

U.S. – Vietnam Trade Relations: Its History, Growth and Possibility

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Many of us have been watching closely for developments around a U.S.-Vietnam trade agreement following the Trump administration's concerns about Vietnam's large trade surplus. Now, it's exciting to learn that a trade deal has been announced – although as of the publishing of this article, details of the agreement are still forthcoming.

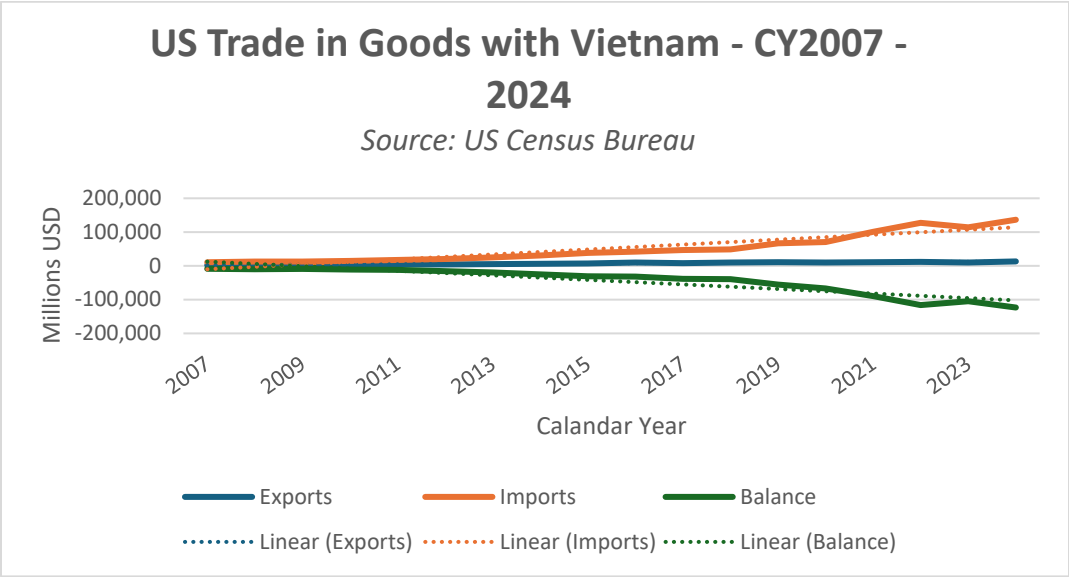
Given the importance of Vietnam as a trading partner for U.S. Soy and the U.S. overall, I am encouraged to hear this news, and hope that previously highlighted areas identified for further discussion have been addressed. After the administration's initial concerns about the U.S.-Vietnam trade imbalance were conveyed, Vietnam proposed several measures to address them, strengthen trade relations, and mitigate the trade imbalance. These "goodwill" offers included:

- Lowering tariffs on U.S. goods
- Committing to purchasing more U.S. imports
- Exploring additional steps to decrease its trade surplus with the U.S.

As we wait to learn the specifics of the agreement and if these offers are included, it's a good opportunity to take a look at the history of trade between the two countries, its balance, and the potential for improvements that benefit both.

What is driving the current trade tensions between the two countries?

Vietnam maintains a large trade surplus with the U.S. In simple terms, this means that Vietnam exports significantly more goods to the U.S. than it imports. This trend began in 2007 when Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). As the WTO's 150th member, Vietnam became eligible for various trade benefits, including lower “most-favored-nation” tariffs and reduced import quotas on its exports. Over the past decade, Vietnam’s trade with the U.S. has increased dramatically, while U.S. exports have remained relatively stagnant.



Vietnam's trade surplus with the U.S. hit a record high of over \$123 billion in 2024, making it the fourth-largest trading partner in terms of trade surplus with the U.S. It's estimated that Vietnam exported \$136.6 billion worth of goods to the U.S. in 2024 which included mobile phone components, clothing, furniture, seafood, electrical machinery, coffee, telecom equipment and more.

U.S. goods exported to Vietnam in 2024 totaled \$13.1 billion and included computers, electronics, machinery, soybeans and soybean meal, plastic materials, and cotton.

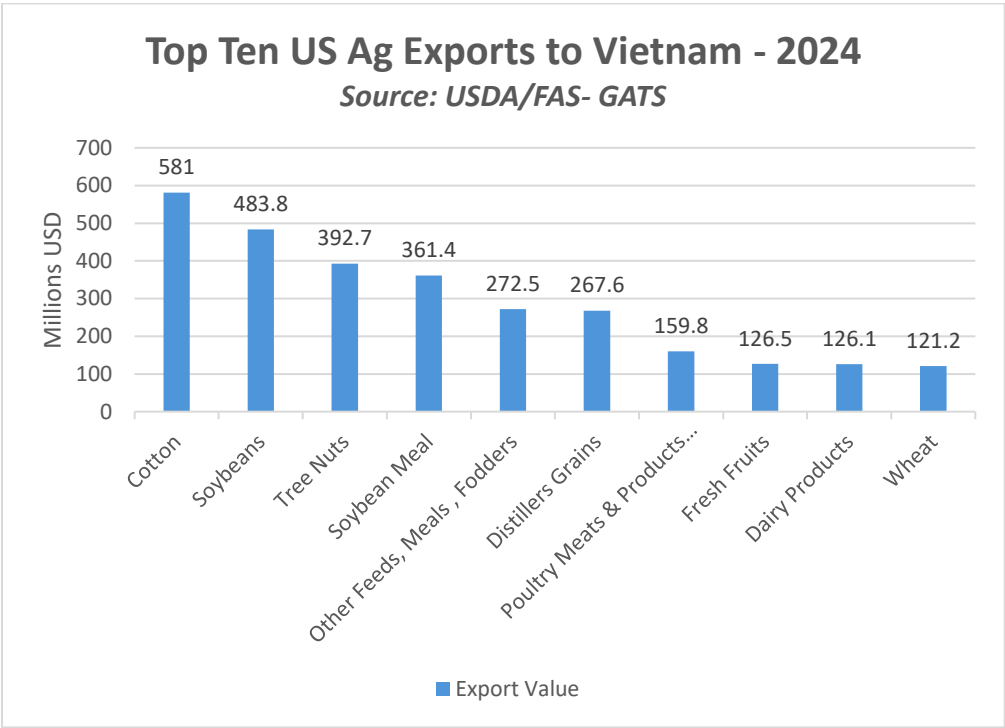
Vietnam maintains a large trade surplus in ag products with the U.S.

The U.S. is currently the largest export market for Vietnam’s agricultural, forestry, and fishery (AFF) products. In 2024, Vietnam’s AFF exports to the U.S. reached approximately \$13.5 billion, accounting for 22% of the country’s total AFF exports worldwide. This represents a nearly 25% increase in value compared to the previous year.

Overall, Vietnam ranks tenth among U.S. agricultural export markets. In 2024, U.S. ag exports to Vietnam reached \$3.4 billion, accounting for over a quarter of total U.S. exports to the country. However, Vietnam continues to hold a significant trade surplus in agricultural trade, exceeding \$10 billion.

The graph below shows the top 10 agricultural products exported from the U.S. to Vietnam in 2024, measured in millions of dollars. Notably, while U.S. soybeans and soymeal lead the list, these essential protein products account for only 32% and 13% of the total Vietnamese market share, respectively.

There is tremendous potential for U.S. Soy in Vietnam’s expanding market, and I look forward to enhancing our competitive position in the short and long term.



The trade outlook with Vietnam has never been brighter

Reaching an agreement that further opens the Vietnamese market to American goods, particularly agricultural products like soybeans and soybean meal, aligns with U.S. interests, especially given Vietnam’s current reliance on its 18 free trade agreements with over 50 trading partners.

U.S. Soy is celebrating 30 years of mutually beneficial collaboration with Vietnam this year. Vietnam is now Southeast Asia’s second-largest importer of U.S. Soy, driven by a growing middle class and increasing demand for quality pork, poultry and seafood. With the country’s economy expanding rapidly, demand for high-quality, sustainably produced soy will only continue to increase. It’s been extraordinary to witness the growth of Vietnam’s agricultural advancements, and U.S. Soy is appreciative and proud of our strong partnership.

Looking ahead, I believe the future of U.S. Soy – and global trade overall – with Vietnam is bright. Those all along the U.S. Soy value chain are showing what is possible when we choose to be guided by a win-win perspective, and we remain committed to supporting Vietnam’s sustainable agricultural growth for years to come.



On June 18, 2025 USSEC celebrated the 30-year milestone of U.S. Soy collaboration in Vietnam with events including a Memorandum of Understanding signing between USSEC and the Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture in Vietnam. The MoU aims to strengthen trade ties, foster industry collaboration and enhance awareness of U.S. Soy sustainability.