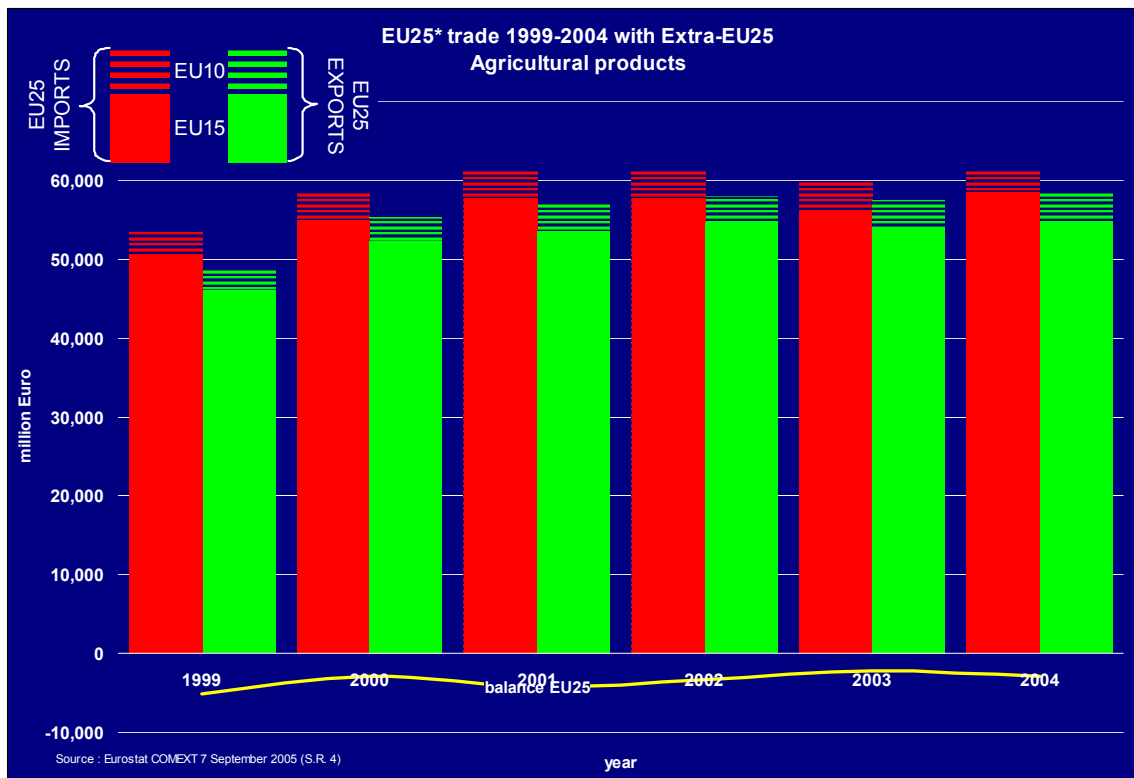


EU enlargement

On 1 May 2004 ten countries joined the EU, now comprises 25 members. This enlargement raises some difficulties in the field of definitions: until 30 April 2004 the 10 new Member States were trade partners; from the first of May they are reporters. This implies that formal EU statistics for the year 2004 (Jan-Apr EU15; May-Dec EU25) are not entirely comparable with the previous year (2003, EU15) nor with the next year (2005, EU25).

Technically it is possible on the basis of national statistics of the new Member States and Eurostat trade statistics for the fifteen old Member States to simulate a “virtual” EU25 as from 1999. However, where we can simulate geographical regions we can not simulate trade regimes. Particularly in the area of Agriculture the trade regimes of the new Member States before accession were significantly different compared to the regime in force in the Community including from May 2004 in the new Member States.

In the “virtual” EU25 for the period 1999-2003 the new Member States account for a relatively stable 6% of total trade in agricultural products with Extra-EU25. Although, overall, no significant shift has been recorded in 2004, this is not always the case for specific products and partners.



In this paper the formal definition of the EU has been used: 2004 statistics are the sum of EU15 trade with extra-EU15 for the period January-April and EU25 trade with Extra-EU25 for the period May-December; the period 1995-2003 covers EU15 trade and the period 1988-1994 EU12.