



Food and Beverage Imports

KEY MESSAGES

- Trends in the quantity of food and beverages imported by Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are not well documented.
- Understanding imports is central to managing food security and diet related health concerns.
- Using the Pacific Food Trade Database (PFTD; see Brief No. 3), this brief presents an overview of key trends and patterns in food imports between 1995 and 2018.
- Imports have increased dramatically since 1995, both in total tonnage, and when controlling for population growth, with differences between Pacific sub-regions.
- The majority of food and beverage imports by weight are from Australia, (primarily wheat and wheat flour), New Zealand, and East and South-East Asia (primarily rice).

CONTEXT

HISTORY OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE IMPORTS

Since around the beginning of this century, PICTs (excluding PNG) have, collectively, been a net food importing region (Figure 1). Regional population growth, combined with other factors including trade liberalisation and consumption preferences, has led to this rise in imports across all PICTs. Growth in imports has been dominated by rice and wheat, and highly processed foods. Imports of key staples ensures caloric needs are met, but erodes food sovereignty. Increased imports of highly processed foods and beverages has contributed to some of the highest rates of diet related non-communicable disease globally.

CHANGE IN IMPORT QUANTITY

Per capita imports of food and beverages have more than doubled since 1995, a trend that does not appear to be slowing (Figure 1). On a per capita

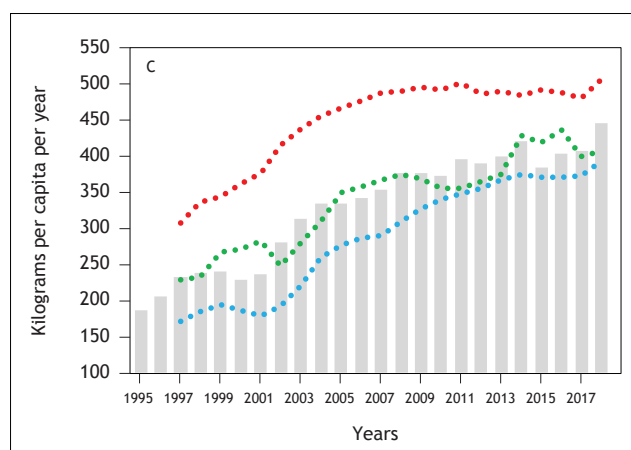


Figure 1. Total food and beverage imports per capita for the region (grey bars), Polynesia (red), Micronesia (green), and Melanesia (blue). Finfish including tuna, salt, oil palm nuts and kernels, alcohol, tobacco, water and Papua New Guinea data excluded.



Processed food for sale at a store in Gizo, Western Province, Solomon Islands. Filip Milovac, 2015.

basis, Polynesia imports the largest quantity of food and beverage, which has plateaued over the last decade. Melanesia and Micronesia exhibit similar import dependence. Importantly, the commodity composition imported is likely to vary significantly between sub-regions and PICTs.

DOMINANT SOURCES OF IMPORTS

Food and beverages entering the Pacific come from a diverse range of regions and countries (Figure 2). However, Australia is the dominant exporter, followed by New Zealand and parts of East and

South East Asia. Fiji imports the greatest volume and acts as a dominant reexport hub, on-shipping to a number of other PICTs including Kiribati, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, Niue, and Cook Islands. Trade from Europe is dominated by exports from France to French territories. Some global regions including Africa Western Asia and Latin America export negligible food and beverages to the region. Imports from East and South East Asia are increasing, including rice and processed foods such as noodles and sugar sweetened beverages.

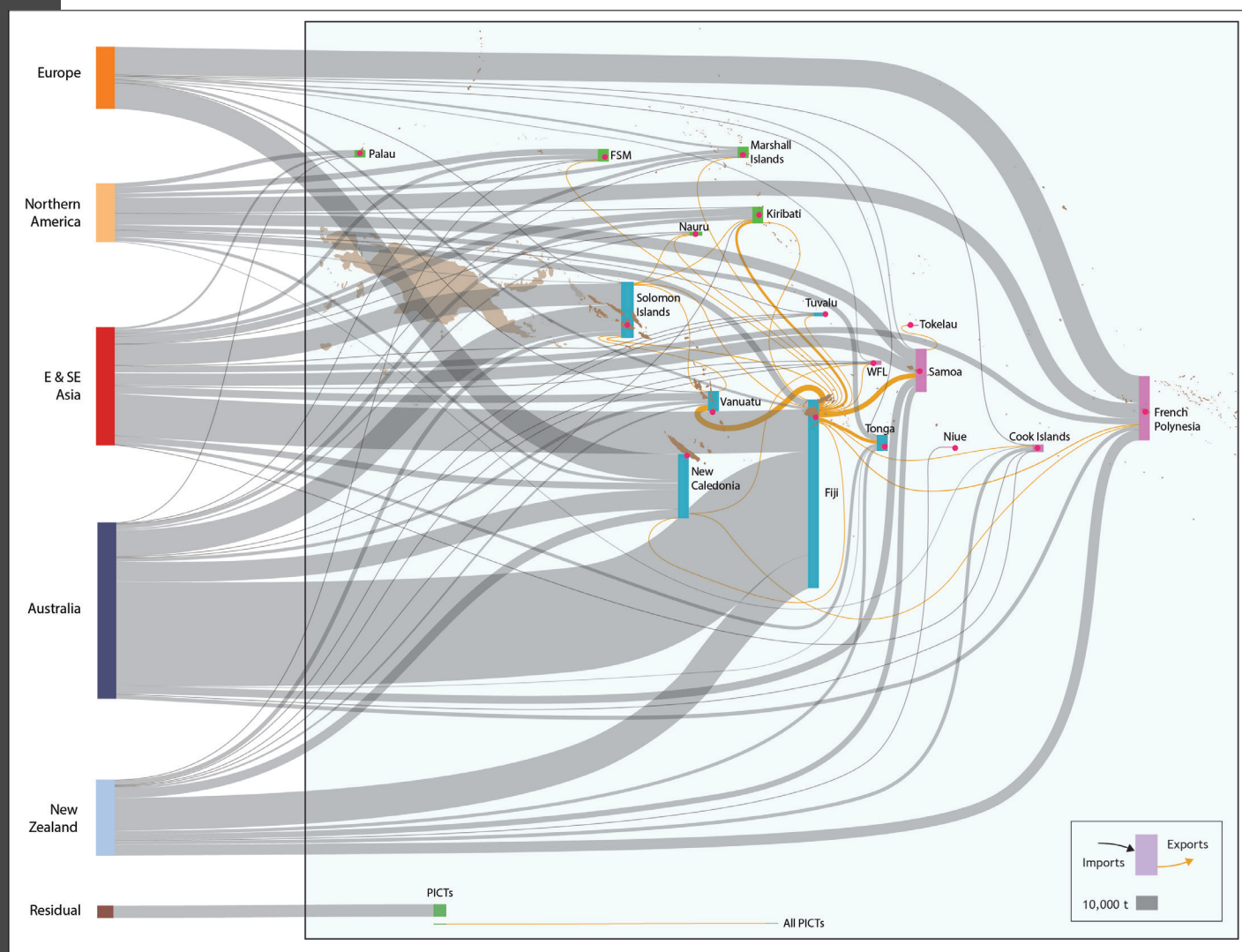


Figure 2. Tonnes of food imported by PICTs (average annual imports for 2014-2018) from global regions. Finfish including tuna, salt, oil palm nuts and kernels, alcohol, tobacco, water and Papua New Guinea data excluded.

SOURCES

- Brewer, T.D., Andrew, N.L., Sharp, M.K., Thow, A.M., Kottage, H., Jones, S. (2020). A method for cleaning trade data for regional analysis: The Pacific Food Trade Database (version 2, 1995-2018). Pacific Community working paper.
- Andrew N.L., Allison E.H., Brewer T., Connell J., Eriksson H., Eurich J., Farmery J., Gephart J., Golden C., Herrero M., Mapusua, K., Seto, K., Sharp M., Thornton, P., Thow A.M., Tutuo, J. (2021). Continuity and change in the contemporary Pacific Food System. Global Food Security. doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2021.100608

ABOUT

This series of briefs has been produced to provide timely updates of ongoing analyses of Pacific food systems. The briefs are not peer reviewed and are either interim products prior to publication or summaries of published work. The series is funded by the Australian Government through ACIAR project FIS/2018/155. For further information contact Michael Sharp (michaels@spc.int). Source details may be updated as publication status changes. Design and graphics by Eleanor McNeill. Version 3.

Citation: Brewer, T. and Andrew, N.L. (2021). Food and Beverage Imports. Food System Brief No. 5. Pacific Community.

SUPPORTED BY