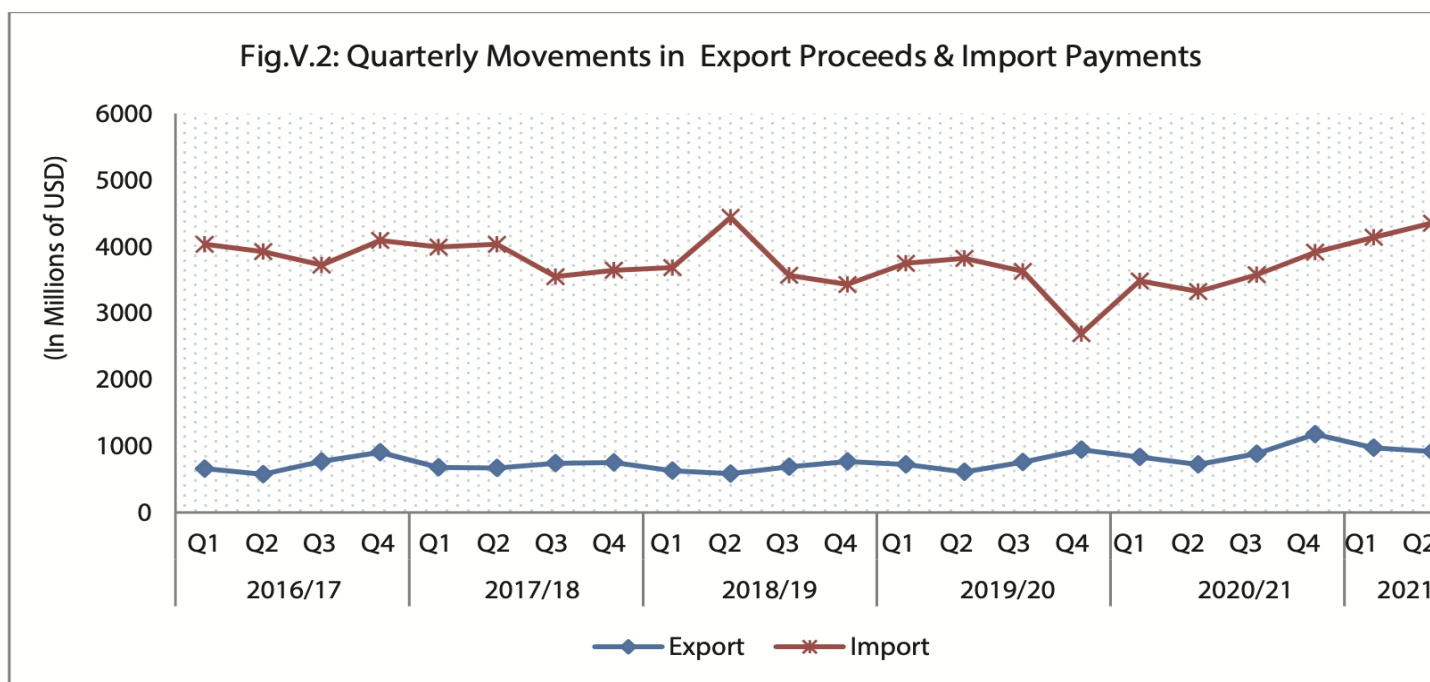


According to some [journalistic sources](#) , Ethiopian exporters are experiencing a serious problem of empty container availability, in counter-tendency with what it used to happen until few months ago, where the problem was the opposite, as empty containers were in excess and remained idle for long time at terminals in dry ports in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, this is happening in a period when some commodities that represent a large fraction of Ethiopian trade, such coffee, are in peak demand on international markets.

After shipped to Ethiopia, containers transporting transit goods from Djibouti are unstaffed at dry ports (mainly in Modjo, that handles between 75 and 80 % of the all the nation's imports), so that they can be staffed with Ethiopian products to be carried back to the Djibouti port for being shipped abroad. Container unstaffing and staffing operations must be carried out quickly in order to ensure a rapid re-use of the container.

However, currently, shipping companies in Ethiopia are not able to provide enough empty containers to such exporters, apparently because of a sharp reduction of Ethiopia's imports. Less containers arrive in Ethiopia, so less containers can be reused for exports. This is reflected in container lease prices doubled in the last three months.

However, this seems to be in contrast with the findings of the [Second Quarter 2021/22 Bulletin of the National Bank of Ethiopia](#) , that based on data of the Ethiopian Customs Commission shows how during the second quarter of the fiscal year 2021/22 (ended in July 7, 2022), merchandise trade deficit reached USD 3.4 billion from the USD 2.6 billion of last year. This means that the growth in merchandise imports outweighed the growth of merchandise exports as shown in the figure below.



Source: Ethiopian Customs Commission

THE ETHIOPIAN CUSTOMS COMMISSION HAS REPORTED THAT THE SHORTAGE OF EMPTY CONTAINERS HAS HALTED EXPORTS SINCE JANUARY 2022. THE COMMISSION SAID THAT THE SHORTAGE OF CONTAINERS IS DUE TO THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR CONTAINERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. THE COMMISSION ALSO SAID THAT THE SHORTAGE OF CONTAINERS IS ACHRONIC PROBLEM THAT HAS BEEN EXISTING FOR A LONG TIME. THE COMMISSION IS CURRENTLY WORKING TO RESOLVE THE SHORTAGE OF CONTAINERS BY PURCHASING NEW CONTAINERS AND BY ENCOURAGING THE REUSE OF OLD CONTAINERS. THE COMMISSION IS ALSO WORKING TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE CONTAINER HANDLING PROCESS AT THE PORTS. THE COMMISSION IS HOPEFUL THAT THE SHORTAGE OF CONTAINERS WILL BE RESOLVED SOON AND THAT EXPORTS WILL BE RESUMED.