

Foreign trade

In Q1 2023, foreign trade fell back but managed to sustain GDP growth overall, as the downturn in imports was much stronger than that in exports. In particular, imports of manufactured goods declined substantially, especially imports of refined petroleum products, which had been very dynamic at the end of 2022, linked to strikes in the refineries. Imports of energy products also declined, especially electricity imports, due to the return to production of nuclear reactors, and also crude oil imports in March, as strikes started up again in the refineries. Regarding exports, their decline was the result of a downturn in exports of services and also of agricultural products, especially cereals. Conversely, exports of energy products and spending by foreign tourists in France increased in Q1.

In Q2 2023, foreign trade is expected to bolster activity once again, then contribute to it marginally in H2. These movements are likely to result in part from trade in energy. With the return to production of the nuclear reactors, net exports of electricity are expected to increase in Q2, as was the case at the beginning of the year, and this rise is expected to continue into H2. Net exports of gas also increased at the end of 2022 and early 2023, especially to Italy and Germany, and hence gas inventory, which was particularly high at the beginning of winter, returned in April to a similar level to previous years. Thus the recovery of gas inventory in the spring is expected to cause net gas exports to fall back in Q2, both through the rise in gas imports and the fall in exports.

Exports look set to increase over the entire forecasting period, in line with world demand for French products. Nevertheless, their quarter by quarter profile could be affected by aeronautical and naval deliveries, which were buoyant in Q2 and Q4. Spending by foreign tourists in France is not expected to be very dynamic, despite the return of Chinese tourists. Meanwhile, not much increase is expected in imports given that domestic demand is sluggish. ●

► 1. French foreign trade

(variation in %, volumes of previous year's chained prices, contributions in points)

	Quarterly variations												Annual variations		
	2021				2022				2023				2021	2022	2023
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
Exports															
Total	0.0	2.9	3.2	3.5	1.2	1.7	-0.7	0.2	-0.2	1.2	0.3	0.6	10.9	7.2	1.3
Manufactured products (66%*)	-1.3	3.3	-2.0	2.5	2.1	-0.6	0.2	-1.4	0.0	1.3	-0.1	0.4	9.3	3.0	-0.1
Imports															
Total	2.1	2.2	0.6	5.5	1.6	0.2	4.0	-0.8	-2.8	0.1	0.2	0.3	9.2	8.7	-1.2
Manufactured products (70%*)	2.0	1.0	-2.3	6.0	0.1	-0.2	2.0	1.0	-3.0	0.2	0.1	0.2	8.9	4.8	-1.1
Contribution of foreign trade to GDP	-0.6	0.1	0.7	-0.6	-0.2	0.5	-1.5	0.3	1.0	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.2	-0.6	0.9

■ Forecast.

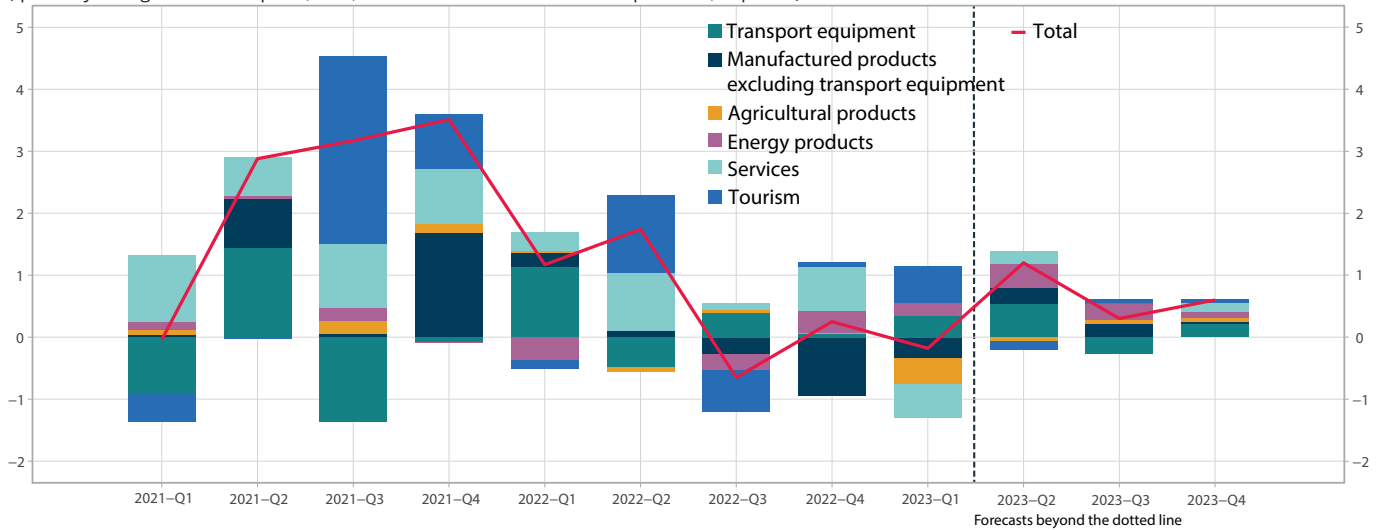
* Share of exports (or imports) of manufactured products in total exports (or imports), in 2021.

How to read it: in Q2 2023, French exports are expected to increase by 1.2%.

Source: INSEE.

► 2. Contributions of different products to exports

(quarterly changes in total exports, in %, and contributions of individual products, in points)

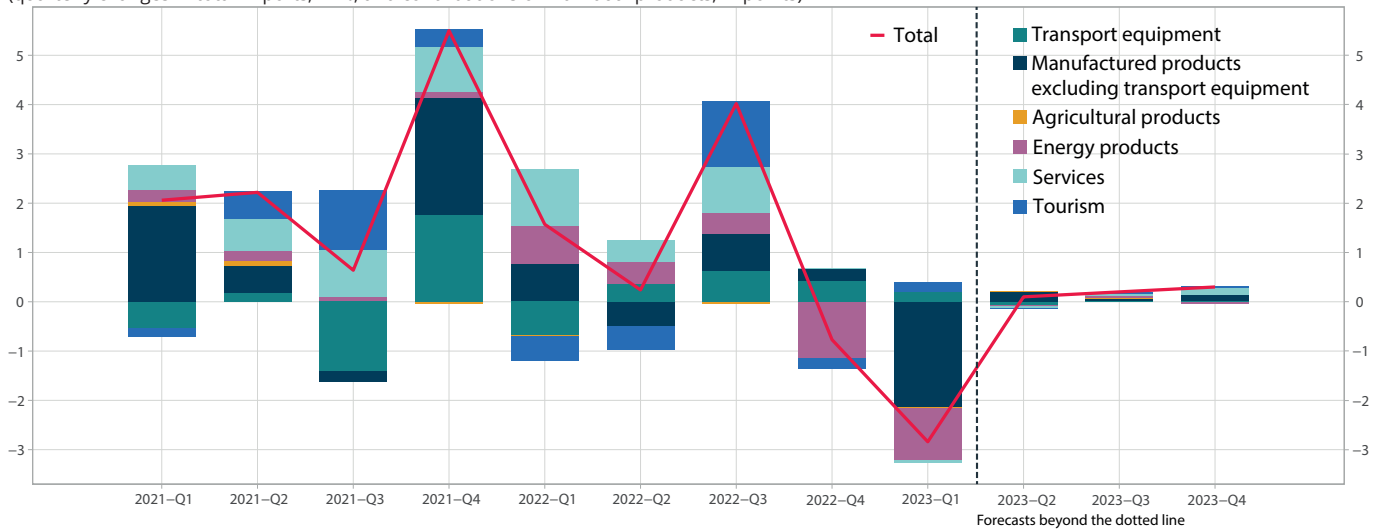


How to read it: French exports fell by 0.2% in the first quarter of 2023. Exports of transport equipment contributed +0.3 points.

Source: INSEE.

► 3. Contributions of different products to imports

(quarterly changes in total imports, in %, and contributions of individual products, in points)



How to read it: French imports fell by 2.8% in the first quarter of 2023. Imports of manufactured goods excluding transport equipment contributed -2.1 points.

Source: INSEE.