

External merchandise trade statistics for May 2019

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (June 25) the external merchandise trade statistics for May 2019. In May 2019, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 2.4% and 4.3% respectively.

In May 2019, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 2.4% over a year earlier to \$343.1 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 2.6% in April 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 4.3% over a year earlier to \$377.8 billion in May 2019, after a year-on-year decrease of 5.5% in April 2019. A visible trade deficit of \$34.7 billion, equivalent to 9.2% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in May 2019.

For the first five months of 2019 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods dropped by 2.5% over the same period in 2018. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 3.8%. A visible trade deficit of \$188.8 billion, equivalent to 10.6% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first five months of 2019.

Comparing the three-month period ending May 2019 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 6.3%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 6.6%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing May 2019 with May 2018, total exports to Asia as a whole went down by 2.6%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Thailand (-14.0%), Malaysia (-11.6%), Singapore (-9.5%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-4.1%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to Korea (+24.5%), the Philippines (+12.1%) and India (+8.9%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular Germany (-16.9%) and the USA (-15.0%). Concurrently, an increase was registered in the value of total exports to the United Kingdom (+9.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Korea (-29.6%), India (-18.6%), Japan (-10.6%), Malaysia (-4.2%) and the Mainland (-4.0%). Concurrently, increases were recorded in the values of imports from Switzerland (+22.0%) and the USA (+2.1%).

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

were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (-19.6%), the USA (-12.0%), Taiwan (-11.7%), the Mainland (-5.0%) and Germany (-5.0%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Singapore (+13.9%) and the Netherlands (+10.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-26.7%), India (-18.8%), Taiwan (-12.5%), Malaysia (-7.0%) and Thailand (-6.7%). The value of imports from the Mainland also decreased by 1.4%. On the other hand, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of imports from Switzerland (+5.1%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing May 2019 with May 2018, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$6.2 billion or -15.7%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$2.7 billion or -2.0%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$1.6 billion or -7.1%). However, an increase was registered in the value of total exports of "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$1.8 billion or 2.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$7.9 billion or -5.3%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$5.1 billion or -14.3%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$2.4 billion or -4.1%). However, an increase was registered in the value of imports of "photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks" (by \$0.6 billion or 6.5%).

For the first five months of 2019 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$22.1 billion or -12.3%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$15.6 billion or -2.5%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$5.0 billion or -5.3%). However, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of total exports of "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$12.6 billion or 4.4%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$49.7 billion or -7.1%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$17.3 billion or -10.8%) and "non-metallic

mineral manufactures" (by \$5.0 billion or -5.9%). However, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$5.8 billion or 19.7%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that merchandise exports remained subdued in May, affected by the weaker global economy and US-Mainland trade tensions. The situation was similar to that in many other Asian economies.

Looking ahead, the near-term outlook for Hong Kong's exports will continue to be clouded by various external uncertainties, including notably the evolution of US-Mainland trade relations. The Government will stay vigilant.

Further information

Table 1 at the annex presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for May 2019. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2016 to May 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 May 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 May 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 May 2019 will be released in mid-July 2019.

The May 2019 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in May 2019 and will be available in mid-July 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).