vegetables, and Asia for fats and oils and fish. Fruit and vegetables are the commodity group with the largest net trade amounts: Asia's trade deficit was USD 58 billion, while the Americas' surplus was USD 67 billion. In 2018, Africa and Asia were net importers of all commodity groups but two (fish and fruit and vegetables for Africa, fish and fats and oils for Asia). Oceania was a net exporter of all commodity groups in 2018. The Americas and Europe were net exporters of most groups, but each had significant net imports in one category: the Americas had a deficit of USD 17 billion for beverages and Europe had one of USD 41 billion for fruit and vegetables.

Looking at the quantities instead of the values traded gives a vastly different picture. In that case, cereals are by a wide margin the most traded commodity group, with exports reaching a historical peak at 481 million tonnes in 2018 (see Figure 39). This is 207 million tonnes, or 76 percent more than in 2000. Three crops accounted for 86 percent of all exports in 2018: wheat (40 percent), maize (36 percent) and rice (10 percent). The relative shares of wheat and rice have barely changed between 2000 and 2017, and that of maize increased by 6 percentage points. For each of the main traded cereals, exports tend to originate from a few countries while imports are more dispersed (see Figure 40).

In 2018, the top three exporters accounted for significant shares of the total exports: 47 percent for wheat, 67 percent for maize and 61 percent for rice. In comparison, the top three importers accounted for 15 to 25 percent of the total imports for these commodities. The main producers tend to also feature among the main exporters. China stands out as a major producing country focusing on domestic demand since its exports are fairly small compared to its production (see Tables 20 and 32); it is also the main importer of rice.

The nominal value of global forest products exports peaked at USD 269 billion in 2018, up USD 124 billion or 86 percent compared with 2000 (see Figure 41). All the main products rebounded after their sharp drop in 2009. With 39 percent of the total value, paper and paperboard was the most traded commodity in 2018, even though its share steadily declined from 48 percent in 2000. Together with pulp for paper and recovered paper, it accounts for 58 percent of the total. Pulp for paper, sawnwood and wood-based panels each represented 13 to 16 percent of the value of forestry exports.

Source: FAOSTAT
Note: Percentages on the figure indicate the shares in the total.
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