

External merchandise trade statistics for August 2019

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (September 26) the external merchandise trade statistics for August 2019. In August 2019, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 6.3% and 11.1% respectively.

In August 2019, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 6.3% over a year earlier to \$352.7 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 5.7% in July 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 11.1% over a year earlier to \$380.8 billion in August 2019, after a year-on-year decrease of 8.7% in July 2019. A visible trade deficit of \$28.0 billion, equivalent to 7.4% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in August 2019.

For the first eight months of 2019 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods dropped by 4.3% over the same period in 2018. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 6.0%. A visible trade deficit of \$305.1 billion, equivalent to 10.6% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first eight months of 2019.

Comparing the three-month period ending August 2019 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 4.5%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods decreased by 4.8%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing August 2019 with August 2018, total exports to Asia as a whole went down by 4.8%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Malaysia (-21.6%), India (-20.8%), Thailand (-16.5%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-5.2%), Vietnam (-3.3%) and Singapore (-2.7%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to Taiwan (+31.2%) and the Philippines (+18.1%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the United Kingdom (-13.3%) and the USA (-8.8%). Concurrently, an increase was registered in the value of total exports to Germany (+4.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular India (-30.2%), Malaysia (-30.0%), Korea (-17.0%), the USA (-16.1%), the Mainland (-12.5%), Thailand (-11.7%) and Singapore (-10.4%).

For the first eight months of 2019 as a whole, year-on-year decreases

were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular India (-15.9%), the USA (-10.6%), the Mainland (-6.0%), Germany (-5.8%), Japan (-3.9%) and Vietnam (-3.8%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Singapore (+8.2%) and Korea (+5.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-25.0%), India (-18.7%), Malaysia (-15.0%), Thailand (-9.0%), Taiwan (-8.6%) and Singapore (-7.4%). The value of imports from the Mainland also decreased by 4.0%.

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing August 2019 with August 2018, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$8.3 billion or -11.7%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$6.1 billion or -4.1%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$3.0 billion or -21.5%). However, an increase was registered in the value of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$1.0 billion or 18.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$12.4 billion or -7.6%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$11.1 billion or -27.3%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$10.8 billion or -16.2%). However, an increase was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$3.4 billion or 53.8%).

For the first eight months of 2019 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$43.3 billion or -4.2%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$35.5 billion or -12.1%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$9.4 billion or -8.2%). However, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$9.8 billion or 25.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$85.4 billion or -7.3%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$39.8 billion or -14.5%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$21.2 billion or -4.7%). However, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$11.4 billion or 23.3%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said the value of merchandise exports continued to record a visible year-on-year decline in August 2019, weighed by slackening global economic growth and escalated US-Mainland trade tensions. Exports to many major markets fell further.

Uncertainties associated with the development of US-Mainland trade tensions will continue to pose downside risks to the already subdued external trading environment. Hong Kong's merchandise export performance will likely remain weak or even worsen further in the near term. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 at the annex presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for August 2019. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2016 to August 2019, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for August 2019 are shown in Table 4, whereas the values of imports of goods from 10 main suppliers are given in Table 5.

Tables 6 and 7 show the values of total exports and imports of 10 principal commodity divisions for August 2019.

All the merchandise trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the periods of comparison. A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external merchandise trade for August 2019 will be released in mid-October 2019.

The August 2019 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in August 2019 and will be available in mid-October 2019. Users can download the publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp230.jsp).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section (2) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 5042).