

External merchandise trade statistics for October 2019

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (November 26) the external merchandise trade statistics for October 2019. In October 2019, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 9.2% and 11.5% respectively.

In October 2019, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 9.2% over a year earlier to \$348.5 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 7.3% in September 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 11.5% over a year earlier to \$379.1 billion in October 2019, after a year-on-year decrease of 10.3% in September 2019. A visible trade deficit of \$30.6 billion, equivalent to 8.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in October 2019.

For the first 10 months of 2019 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods dropped by 5.1% over the same period in 2018. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 7.0%. A visible trade deficit of \$367.5 billion, equivalent to 10.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first 10 months of 2019.

Comparing the three-month period ending October 2019 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 0.7%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods decreased by 1.7%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing October 2019 with October 2018, total exports to Asia as a whole went down by 6.4%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Korea (-14.5%), India (-10.7%), Vietnam (-10.3%), Japan (-10.1%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-7.3%) and Malaysia (-4.0%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to Taiwan (+16.8%) and Singapore (+4.5%).

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 (-22.1%), the USA (-21.1%) and Germany (-17.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Korea (-24.7%), the USA (-23.9%), India (-16.3%), the Mainland (-14.5%), Thailand (-9.5%) and Singapore (-6.1%). Concurrently, increases were recorded in the values of imports from Vietnam (+23.4%) and Malaysia (+3.0%).

For the first 10 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 (-14.8%), the USA (-13.2%), Germany (-7.8%), the Mainland (-6.0%), Japan (-4.5%) and Vietnam (-3.8%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Singapore (+5.8%) and Taiwan (+2.0%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-25.1%), India (-19.2%), Malaysia (-14.2%), Thailand (-9.9%) and Singapore (-8.5%). The value of imports from the Mainland also decreased by 5.8%. On the other hand, the value of imports from Vietnam increased by 10.3%.

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing October 2019 with October 2018, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$14.0 billion or -16.9%), "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$4.5 billion or -19.6%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$3.8 billion or -9.9%). However, an increase was registered in the value of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$1.7 billion or 32.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$17.5 billion or -21.0%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$8.2 billion or -22.0%) and "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$5.8 billion or -3.8%). However, an increase was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$2.2 billion or 38.0%).

For the first 10 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 \$49.6 billion or -3.7%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$46.7 billion or -12.5%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$27.2 billion or -4.3%). However, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$14.3 billion or 30.4%).

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 \$101.2 billion or -6.9%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$57.3 billion or -16.4%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$46.2 billion or -7.6%). However, a year-on-year increase was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$14.9 billion or 24.3%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the year-on-year decline in the value of merchandise exports accelerated further in October, buffeted by sluggish global demand and continued US-Mainland trade tensions. Exports to many major markets registered visible declines.

Looking ahead, Hong Kong's merchandise export performance will likely stay weak in the near term, as soft global economic growth and uncertainties stemming from US trade policies continue to dampen external demand. 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 October 2019. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2016 to October 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 October 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 October 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 October 2019 will be released in mid-December 2019.

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