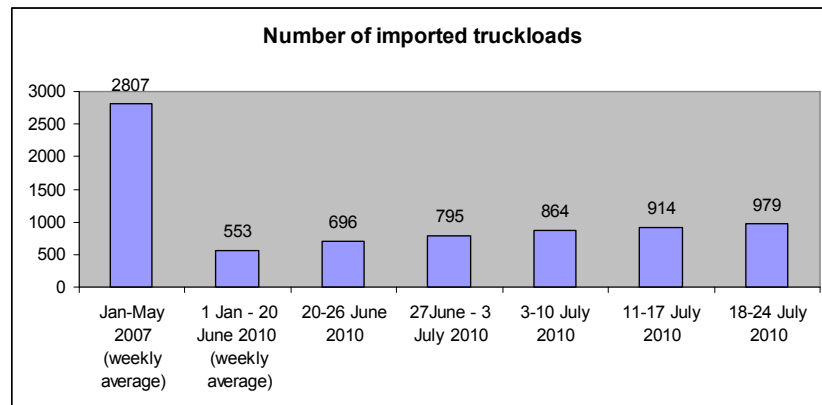




Gaza Access Situation

Weekly Update from the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for 18-24 July

The volume of imports into Gaza has continued to rise for the seventh consecutive week. A total of 979 truckloads entered Gaza during the reporting period - a 77 percent increase compared to the weekly average of 553 truckloads that entered in 2010 prior to the announcement.



This figure of 979 truckloads represents only 35 percent of the weekly average that entered Gaza during the first five months of 2007, before the blockade was intensified.

The current volume of goods entering Gaza through the crossings remains well below what is needed to meet demand. The limited capacity of the Kerem Shalom Crossing, which can currently handle approximately 150 truckloads a day, is at present a major factor in this. The Israeli authorities have announced a projected increase in capacity to 250 truckloads by the end of July (delayed from mid-July). This will require progress in the necessary expansion of crossing facilities, including the open area for back-to-back cargo reception on the Palestinian side of Kerem Shalom. At present, the Israeli authorities are continuing to allow about 100 truckloads per day for the commercial sector in Gaza, estimated to be well below current demand.

The operation of the Karni Crossing, which was built and equipped to handle over 750 truckloads a day, remains limited to one conveyor belt used for the transfer of grains and construction aggregates. This belt is currently operated two days a week and can transfer up to 120 truckloads a day. The Israeli authorities have agreed to extend operation of the conveyor belt to three days a week. The main elements of the Karni Crossing remain closed due to Israeli security concerns.

Since the announcement of the policy, a variety of previously prohibited imports continue to enter Gaza, the majority of which are consumer items. A range of new 'productive' items has also entered since then, primarily for the textile and agricultural sectors. This week, for the first time since the announcement, food items needed for the food and beverage manufacturing sectors were allowed into Gaza in industrial quantities together with requisite packaging. While glass for residential windows has been entering since the beginning of the year, thicker and larger types of glass suitable for other uses, including shop fronts, are once again being allowed into Gaza.

Despite the entry of new 'productive' items, food items (including fodder and livestock) still account for the bulk of imports into Gaza. While the share of food items decreased from 76 percent in the first five months of 2010 to 61 percent since the announcement, current figures are still significantly higher than before the intensification of the blockade, when food items accounted for less than 20 percent of all imports.

The import of industrial machinery by the private sector continues to require the submission of multiple technical specification documents to obtain security clearance from the Israeli authorities, before coordination for actual entry can be requested. This applies for all items, including those not on the list of restricted 'dual-use' items published by the Government of Israel. Some such items not on the 'dual-use' list have recently been denied for reasons which are not yet clear.

Since the new Israeli measures do not specifically include the lifting of current restrictions on exports from Gaza (to the West Bank, Israel and the rest of the world), the scale of economic activity remains heavily dependant on domestic demand, which in turn is constrained by the low purchasing power of the population and the relatively small size of the local market. Until the crossings are opened for exports, the impact of the new measures on rates of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity will remain limited.

Ongoing restrictions on the import of basic construction materials, defined by the Israeli authorities as 'dual-use' items and only allowed for projects approved by the PA and supervised by UN or other international organizations, continue to challenge effective and efficient implementation. The entry of each truckload designated for such projects continues to be subject to extensive coordination procedures, which have increased administrative and operational costs.