

External merchandise trade statistics for August 2020

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (September 24) the external merchandise trade statistics for August 2020. In August 2020, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 2.3% and 5.7% respectively.

In August 2020, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 2.3% over a year earlier to \$344.5 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 3.0% in July 2020. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 5.7% over a year earlier to \$359.1 billion in August 2020, after a year-on-year decrease of 3.4% in July 2020. A visible trade deficit of \$14.6 billion, equivalent to 4.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in August 2020.

For the first eight months of 2020 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 5.8% over the same period in 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 8.1%. A visible trade deficit of \$219.7 billion, equivalent to 8.3% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first eight months of 2020.

Comparing the three-month period ending August 2020 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 0.3%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 0.6%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing August 2020 with August 2019, total exports to Asia as a whole went down by 1.8%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Japan (-19.4%), Singapore (-14.6%), Thailand (-12.5%) and Korea (-9.1%). The value of total exports to the mainland of China (the Mainland) also decreased by 1.4%. On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to India (+12.8%) and Vietnam (+11.5%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular Germany (-24.2%) and the USA (-14.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular the USA (-29.3%), Korea (-11.8%), Japan (-6.6%) and the Mainland (-6.1%). Concurrently, increases were recorded in the values of imports from Taiwan (+20.8%) and Vietnam (+13.6%).

For the first eight months of 2020 as a whole, year-on-year decreases

were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular the USA (-22.0%), Germany (â€‘21.1%), India (-20.0%), Singapore (-17.8%), Korea (-13.0%) and Japan (-12.7%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Taiwan (+8.0%) and the Mainland (+2.2%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular the USA (-22.0%), the Mainland (â€‘11.9%) and Japan (-7.3%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from Vietnam (+40.6%), Taiwan (+20.3%), Korea (+5.3%) and Singapore (+4.5%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing August 2020 with August 2019, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$3.2 billion or -33.6%), "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$2.7 billion or -13.2%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$1.9 billion or -3.1%), "photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks" (by \$1.7 billion or -17.5%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$1.4 billion or -21.4%). However, increases were registered in the values of total exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$6.9 billion or 4.8%), "non-ferrous metals" (by \$1.5 billion or 66.9%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$1.3 billion or 11.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$3.7 billion or -16.8%), "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$2.9 billion or -34.5%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$2.4 billion or â€‘18.7%). However, increases were registered in the values of imports of "essential oils and resinoids and perfume materials; toilet, polishing and cleansing preparations" (by \$2.1 billion or 49.4%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$1.3 billion or 2.4%)

For the first eight months of 2020 as a whole, year-on-year 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 \$67.2 billion or -14.3%), "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$39.2 billion or -25.7%), "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$33.5 billion or -31.9%) and "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$24.7 billion or -37.8%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$58.0 billion or 5.8%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$15.0 billion or 5.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$48.7 billion or -39.7%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$42.0 billion or -9.7%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$38.2 billion or -21.8%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$33.7 billion or 3.1%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$9.4 billion or 15.5%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that merchandise exports continued to fall moderately year-on-year in August as the global economy remained weak. Exports to the US and the EU posted narrower declines alongside the gradual economic recovery in these markets. Yet, exports to the Mainland turned to a mild decline, and those to other major Asian markets showed mixed performance.

Looking ahead, the COVID-19 pandemic will remain a major downside risk to the global economic outlook until an effective vaccine is widely available. The development of China-US relations and geopolitical tensions also add uncertainties. Hong Kong's merchandise export performance will thus likely remain constrained in the near term. The Government will monitor relevant developments closely.

Further information

Table 1 at the annex presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for August 2020. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2017 to August 2020, 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 2020 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 2020.

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 2020 will be released in mid-October 2020.

The August 2020 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in August 2020 and will be available in mid-October 2020. 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).