.9	0.0	**2,723.1**
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	574.9	202.9	866.0	227.6	139.0	170.2	5,620.5	0.0	19,383.4	221.1	1,592.0	736.9	26.4	**29,760.8**
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	56.2	0.0	2.0	0.0	100.5	0.0	11.2	0.0	55.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**225.1**
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	838.6	842.6	124.7	38.6	73.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	725.3	1,484.4	0.0	2,553.9	0.0	**6,681.0**
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	894.7	285.9	97.9	2.1	510.4	15.0	1,324.0	339.0	181.3	41.9	473.5	9,342.1	0.2	**13,508.0**
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	290.8	939.1	144.6	9.3	137.5	43.0	520.4	410.7	3,087.6	252.4	297.4	608.4	4.2	**6,745.5**
7:Machinery and transport equipment	284.7	107.4	137.5	1.4	64.4	45.1	30.0	0.0	115.4	39.5	0.0	0.0	18.0	**843.3**
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	631.5	1,713.9	217.0	36.1	214.2	224.5	1,307.9	3.0	10,682.4	235.0	920.0	341.4	17.8	**16,544.5**
Total	**8,462.8**	**5,080.9**	**2,133.6**	**438.4**	**2,227.9**	**820.4**	**11,240.9**	**2,419.0**	**51,883.4**	**10,360.3**	**4,145.2**	**24,741.7**	**81.8**	**124,036.4**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month														



3.35. During the December 2024 data collection period, Informal exports to Ethiopia were dominated by crude materials of vegetable origin and food items at 63.7 per cent and 17.1 per cent, reflecting active trade in agricultural commodities. Uganda's informal imports from Kenya comprised a diverse range of products, including food, chemicals, and manufactured goods.

3.36. In June 2025, total informal exports declined with Ethiopia and Uganda dominating as Kenya's informal export markets, accounting for 54.0 per cent and 29.1 per cent of total informal exports, respectively. However, the trend of informal exports showed slight shifts among commodity categories with food and live animals leading with a share of 37.9 per cent of total informal exports.

Table 3.16: Value of Informal Exports by Commodity Group and Country, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

SITC Section	Dec-2024					Jun-2025				
	Ethiopia	Somalia	Tanzania	Uganda	Total	Ethiopia	Somalia	Tanzania	Uganda	Total
0:Food and live animals	12,728.5	6,523.2	8,032.2	17,984.4	**45,268.4**	19,916.3	1,405.7	9,673.9	16,009.2	**47,005.1**
1:Beverages and tobacco	1,499.5	169.8	31.6	2,522.3	**4,223.1**	709.4	666.0	93.9	1,253.7	**2,723.1**
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	47,428.8	13,608.3	2,264.5	3,874.5	**67,176.0**	26,595.9	0.0	1,543.9	1,621.0	**29,760.8**
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	6.0	240.0	123.7	725.5	**1,095.1**	66.4	0.0	2.0	156.7	**225.1**
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	1,309.9	438.6	3,525.0	1,299.2	**6,572.7**	725.3	0.0	2,490.3	3,465.5	**6,681.0**
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	4,712.3	973.0	440.8	4,420.1	**10,546.2**	1,978.8	339.0	428.0	10,762.2	**13,508.0**
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	2,104.5	2,428.9	1,858.8	2,279.7	**8,671.9**	3,930.4	385.7	1,349.6	1,079.8	**6,745.5**
7:Machinery and transport equipment	193.1	170.0	416.0	1,108.3	**1,887.4**	145.4	0.0	303.7	394.2	**843.3**
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	4,526.5	2,460.7	4,377.4	2,897.7	**14,262.3**	12,898.0	15.3	2,219.7	1,411.5	**16,544.5**
Total	**74,509.1**	**27,012.4**	**21,070.0**	**37,111.5**	**159,703.0**	**66,965.8**	**2,811.7**	**18,105.0**	**36,153.9**	**124,036.4**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month										

Informal Import Commodities

3.37. This section presents the analysis in the scale and structure of informal imports across Kenya's borders by border station and country for data collected in December 2024 and June 2025.
Informal Import Commodities by Border Station

3.38. As shown in Table 3.17, food and live animals remain the key commodities of Kenya's informal import trade. The continued prominence of border stations such as Mandera (Somalia), Namanga, and Isebania underscores the resilience of informal trade networks, particularly in agricultural and household products.

3.39. In December 2024, Mandera (Somalia) border point was leading in informal imports, accounting for 31.7 per cent of the total informal imports into the country. Other major entry points during the same period included Rhamu (24.0%), Malaba (7.6%), and Isebania (6.2%). Notably, 67.3 per cent of goods entering Kenya through these borders comprised food and live animals.

3.40. In June 2025, import flows were evenly distributed among several border stations. Namanga was the leading entry point, accounting for 22.1 per cent of total informal imports, with major imports comprising food and live animals (19.9%). It was followed by Moyale, Isebania, and Malaba, which contributed 15.3, 13.8 and 11.7 per cent of the total informal imports, respectively. Food and live animals was the key import category representing 78.5 per cent of total informal imports during this period.

Table 3.17: Value of Informal Imports by Commodity Group and Border Station, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

Dec-2024														
SITC Section	**Busia**	**Isebania**	**Loitokitok**	**Lunga Lunga**	**Lwakhakha**	**Malaba**	**Mandera Ethiopia**	**Mandera Somalia**	**Moyale**	**Namanga**	**Rhamu**	**Suam**	**Taveta**	**Total**
0:Food and live animals	2,960.3	6,713.6	1,699.3	1,001.9	1,023.4	8,967.7	5,703.3	22,926.9	3,871.3	6,281.4	28,814.4	426.2	3,391.7	**93,781.3**
1:Beverages and tobacco	119.3	52.1	44.0	16.7	3.2	304.8	0.0	0.0	1,307.8	629.1	8.0	7.5	34.4	**2,526.8**
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	641.3	451.3	304.7	52.0	1.5	650.7	22.0	1,166.0	2,782.7	48.7	78.5	140.7	763.5	**7,103.7**
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	29.6	0.0	39.1	0.0	0.5	0.0	2.6	2,514.8	4.1	0.0	348.0	0.0	0.0	**2,938.8**
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	0.3	15.6	64.3	5.1	0.0	101.5	2,590.3	4,103.6	22.2	119.2	2,122.7	0.0	1.3	**9,145.9**
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	62.8	108.8	24.4	5.4	3.0	69.2	447.7	239.6	55.7	131.4	90.0	0.0	164.1	**1,402.2**
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	1,377.1	367.7	436.6	24.7	38.6	296.7	0.0	1,627.0	0.0	180.8	0.0	329.9	115.4	**4,794.4**
7:Machinery and transport equipment	371.8	83.0	90.7	0.0	0.0	32.7	0.0	820.0	0.0	45.1	1,920.0	0.0	17.9	**3,381.3**
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	1,613.9	842.3	464.0	11.8	23.2	125.0	14.4	10,763.8	149.9	20.8	0.0	63.2	147.1	**14,239.6**
Total	**7,176.4**	**8,634.5**	**3,167.1**	**1,117.7**	**1,093.5**	**10,548.2**	**8,780.4**	**44,161.6**	**8,193.8**	**7,456.4**	**33,381.5**	**967.5**	**4,635.5**	**139,314.1**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month														

KSh '000s

Jun-25														
SITC Section	**Busia**	**Isebania**	**Loitokitok**	**Lunga Lunga**	**Lwakhakha**	**Malaba**	**Mandera Ethiopia**	**Mandera Somalia**	**Moyale**	**Namanga**	**Rhamu**	**Suam**	**Taveta**	**Total**
0:Food and live animals	2,291.5	13,435.3	1,523.2	1,074.3	454.1	12,253.6	6,680.0	4,287.2	16,826.6	24,892.7	6,098.6	627.6	7,721.1	**98,165.7**
1:Beverages and tobacco	100.7	511.2	14.8	3.4	11.1	37.1	0.0	0.0	497.5	1,301.4	6.0	0.0	2.8	**2,486.0**
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	347.0	1,269.0	276.1	4.4	1.8	2,038.0	0.0	386.3	1,472.7	542.8	337.5	77.4	2,167.5	**8,920.5**
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	4.2	0.0	76.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	127.5	153.0	0.0	27.6	412.2	0.0	8.5	**809.3**
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	6.8	103.4	4.5	0.0	0.0	2.3	4,291.7	935.3	0.0	50.5	685.8	0.0	0.0	**6,080.2**
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	5.1	103.9	41.6	0.0	1.5	0.6	37.5	189.5	0.0	76.2	0.0	126.0	62.0	**643.9**
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	149.3	620.7	76.5	24.4	22.0	102.1	0.0	0.0	271.0	340.6	295.0	4.2	497.8	**2,403.8**
7:Machinery and transport equipment	59.5	257.3	7.9	0.0	0.0	56.7	0.0	210.0	0.0	81.2	0.0	0.0	19.3	**691.7**
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	177.8	950.6	146.0	1.1	36.8	145.9	0.0	1,590.1	46.4	278.4	1,052.5	61.8	420.5	**4,907.9**
Total	**3,141.8**	**17,251.5**	**2,166.7**	**1,107.6**	**527.2**	**14,636.4**	**11,136.7**	**7,751.3**	**19,114.3**	**27,591.4**	**8,887.6**	**897.0**	**10,899.5**	**125,109.1**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month														

Informal Import Commodities by Country

3.41. As presented in Table 3.18, Tanzania was the main source of informal imports in June 2025, largely due to increased food inflows. In December 2024, Ethiopia was the largest source of informal imports, contributing 36.1 per cent of the total informal imports. Major commodities traded included food and live animals (76.2%), animal and vegetable oils (9.4%), and crude materials (5.7%). Somalia followed at 31.7 per cent, largely on account of food and live animals (52.0%) and miscellaneous manufactured goods (24.4%).

3.42. In June 2025, Tanzania was the leading source of informal imports, accounting for 47.4 per cent of total informal imports driven mainly by food and live animals (82.5%). The value of Informal imports from Uganda remained relatively unchanged underscoring its continued role as a reliable informal trading partner.

Table 3.18: Value of Informal Imports by Commodity Group and Country, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

SITC Section	Dec-2024					Jun-25				
	Ethiopia	Somalia	Tanzania	Uganda	Total	Ethiopia	Somalia	Tanzania	Uganda	Total
0:Food and live animals	38,391.4	22,962.1	19,067.9	13,359.8	**93,781.3**	29,602.7	4,290.2	48,654.6	15,618.2	**98,165.7**
1:Beverages and tobacco	1,315.8	0.0	776.2	434.8	**2,526.8**	503.5	0.0	1,833.6	148.9	**2,486.0**
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	2,883.2	1,166.0	1,620.3	1,434.2	**7,103.7**	1,810.2	386.3	4,259.7	2,464.3	**8,920.5**
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	354.7	2,514.8	39.1	30.2	**2,938.8**	539.7	153.0	112.3	4.4	**809.3**
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	4,735.2	4,103.6	205.4	101.8	**9,145.9**	4,977.5	935.3	158.4	9.1	**6,080.2**
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	593.5	239.6	434.1	135.0	**1,402.2**	37.5	194.1	279.5	132.8	**643.9**
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	0.0	1,627.0	1,125.2	2,042.3	**4,794.4**	566.0	15.0	1,553.5	269.2	**2,403.8**
7:Machinery and transport equipment	1,920.0	820.0	236.8	404.5	**3,381.3**	2.0	210.0	363.6	116.1	**691.7**
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	164.3	10,763.8	1,486.1	1,825.3	**14,239.6**	1,098.9	1,590.1	1,774.4	444.5	**4,907.9**
Total	**50,358.2**	**44,196.9**	**24,991.1**	**19,767.9**	**139,314.1**	**39,138.1**	**7,773.9**	**58,989.7**	**19,207.4**	**125,109.1**
Data is cummulative for only 14 days in each Month										



Chapter 4: Comparative analysis of Formal and Informal Trade

Overview

This chapter provides an analysis between formal and informal trade between Kenya and her neighbours namely, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia and Tanzania for the month of December 2024 and June 2025. The evolution of formal and informal cross-border trade is often an indication of trade and economic integration policies, with informal cross-border trade reflecting longstanding relationships between neighbouring countries and communities at the points of entry and exit. The dynamics in trade patterns often explain economic situations among trading partners during the period.



Summary of Trade

4.2. As presented in Table 4.1, the volume of formal trade was valued at KSh 23.1 billion in December 2024 and KSh 29.2 billion in June 2025. Formal trade was in favour of Kenya, registering trade surplus in both December 2024 and June 2025, while informal trade saw a shift from a trade surplus of KSh 45.1 million in December 2024 to a trade deficit of KSh 2.3 million in June 2025. The share of informal exports to total exports was 2.2 per cent in December 2024 and 1.3 per in June 2025. A similar trend was observed for imports, with informal imports accounting for 4.1 per cent and 2.7 per cent of total imports in the two-survey period respectively. Formal exports and imports were mainly through land border points, with exports recording an average share of 77.0 per cent while imports registered an average share of 83.8 per cent in both survey periods.

Table 4.1: Analysis of Formal Trade and Informal Trade by Trade Flow, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

Trade Flow	Dec-2024		Jun-2025	
	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]
Total Export	**15,814,546.8**	**352,943.7**	**19,554,531.5**	**265,437.8**
of which Total Export through Land Border Points3	11,659,382.5	352,943.7	15,693,634.9	265,437.8
Import	**7,235,981.5**	**307,884.1**	**9,601,019.0**	**267,733.5**
of which Import through Land Border Points[3]	6,045,681.1	307,884.1	8,077,258.0	267,733.5
Trade Volume	**23,050,528.3**	**660,827.8**	**29,155,550.5**	**533,171.3**
of which Total Trade through Land Border Points[3]	**17,705,063.6**	**660,827.8**	**23,770,892.9**	**533,171.3**
Trade Balance	**8,578,565.3**	**45,059.6**	**9,953,512.5**	**-2,295.7**
of which Trade Balance through Land Border Points[3]	**5,613,701.3**	**45,059.6**	**7,616,376.9**	**-2,295.7**

[1]Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda
[2]Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda uprated to a whole month
[3]Excludes trade in Electricity

Summary of Trade by Direction

4.3. Table 4.2 compares formal trade, through all land border points, and informal trade between Kenya and its neighbouring countries Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda for December 2024 and June 2025. Uganda was the largest market for Kenya's formal exports amounting to KSh 8.3 billion in December 2024 and KSh 12.4 billion in June 2025. Ethiopia on the other hand, was the main destination of Kenya's informal exports accounting for 46.7 per cent and 54.0 per cent of the total informal export revenue in December 2024 and June 2025, respectively.

4.4. Tanzania was the main source of Kenya's formal imports amongst the four countries valued at KSh 3.3 billion in December 2024 and KSh 5.1 billion in June 2025. There was a shift in the source of informal imports where in December 2024 Ethiopia was the largest source of informal imports accounting for 36.1 per cent of the total informal imports. In June 2025, Tanzania became the leading source of informal imports, accounting for 47.4 per cent of total informal imports.

Table 4.2: Formal and Informal Trade by Trade Flow and Country, December 2024 and June 2025 KSh '000s

Country	Dec-2024				Jun-2025			
	Export		Import		Export		Import	
	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]
Ethiopia	1,106,298.3	164,665.2	1,061,230.3	111,291.6	1,032,834.3	143,306.9	1,013,624.3	83,755.5
Somalia	1,104,432.6	59,697.3	182.7	97,675.1	1,024,555.8	6,017.0	2,358.2	16,636.2
Tanzania	5,277,637.0	46,564.8	3,300,402.3	55,230.4	5,134,578.9	38,744.6	5,131,636.0	126,237.9
Uganda	8,326,178.9	82,016.4	2,874,166.2	43,687.1	12,362,562.5	77,369.3	3,453,400.4	41,103.8
Total	**15,814,546.8**	**352,943.7**	**7,235,981.5**	**307,884.1**	**19,554,531.5**	**265,437.8**	**9,601,019.0**	**267,733.5**
Grand Total	**16,167,490.5**		**7,543,865.6**		**19,819,969.3**		**9,868,752.5**	

[1]Formal Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda through All Border points
[2]Informal Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda uprated to a whole month

Summary of Trade through Land Border points by Direction

In both periods, formal trade between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania is mainly through land border points as presented in Table 4.3. In contrast, Ethiopia recorded relatively low volumes of formal trade, suggesting that most trade between Kenya and Ethiopia occurs through non-land border points, given that Moyale, the main land border between the two countries, operates during daytime. Somalia did not record any formal trade through land borders, as land border stations along Kenya-Somalia border are currently not operational.

Table 4.3: Formal Trade through Land Border Points and Informal Trade by Trade Flow and Country, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

Country	Dec-2024				Jun-2025			
	Export		Import		Export		Import	
	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]	Formal[1]	Informal[2]
Ethiopia	4,481.6	164,665.2	127,985.1	111,291.6	36,770.2	143,306.9	56,023.5	83,755.5
Somalia	0.0	59,697.3	0.0	97,675.1	0.0	6,017.0	0.0	16,636.2
Tanzania	4,076,257.8	46,564.8	3,276,662.9	55,230.4	4,214,064.3	38,744.6	4,775,571.0	126,237.9
Uganda	7,578,643.0	82,016.4	2,641,033.1	43,687.1	11,442,800.4	77,369.3	3,245,663.5	41,103.8
Total	**11,659,382.5**	**352,943.7**	**6,045,681.1**	**307,884.1**	**15,693,634.9**	**265,437.8**	**8,077,258.0**	**267,733.5**
Grand Total	**12,012,326.2**		**6,353,565.2**		**15,959,072.7**		**8,344,991.4**	

[1]Formal Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda through Land Border points, Trade in Electricity excluded
[2]Informal Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda uprated to a whole month

Traded Commodities

Informal trade between December 2024 and June 2025 remained concentrated in a few major commodity groups as presented in Table 4.4. Food products dominated informal imports, showing slight growth from KSh 207.3 million to KSh 210.1 million, while exports had a slight increase of 0.6 per cent. Exports of crude materials, which was the largest informal export category in December, declined by 57.1 per cent to KSh 63.7 million in June 2025. Manufactured goods recorded stable export levels but experienced reduced imports over the period.

Formal trade showed strong expansion and greater diversification. Significant growth was recorded in exports of food products, chemicals, and manufactured goods, which increased by 52.4, 56.7 and 38.0 per cent respectively. Imports were led by food, chemical related products, and machinery and transport equipment increasing by 105.7, 12.7 and 43.0 per cent.

Table 4.4: Comparative analysis of Formal[1] and Informal[2] Trade by Trade Flow and Commodity Groups, December 2024 and June 2025

KSh '000s

SITC Section	Dec-2024				Jun-2025			
	Export		Import		Export		Import	
	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
0:Food and live animals	2,441,730.8	100,043.1	2,199,793.8	207,256.6	3,720,616.2	100,591.0	4,525,252.6	210,074.7
1:Beverages and tobacco	696,807.1	9,333.0	100,528.9	5,584.3	624,517.1	5,827.4	59,328.3	5,320.1
2:Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	520,541.1	148,458.9	472,985.6	15,699.1	574,372.0	63,688.1	476,923.2	19,090.0
3:Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	1,711,586.9	2,420.2	1,511,285.3	6,494.8	1,592,809.9	481.7	1,497,221.2	1,731.9
4:Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	833,822.5	14,525.6	99,123.0	20,212.5	1,019,422.7	14,297.4	11,398.3	13,011.6
5:Chemicals and related products, n.e.s.	3,186,178.1	23,307.2	381,351.3	3,098.9	4,992,300.6	28,907.1	429,468.2	1,378.0
6:Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	2,899,499.2	19,164.9	2,250,860.9	10,595.7	4,001,080.7	14,435.3	2,378,350.2	5,144.1
7:Machinery and transport equipment	1,786,340.6	4,171.2	116,264.6	7,472.6	1,419,826.0	1,804.7	166,274.7	1,480.3
8:Miscellaneous manufactured articles	1,737,854.3	31,519.7	103,689.7	31,469.5	1,609,574.3	35,405.2	56,802.2	10,502.9
9:Commodities and transactions nec	186.2	0.0	98.4	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	**15,814,546.8**	**352,943.7**	**7,235,981.5**	**307,884.1**	**19,554,531.5**	**265,437.8**	**9,601,019.0**	**267,733.5**

[1]Includes Trade for Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda only

[2]uprated to a whole month



Chapter 5: Conclusions and Policy Implications

The findings underscore the persistent significance of informal trade in Kenya's border economy despite seasonal fluctuations and logistical challenges. Informal cross-border trade remains a crucial livelihood source and a stabilizing factor in regional food supply chains.



However, the observed contraction and trade imbalance highlight the need for the following recommendations and policy interventions:

i. Enhancement of facilitation and continuous monitoring of informal cross-border trade.
ii. Strengthening data integration between KNBS and KRA to improve coverage.
iii. Engagement of export promotion and standards agencies to train traders in product development, value addition, and quality improvement.
iv. Introduction of a legal framework requiring informal traders to declare goods at border crossings, and implementation of simplified documentations like Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa's Simplified Trade Regime (COMESA-STR), supported by trader sensitization.
v. Stakeholder sensitization and coordination aimed at training customs, immigration, police, and border officials to coordinate effectively and respect traders' rights and promote awareness on formal declaration of goods to reduce harassment and improve compliance.
vi. Improvement of border market infrastructure and connectivity to support informal trade.
vii. Strengthening bilateral trade pacts with Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Somalia (main cross-border trading partners) to sustain cross-border trade and foster good neighbourliness.
viii. Policy interventions to transition informal traders toward formal market participation through training, simplified customs procedures, and cross-border trade infrastructure.
ix. Regional policy harmonization to develop joint trade and fiscal policies targeting informal traders to enhance competitiveness and stabilize prices.
x. The results reaffirm the importance of continuous ICBT monitoring to complement formal trade statistics and ensure more accurate measurement of Kenya's total trade performance within the East African Community (EAC) and Africa. Further, the integration of informal trade into formal merchandise trade has continued to improve Kenya's Balance of Payment statistics. Overall, the country remained a net exporter of industrial products and a net importer of agricultural products, respectively, under the informal trade arrangement.



Annex

Annex I: Top 5 Informal Trade Commodities by Country and Period

KSh '000s

Import				Export			
Country/ Commodity	Jun-2025	Country/ Commodity	Dec-2024	Country/ Commodity	Dec-2024	Country/ Commodity	Jun-2025
Ethiopia		**Ethiopia**		**Ethiopia**		**Ethiopia**	
Cattle	16,898	Rice	20,278	Worn Shoes	65,971	Worn Shoes	27,160
Cooking oil	10,652	Sugar	19,517	Worn clothes	36,753	Worn clothes	13,368
Goats	7,366	Dry Beans	13,608	Soap	8,767	Miraa/Khat	12,378
Milk	6,720	Cooking oil	9,531	Rice	7,119	New women clothes	10,307
Rice	5,457	Cattle	5,967	New women clothes	6,567	Wheat Flour	9,714
Somalia		**Somalia**		**Somalia**		**Somalia**	
Milk	4,634	Milk	25,221	Wood/Timber	16,609	Soda	1,090
Pasta	2,978	New shoes	10,187	Miraa/Khat	12,658	Pasta	984
New women clothes	2,867	Rice	9,097	Cement	4,495	Wheat Flour	847
Cooking oil	2,001	Sugar	8,864	Wheat Flour	3,688	Soap	674
Rice	918	Cooking oil	7,751	Beans	3,229	Tanks	610
Tanzania		**Tanzania**		**Tanzania**		**Tanzania**	
Rice	16,464	Rice	11,599	Cooking oil	7,189	Camels	10,058
Goats	16,283	Goats	8,087	Potatoes	4,809	Cooking oil	5,223
Sugar	16,235	Maize Flour	3,624	Babies clothing	4,403	Potatoes	3,023
Cattle	9,592	Maize	3,014	Worn clothes	2,654	Worn clothes	2,439
Maize	9,300	Cattle	2,663	Worn Shoes	1,854	Babies clothing	1,702
Uganda		**Uganda**		**Uganda**		**Uganda**	
Fish	13,039	Fish	10,382	Wheat Flour	21,713	Wheat Flour	27,324
Ground Nuts	4,594	Oranges	3,060	Soap	6,438	Fertiliser	17,036
Oranges	3,634	Bananas	2,257	Dry Beans	6,376	Cooking oil	7,414
Mangoes	2,515	Millet	1,799	Energy drink	5,109	Soap	5,433
Cassava	1,967	Packing sacks & bags	1,673	Worn clothes	3,423	Rice	3,024

Annex II: Concepts and Definitions

Annex I explains the basic ideas and definitions used in international merchandise trade statistics based International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions, 2010 (IMTS 2010). To produce accurate data, survey staff should take time to understand the material in this chapter.

Informal Cross -Border Trade (ICBT): This refers to transactions in goods and services between residents and non-residents of the country that are not captured through the official customs clearance system and therefore not included in the official international trade statistics. They constitute informal exports and imports of goods and services.

Resident: Is any individual whose principal dwelling is in Kenya and their centre of economic interest in Kenya. For statistical purposes, an individual who lives (or intends to live) in Kenya for at least one year is considered a resident of Kenya, regardless of the individual's citizenship or nationality. Exceptions include diplomatic representatives, members of the armed forces, students, medical patients, border workers, commuters, guest workers with temporary work permits.

Non-resident: Is any individual ordinarily living outside Kenya and whose centre of economic interest is not in Kenya. For statistical purposes, an individual who lives outside Kenya for at least one year is considered to be a non-resident, regardless of the individual's citizenship or nationality.

Goods: Goods are defined as physical, produced objects for which a demand exists, over which ownership rights can be established and whose ownership can be transferred from one institutional unit to another.

Country of Last Known Destination: The Country of last known destination is the country in which the goods and services are exported to, as far as is known at the time of exportation.

Country of Origin: The country of origin is the country in which goods and services have been produced or manufactured. In the case of manufactured goods, the country in which the manufacturing process was substantially completed is the country of origin. When the country of origin cannot be determined, the goods are shown as originating in the country from which they were last consigned.

Informal Exports: Refer to outward flow of goods and services which are not recorded through the official customs system irrespective of where the goods were manufactured, extracted or produced.
Informal Imports: Refer to the inward flow of goods and services which are not recorded by customs authorities irrespective of where the goods were manufactured, extracted or produced.

Customs Territory: The territory in which the customs law of a contracting party applies.
Economic Territory of a Country: Consists of the geographical territory administered by a government within which persons, goods and capital circulate freely. It includes the airspace, territorial waters, and continental shelf lying in international waters over which the country enjoys exclusive rights, or it has, or claims to have jurisdiction in respect of the right of fish or to export fuels or minerals below the seabed. It includes territorial enclaves in the rest of the world. It includes free zones and bonded warehouses or factories operated by offshore enterprises under customs control. These form part of economic territory of the country in which they are physically located.

Means of Transport: Refer to methods or systems or ways used to move people or goods from one place to another. Examples include bicycle, vehicle, donkey, wheelbarrow, motorbike, head/hand, push/hand cart, boat/canoe, ox-cart, etc.

Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System Nomenclature Classification (HS): Classification of items/commodities using this nomenclature is based on the nature of commodity. Harmonised System (HS) has 96 Chapters from 00 – 97. Chapter 77 is not in use. Kenya applies HS2022 after migrating from HS2017.

Balance of Payments Statistics (BOP): This is a statistical statement that systematically summarizes the economic transactions of an economy with the rest of the world for a given period of time.

Border Station: Gazetted crossing point between two or more countries where cross border trade transactions take place. Non-gazetted crossing points would be considered where the reporting country deems their inclusion necessary.

KNBS
KENYA NATIONAL
BUREAU OF STATISTICS
Keeping you informed

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
Real Towers, Hospital Road
P.O Box 30266-00100
Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: (+254) 3317583/6
Fax:(+254) 20 3315977

directorgeneral@knbs.or.ke
Kenya Stats
@KNBStats
www.knbs.or.ke