

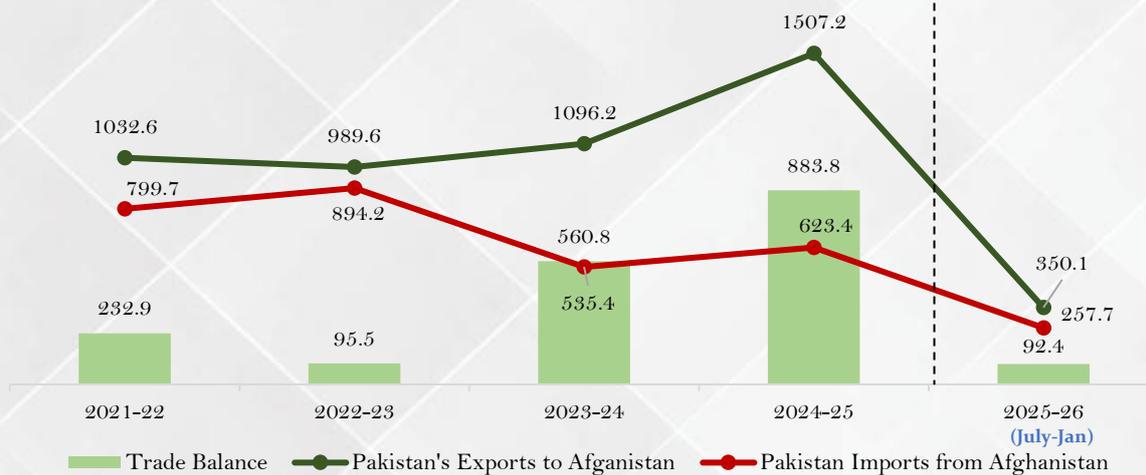
# Implications of Disrupted Trade Corridors on Pakistan's Agri-Food Trade with Afghanistan

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## 1. Introduction

Pakistan and Afghanistan share deep historical, ethnic, and geographic linkages, but bilateral relations remain complex and fragile due to recurring security tensions and political mistrust along the border. These factors continue to affect cross-border movement and trade.

**Figure 1: Pakistan Afghanistan Bilateral Trade (US\$ Mn)**



Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

Over the years, Afghanistan remains an important export destination for Pakistan. In FY25, Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan stood at approximately US\$1.51 billion, making it Pakistan's seventh-largest export market and accounting for about 4.66 percent of total exports. In FY25, imports were valued at approximately US\$0.66 billion, accounting for about 1.17 percent of Pakistan's total imports.

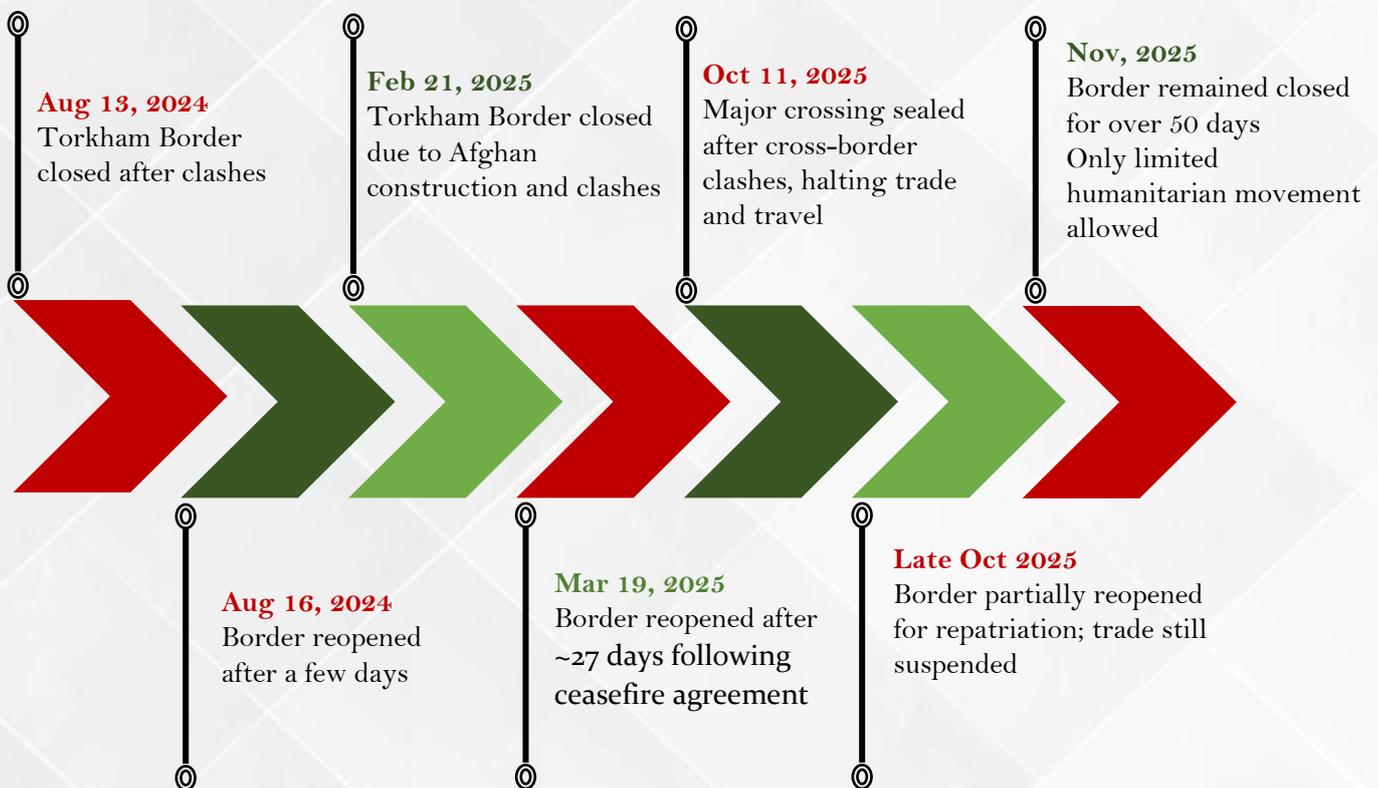
In FY25 Afghanistan was a key destination for Pakistan’s agrifood exports, taking a 31% share in vegetable exports worth 98.38 million USD, with a 20% share in fruit exports totaling 58.12 million USD, and accounting for a 8% share in cereal exports valued at 259.69 million USD. Pakistan’s exports to Afghanistan include key agrifood products such as fresh or chilled potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic, mangoes, citrus fruits, dates, basmati rice, and maize.

In FY25 Pakistan imported significant agrifood products from Afghanistan, including vegetables worth 163.43 million USD with a 14 percent share, fruits totaling 91.46 million USD with a 34 percent share, and cereals valued at 6.56 million USD with a 4 percent share. Pakistan imports key agrifood products from Afghanistan including tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, lentils, dry fruits, grapes, pomegranates, barley, and oats.

Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is heavily dependent on geographic proximity, land routes, and transit arrangements. Pakistan provides Afghanistan access to seaports, while overland routes through Afghanistan support Pakistan’s regional connectivity toward Central Asia. However, this reliance on land corridors makes trade flows highly sensitive to security incidents and border closures, which can quickly disrupt supply chains and market availability in both countries.

Border closures have periodically disrupted Pakistan–Afghanistan trade, usually for short durations. However, the frequency and duration of such disruptions increased since 2024–25, culminating in a prolonged closure in October 2025 that significantly affected cross-border trade flows. These repeated interruptions have heightened uncertainty for exporters and traders. The key border events during this period are summarized in the timeline below.

**Figure 2: Timeline of Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Closure**



## 2. Evaluating Impact of Border Closure on Agrifood Trade

The October 2025 Pakistan-Afghanistan border closure disrupted trade, stalling exports, delaying imports, and affecting road-dependent supply chains. Perishable goods and food commodities, especially fruits, vegetables, and cereals, were most affected due to limited storage and time sensitivity.

### 2.1 Impact on Agrifood Exports to Afghanistan

Pakistan's exports of vegetables to Afghanistan declined sharply during the October–January period following the October 2025 border closure. Total exports fell from USD 15,155.2 thousand in 2024–25 to USD 299.4 thousand in 2025–26, reflecting a near-complete disruption of trade.

The largest reductions were observed in high-volume items such as fresh or chilled potatoes, cabbages, and garlic, which traditionally account for a significant share of exports to the Afghan market. The sharp decline highlights the vulnerability of perishable agricultural exports to transport disruptions and delays at border crossings, particularly given the limited storage capacity and heavy reliance on land routes.

**Table 1: Pakistan's Vegetable Exports to Afghanistan Oct-Jan (USD Thousand)**

HS Code	Category	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
07019000	Fresh or chilled potatoes (excluding seed)	14,393.5	8,375.3	3,588.7	10,189.6	254.3
07049000	Fresh or chilled cabbages, kohlrabi, kale, etc.	10,184.4	8,109.7	4,319.2	2,945.7	28.1
07020000	Tomatoes, fresh or chilled.	376.1	831.4	1,342.1	506.1	3.1
07101000	Potatoes	7.2	30.4	228.2	255.5	-
07108000	Vegetables (uncooked/cooked by steaming/boiling)	12.6	46.7	-	1.9	-
07011000	Potatoes Seed	-	632.8	321.7	57.9	-
07032000	Garlic	58.6	46.2	169.4	736.5	13.9
07109000	Mixtures of vegetables	-	2.9	2.9	2.1	-
07099900	Fresh or chilled vegetables n.e.s.	12.4	68.5	18.8	415.8	-
07070000	Cucumbers and gherkins fresh or chilled.	-	18.5	27.9	22.4	-
07061000	Carrots and turnips	0.5	-	-	-	-
07041000	Cauliflowers and headed broccoli	-	-	6.9	-	-
07096000	Fruits of the genus Capsicum or of the genus Pimenta	-	4.0	6.8	2.1	-
07031000	Onions and shallots	-	-	-	14.6	-
07129000	Other vegetables; mixtures of vegetables	-	-	-	2.9	-
07093000	Aubergines (eggplants)	-	-	4.4	-	-
07102900	Leguminous vegetables (shelled/unshelled, uncooked/cooked)	0.9	-	-	-	-
07039000	Leeks and Other alliaceous vegetables	-	-	-	2.2	-
07094000	Celery Other than celeriac	-	2.5	-	-	-
07097000	Spinach, New Zealand Spinach and orache Spinach (garden Spinach)	-	-	0.8	-	-
07122000	Onions	-	0.3	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>25,046.3</b>	<b>18,169.3</b>	<b>10,037.7</b>	<b>15,155.2</b>	<b>299.4</b>

Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

Pakistan's exports of fruits to Afghanistan declined sharply during the October–January period following the border closure. Total fruit exports fell from USD 30,984.3 thousand in 2024–25 to USD 1,965.8 thousand in 2025–26, indicating a substantial contraction in trade. Significant reductions were observed across major export items, including

bananas, plantains, lemons & limes, and mangoes, reflecting widespread disruption in shipments of perishable commodities.

Among these, the most pronounced decline was in citrus exports, particularly kino, which traditionally accounts for a large share of Pakistan's fruit exports to Afghanistan and fell to negligible levels during the period. The sharp decline highlights the vulnerability of fruit exports to transport disruptions and delays at border crossings, as limited cold storage capacity and heavy reliance on road transport make these commodities particularly sensitive to prolonged trade interruptions.

**Table 2: Pakistan's Fruits Exports to Afghanistan Oct-Jan (USD Thousand)**

HS Code	Category	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
08052910	Kino (Fresh)	16,467.1	14,238.4	16,884.9	21,425.0	-
08039000	Fresh or dried bananas (excluding plantains)	15,278.9	7,603.3	5,724.6	892.5	1,252.0
08045020	mangoes	9.1	2.7	34.8	118.0	70.9
08059000	Fresh or dried citrus fruit (excl.oranges, lemons)	2,242.7	1,055.8	450.1	5,487.4	6.5
08031000	Plantains	1,064.0	583.6	3,055.2	1,355.0	543.7
08109090	Fresh tamarinds, cashew apples, jackfruit,	9.1	1,755.6	696.5	28.3	-
08051000	Oranges	1,962.8	2,709.6	83.2	138.9	-
08071100	watermelons	-	-	-	-	5.6
08052990	Fresh or dried wilkings and citrus hybrids: other	2,550.7	-	14.8	-	-
08045010	Guavas	12.3	441.2	159.5	87.9	-
08045050	Mango Pulp	-	-	-	132.8	0.2
08041020	Dried Dates	22.7	0.7	0.8	-	-
08041010	Fresh Dates	18.3	1.1	0.3	15.8	0.0
08134010	Tamarind	13.7	7.4	4.0	-	-
08052100	Mandarins (including tangerines and satsumas)	-	107.9	-	-	-
08101000	Strawberries	-	-	0.1	-	-
08134090	Dried peaches, pears, papaws	-	-	-	0.5	-
08023200	Shelled Walnuts	-	-	-	-	-
08107000	Fresh Persimmons	9.7	1.2	67.6	-	-
08045090	Fresh or dried guavas, mangoes: other	4.4	27.6	-	-	-
08045040	Frozen mango	-	2.3	-	-	-
08071900	Fresh melons (excluding watermelons)	-	-	-	1.4	-
08131000	Apricots	-	1.9	-	-	-
08055000	Lemons and limes	216.5	101.9	544.8	1,300.8	87.2
08094000	Plums and sloes	0.5	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>39,882.6</b>	<b>28,642.3</b>	<b>27,721.3</b>	<b>30,984.3</b>	<b>1,965.8</b>

Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

Pakistan's exports of cereals to Afghanistan also declined during the October–January period following the border closure, though the contraction was less severe compared to perishable commodities. Total cereal exports fell from USD 95,249.7 thousand in 2024–25 to USD 19,927.19 thousand in 2025–26, indicating a substantial decline in trade. The reduction was most visible in semi-milled or wholly milled rice and broken rice, which experienced sharp decreases in export volumes, while basmati rice exports remained relatively resilient in comparison.

The comparatively smaller decline in cereals reflects the lower perishability and longer shelf life of these products, allowing exporters greater flexibility in storage and shipment. Nevertheless, the reduction in volumes highlights the broader impact of

prolonged border restrictions on bulk food trade and the continued dependence of cereal exports on uninterrupted land transport routes to the Afghan market.

**Table 3: Pakistan's Cereals Exports to Afghanistan Oct-Jan (USD Thousand)**

HS Code	Category	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
10063090	Semi-milled or wholly milled rice	35,383.40	13,186.50	91,125.20	62,442.60	6,697.35
10064000	Broken Rice	6,278.80	43,422.00	32,754.20	3,882.00	218.18
10063010	Basmati	134.50	339.10	26,296.90	14,295.90	12,620.51
10061090	Rice in the husk	108.40	1.50	-	13,632.60	107.57
10059000	Maize (excluding seed for sowing)	10.40	565.20	838.70	946.90	255.91
10051000	Maize Seed	3.30	51.00	114.40	25.30	24.39
10062000	Husked (brown) Rice	474.50	-	3.40	-	0.00
10082900	Millet (excluding grain sorghum, and seed for sowing)	28.00	6.30	77.50	24.40	3.28
10039000	Barley (excluding seed for sowing)	-	7.40	-	-	0.00
10082100	Millet Seed	6.60	2.20	22.90	-	0.00
10049000	Oats (excluding seed for sowing)	-	6.60	-	-	0.00
10071000	Grain Sorghum Seed	-	0.60	-	-	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>42,427.9</b>	<b>57,588.4</b>	<b>151,233.2</b>	<b>95,249.7</b>	<b>19,927.19</b>

Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

## 2.2 Impact on Agrifood Imports from Afghanistan

Pakistan's imports of vegetables and other food commodities from Afghanistan declined sharply during the October–January period following the border closure. Imports of several major items fell significantly compared to the previous year, reflecting disruptions in cross-border supply chains and reduced availability of seasonal produce. Notable declines were observed in tomatoes, onions and shallots, kidney beans, and green beans, which constitute an important share of Pakistan's food imports from Afghanistan. Tomatoes fell from USD 15,437.2 thousand in 2024–25 to USD 1,983.2 thousand in 2025–26, while onions and shallots declined from USD 45,690.0 thousand to USD 5,223.5 thousand.

Among these, the sharp reduction in onions and tomatoes is particularly significant, as these commodities play an important role in meeting domestic demand and stabilizing prices during seasonal shortages. The decline highlights Pakistan's reliance on cross-border agricultural imports and demonstrates how prolonged border disruptions can affect domestic supply conditions, especially for essential food items with limited short-term substitutes.

**Table 4: Pakistan's Vegetables Imports from Afghanistan Oct-Jan (USD Thousand)**

HS Code	Description	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
07019000	Fresh or chilled potatoes (excluding seeds)	110.4	61.2	15.6	245.5	1.1
07020000	Tomatoes, fresh or chilled.	14,077.8	7,786.2	8,734.0	15,437.2	1,983.2
07031000	Onions and shallots	14,584.3	30,506.0	48,592.8	45,690.0	5,223.5
07032000	Garlic	9.7	274.0	69.2	4.6	-
07051100	Cabbage Lettuce (head Lettuce)	154.0	104.9	689.5	76.4	2.9
07061000	Carrots and turnips	3.4	33.4	10.7	-	-
07069000	Fresh or chilled salad beetroot	-	1.9	-	-	-
07070000	Cucumbers and gherkins fresh or chilled.	2,242.4	2,028.2	1,561.4	1,913.5	539.3

HS Code	Description	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
07096000	Fruits of the genus Capsicum or of the genus Pimenta	19.7	86.3	-	-	-
07099300	Pumpkins, squash and gourds (Cucurbita spp.)	-	-	-	-	5.1
07099900	Fresh or chilled vegetables n.e.s.	45.6	17.7	3.8	9.8	-
07122000	Onions	15.9	7.1	2.3	15.3	-
07123100	Mushrooms of the genus Agaricus	-	0.4	-	-	-
07123900	Dried mushrooms and truffles	-	1.4	0.8	1.6	-
07129000	Other vegetables; mixtures of vegetables	-	-	-	22.0	-
07131000	Peas (Pisum sativum)	7.6	888.4	105.5	287.3	21.3
07132010	Dry Whole Chickpeas: Gram	-	2.9	-	-	-
07132020	Dry Whole Chickpeas: Grams split	-	-	82.6	-	-
07132090	Dried, shelled chickpeas	11.4	1,177.7	2,867.6	2,565.1	6.6
07133300	Kidney Beans, including white pea Beans (Phaseolus vulgaris)	6,331.8	5,150.4	3,398.1	8,875.4	419.2
07133910	Green Beans (dry whole)	2,598.7	8,786.6	6,282.3	4,346.0	679.4
07134010	Dry Whole Lentils	468.0	357.4	885.8	793.0	63.4
07139010	Black matpe (dry whole)	36.5	-	92.3	218.8	-
07139020	Mash dry whole	2,898.1	2,701.8	1,606.9	3,812.5	544.6
07143000	Yams (Dioscorea spp.)	85.7	141.4	203.6	202.7	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>43701.15</b>	<b>60115.32</b>	<b>75204.84</b>	<b>84516.87</b>	<b>9489.56</b>

Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

Pakistan's imports of fruits and nuts from Afghanistan also declined sharply during the October-January period following the border closure. Total imports fell from USD 60,858.6 thousand in 2024-25 to USD 18,018.6 thousand in 2025-26, reflecting a significant contraction in cross-border trade. Major reductions were observed in key items such as fresh grapes, pomegranates, dried fruits, and figs, which constitute a substantial share of Pakistan's seasonal fruit imports from Afghanistan. Imports of fresh grapes declined from USD 28,434.5 thousand to USD 7,585.7 thousand, while pomegranates fell from USD 15,967.2 thousand to USD 3,036 thousand.

Among these, the decline in fresh grapes and pomegranates is particularly significant, as these products are widely consumed in domestic markets and play an important role in meeting seasonal demand. The reduction highlights Pakistan's dependence on cross-border fruit imports and demonstrates how prolonged border disruptions can affect market supply, particularly for perishable and seasonal commodities with limited short-term alternatives.

**Table 5: Pakistan's Fruits Imports from Afghanistan Oct-Jan (USD Thousand)**

HS Code	Description	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
0801100	Desiccated coconuts	-	274.7	-	-	-
08013200	Fresh or dried cashew nuts, shelled	-	132.2	115.5	69.4	-
08021100	Fresh or dried almonds in shell	173.2	651.6	364.4	1,050.7	329.0
08021200	Fresh or dried almonds, shelled	135.2	281.9	221.4	1,003.6	98.6
08022100	Fresh or dried hazelnuts or filberts, in shell	-	8.6	-	-	-
08023100	Fresh or dried walnuts, in shell	9.5	58.2	5.5	1.1	-
08023200	Fresh or dried walnuts, shelled	23.6	42.9	-	0.6	-
08025100	Fresh or dried pistachios, in shell	-	12.3	1.5	-	-
08029000	Nuts, fresh or dried, whether or not shelled or peeled	92.3	-	-	-	-
08029100	pine nuts, in shell	-	18.2	-	-	-
08029200	pine nuts, shelled	-	0.4	-	-	-
08029900	Nuts, fresh or dried	-	-	-	2.1	-
08041010	Fresh Dates	-	-	-	-	10.7
08042000	Fresh or dried figs	985.9	568.1	688.8	1510.3	502.3

HS Code	Description	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
08055000	Lemons and limes	-	5.6	-	-	-
08061000	Fresh Grapes	21,746.0	13,412.9	27,178.6	28,434.5	7,585.7
08062000	Dried Grapes	4,456.6	4,624.2	4,029.2	5,948.3	1,010.6
08071100	Fresh Watermelons	15.5	5.8	-	-	-
08071900	Fresh melons (excluding watermelons)	42.0	8.2	-	14.9	2.3
08081000	Apples	2,121.4	10,206.5	5,540.7	3,863.3	4,928.7
08091000	Apricots	-	-	-	11.5	-
08102000	Raspberries, blackberries, mulberries and loganberries	16.5	97.4	-	49.2	0.1
08105000	Kiwifruit	-	1.2	4.1	-	-
08109010	Pomegranates	37,502.8	16,103.7	17,127.1	15,967.2	3,036.0
08111000	Strawberries	0.3	-	-	-	-
08112000	Raspberries, blackberries, mulberries, etc	45.3	-	-	-	-
08131000	Apricots	1,550.4	2,444.0	2,573.3	1,479.6	228.2
08132000	Prunes	834.2	295.4	734.0	949.9	12.2
08134020	Cherries	-	-	-	2.5	-
08134050	Plums (allocha)	-	5.9	-	-	157.1
08134090	Dried peaches, pears, papaws "papayas", tamarinds and other edible fruits	154.1	52.7	349.0	500.0	117.1
08135000	Mixtures of nuts or dried fruits of this Chapter	-	0.1	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>69,904.8</b>	<b>49,312.9</b>	<b>58,932.9</b>	<b>60,858.6</b>	<b>18,018.6</b>

Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

Pakistan's imports of cereals from Afghanistan remained relatively small but declined sharply during the October–January period following the border closure. Total imports fell from USD 1,977.2 thousand in 2024–25 to USD 56.1 thousand in 2025–26, reflecting a near-complete disruption of these trade flows. The decline was observed across most cereal categories, including barley, millet, and maize, which are typically imported in limited but occasionally important quantities.

Although cereal imports from Afghanistan constitute a minor share of Pakistan's overall food supply, the sharp reduction highlights how border disruptions can interrupt even small but locally significant trade flows, particularly in border regions where such imports supplement domestic availability.

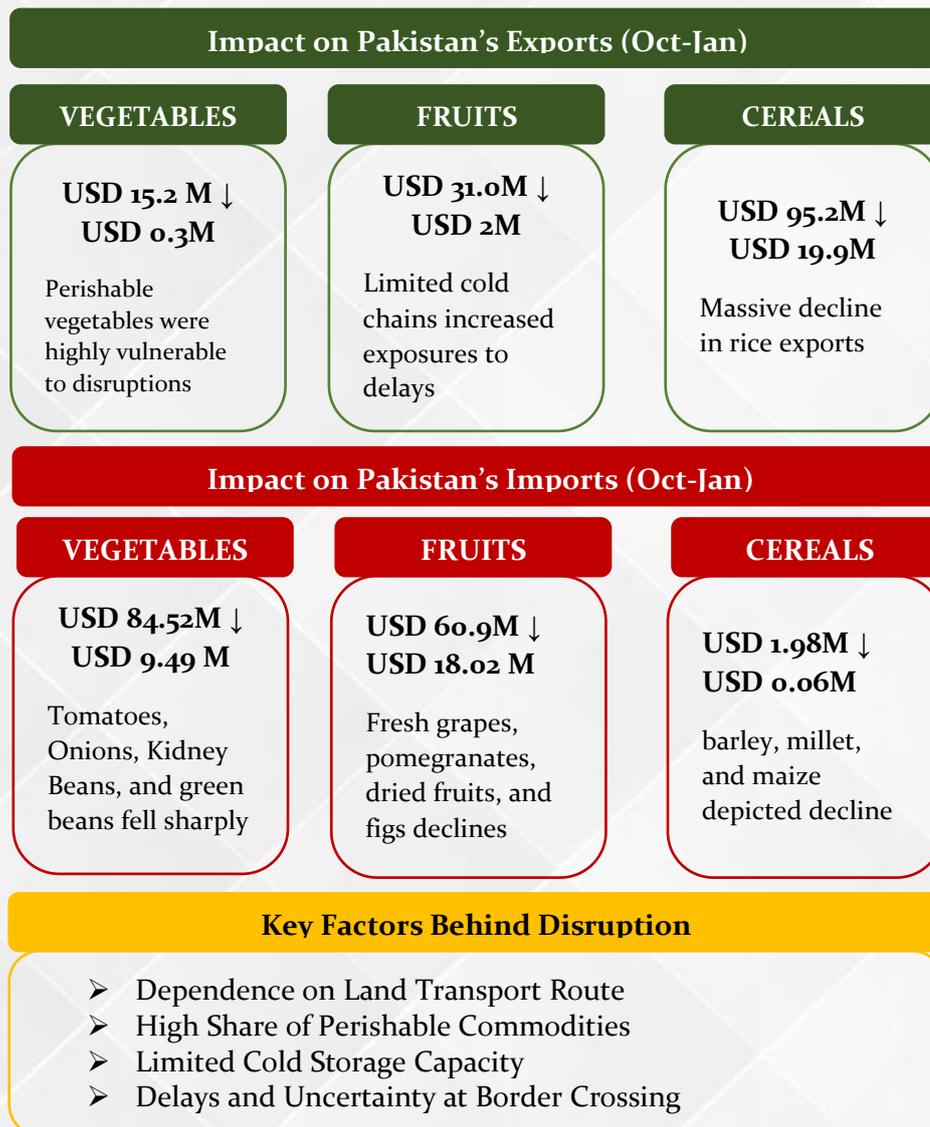
**Table 6: Pakistan's Cereals Imports from Afghanistan Oct-Jan (USD Thousand)**

HS	Description	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
10031000	Barley Seed	-	558.6	-	-	-
10039000	Barley (excluding seed for sowing)	-	-	250.0	839.4	-
10041000	Oats Seed	-	103.1	32.6	671.8	-
10049000	Oats (excluding seed for sowing)	-	70.5	-	-	8.7
10059000	Maize (excluding seed for sowing)	4.7	-	9.3	88.2	-
10082100	Millet Seed	-	3.5	2.2	-	-
10082900	Millet (excluding grain sorghum, and seed for sowing)	-	4.9	5.4	377.8	47.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>4.7</b>	<b>740.6</b>	<b>299.5</b>	<b>1,977.2</b>	<b>56.1</b>

Source: Trade Information Portal of Pakistan (TIPP)

While the preceding analysis highlights the impact of border closures on bilateral trade flows, the disruption also transmitted significant effects within Pakistan's domestic economy, particularly in agriculture, food markets, and related economic activity.

**Figure 3: Pakistan–Afghanistan Trade Comparison, FY 2024-25 vs FY 2025-26**



### 3. Impact of Border Closure on Pakistan's Economy

This section examines how the disruption affected Pakistan's domestic economy, as land route interruptions reduced farm output, squeezed incomes, raised food prices, and slowed activity across agriculture, food markets, and logistics.

#### 3.1 Impact on Agriculture and Farm Incomes

The agricultural sector was among the most affected by the border closure due to the disruption of export channels and the diversion of perishable produce to domestic markets. Export-oriented crops, particularly potatoes and citrus, experienced sharp price declines as supply exceeded domestic demand, leaving many farmers unable to recover production costs<sup>1</sup>.

The suspension of cross-border trade also resulted in wastage of major tradeable perishable commodities. Consignments of fruits and vegetables remained abandoned at terminals and on routes, and exporters were unable to redirect shipments in time. The spoilage of produce reduced earnings for farmers and traders while increasing post-harvest losses across agricultural value chains<sup>2</sup>. Income pressures were further intensified by rising input costs, including fertilizer, irrigation, and transport, which reduced already narrow profit margins<sup>3</sup>. Limited bargaining power in domestic marketing channels also forced many farmers to sell produce at distressed prices, amplifying financial losses<sup>4</sup>.

If prolonged, such disruptions can have lasting effects on rural livelihoods and agricultural production. Lower profitability reduces farmers' ability to finance inputs for subsequent cropping cycles, which may weaken agricultural momentum, discourage production of export-oriented crops, and increase vulnerability in rural economies.

#### 3.2 Impact on Food Prices and Markets

Border disruptions also affected domestic food markets by interrupting imports of vegetables and fruits from Afghanistan, particularly tomatoes and onions, which play an important role in stabilizing seasonal supply. Reduced inflows contributed to noticeable price increases in several urban markets during periods of restricted trade.

Prices of Afghan-sourced fruits, including pomegranates and grapes, also increased as traders shifted to higher-cost alternative suppliers. These developments illustrate how border disruptions can simultaneously depress producer prices while increasing consumer prices, creating imbalances across the food supply chain<sup>5</sup>.

#### 3.3 Food Security and Supply Risks

The interruption of cross-border food imports affected both the availability and affordability of key food items. Temporary shortages of perishable commodities highlighted the reliance of urban markets on seasonal imports, while rising retail prices

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1965172>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawnnews.tv/news/1274461>

<sup>3</sup> <https://drahmadm.substack.com/p/the-politics-of-the-potato-why-a>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/10/pakistan-afghanistan-border-closures-push-prices-essentials-such-tomatoes>

<sup>5</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2574860/fruit-vegetable-prices-soar-amid-pak-afghan-tensions>

placed additional pressure on household budgets, particularly among lower-income consumers<sup>6</sup>.

These types of trade disruptions may weaken domestic supply capacity by reducing farm incomes and limiting investment in future production. This combination of reduced supply resilience and increased price volatility may heighten vulnerability to future food price shocks.

### 3.4 Impact on Trade and Logistic Activities

The border closure also affected activity in trade-dependent sectors and border-linked regions. Reduced cross-border movement disrupted transport services, warehousing operations, and wholesale markets that depend on continuous trade flows. Declines in commercial activity also affected revenues associated with logistics and trade services.

Disruptions to agricultural exports reduced farm incomes, interruptions in imports increased food price volatility, and reduced cross-border movement weakened regional economic activity. The key transmission channels are summarized below.

Figure 4 Impact of Border Closure



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2619913/pakistan>

#### 4. Recommendation

- ➔ **Market Diversification:** Pursue a Preferential Trade Agreement with Bangladesh as well as other countries to secure reciprocal market access for key food commodities and diversify agricultural export markets beyond Afghanistan. This would reduce vulnerability to political and border-related disruptions, strengthen food security outcomes, and help stabilize export flows and farm incomes.
- ➔ **Agriculture Transformation and Value Addition:** Implement the Agriculture Transformation Plan prepared by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, with a strong emphasis on value addition, modern processing, and improved branding and packaging. Expand fruit processing, dehydration facilities, and cold storage infrastructure planned under the initiative.
- ➔ **Alternative Transit Routes to Central Asia Through China:** The China route under the Quadrilateral Transit Traffic Agreement offers a politically stable alternative that bypasses Afghanistan but requires infrastructure strengthening. Passing through Kashgar and the Khunjerab Pass, it faces challenges such as harsh terrain and seasonal closures. Pakistan should upgrade it into an all-weather freight corridor, integrate it further within CPEC, and offer port incentives at Gwadar and Karachi to attract Central Asian exporters. While costlier, this route provides long-term stability and strategic diversification.
- ➔ **Utilization of Iran-Based Regional Corridors:** Strengthen the use of regional trade corridors through Iran and the Persian Gulf to reduce vulnerability to disruptions along the Afghanistan route. Enhancing connectivity, customs coordination, and multimodal logistics along these corridors would provide Pakistan with additional contingency routes for exports to Central Asia and other regional markets while improving overall trade resilience<sup>7</sup>.
- ➔ **Development of Alternative Markets for Price-Sensitive Produce:** Actively develop alternative export markets for bulk and price-sensitive agricultural commodities, particularly fruits and vegetables, to reduce dependence on a single destination. TDAP should prioritize identifying potential markets in South Asia and other emerging regions, while facilitating phytosanitary agreements, trade missions, and commercial linkages to support market entry.
- ➔ **Separate Trade from Politics:** Pakistan should institutionalize a “trade continuity framework” that keeps commercial crossings operational even during diplomatic disputes. Border trade can be managed through pre-agreed emergency protocols, ensuring that essential goods (food, medicine, fuel) continue moving despite political friction. This reduces the economic cost of every political incident.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-trade-resilient-2025-iran-central-asia-routes-offset-pakistan-closures-2026-01-06/>