

External merchandise trade statistics for December 2020

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (January 26) the external merchandise trade statistics for December 2020. In December 2020, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 11.7% and 14.1% respectively.

In December 2020, the value of total exports of goods increased by 11.7% over a year earlier to \$392.2 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 5.6% in November 2020. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 14.1% over a year earlier to \$437.9 billion in December 2020, after a year-on-year increase of 5.1% in November 2020. A visible trade deficit of \$45.7 billion, equivalent to 10.4% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in December 2020.

For 2020 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 1.5% over 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 3.3%. A visible trade deficit of \$342.2 billion, equivalent to 8.0% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in 2020.

Comparing the fourth quarter of 2020 with the preceding quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.5%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 8.9%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing December 2020 with December 2019, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 13.8%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Taiwan (+28.9%), Korea (+20.1%), Vietnam (+18.2%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+17.5%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to India (-21.4%) and Singapore (-13.5%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the USA (+3.2%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to Germany (-7.2%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (+42.0%), Taiwan (+35.6%), Singapore (+21.7%), Vietnam (+21.3%) and the Mainland (+14.7%). Concurrently, a decrease was recorded in the value of imports from the USA (-4.9%).

For 2020 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (-17.6%), Singapore (-17.5%), the USA (-14.9%), Germany (-14.5%), Japan

(-9.7%) and Korea (-7.6%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Taiwan (+11.6%), Vietnam (+5.3%) and the Mainland (+5.1%).

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 (-17.9%), the Mainland (-6.5%) and Japan (-5.0%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from Vietnam (+28.4%), Taiwan (+22.8%), Korea (+12.3%) and Singapore (+8.1%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing December 2020 with December 2019, increases 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 \$30.1 billion or 20.8%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$5.0 billion or 8.1%), "non-ferrous metals" (by \$3.9 billion or 174.7%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$3.9 billion or 10.1%). However, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$3.1 billion or -31.2%) and "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$2.1 billion or -27.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$35.4 billion or 23.6%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$10.8 billion or 17.7%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$4.2 billion or 13.1%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$0.9 billion or -9.4%).

For 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 \$69.5 billion or -9.4%), "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$37.0 billion or -16.6%), "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$32.4 billion or -33.7%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$31.7 billion or -20.4%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$133.0 billion or 8.5%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$29.4 billion or 7.4%).

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 \$49.5 billion or -27.9%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$45.3 billion or -6.6%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$39.3 billion or -15.0%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in

the values of imports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$124.6 billion or 7.4%), "essential oils and resinoids and perfume materials; toilet, polishing and cleansing preparations" (by \$16.5 billion or 31.6%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$12.3 billion or 23.0%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports posted a double-digit growth in December 2020 over a year earlier, as import demand in many major markets revived further. Exports to the Mainland accelerated notably, and those to the US and the EU also saw faster growth. Exports to many other major Asian markets showed improvement of varying degrees. Yet dragged by the weak export performance in the first half of the year, the value of merchandise exports fell further by 1.5% for 2020 as a whole.

Looking ahead, while the Mainland economy is expected to strengthen further and render support to Hong Kong's exports, the prospects of other major markets will depend on how the pandemic situation evolves. Evolving China-US relations under the new US administration, persistent geopolitical tensions and post-Brexit developments also warrant attention. The Government will monitor the developments closely.

Further information

Table 1 at the annex presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for December 2020. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2017 to December 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 December 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 December 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 December 2020 will be released in mid-February 2021.

The December 2020 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in December 2020 and will be available in mid-February 2021. Users can download the publication 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).