

External merchandise trade statistics for October 2020

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (November 24) the external merchandise trade statistics for October 2020. In October 2020, the value of Hong Kong's total exports of goods decreased by 1.1%, whereas the value of imports of goods increased by 0.6% over a year earlier.

In October 2020, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 1.1% over a year earlier to \$344.7 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 9.1% in September 2020. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 0.6% over a year earlier to \$381.4 billion in October 2020, after a year-on-year increase of 3.4% in September 2020. A visible trade deficit of \$36.8 billion, equivalent to 9.6% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in October 2020.

For the first 10 months of 2020 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 3.7% over the same period in 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 6.0%. A visible trade deficit of \$270.8 billion, equivalent to 7.9% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first 10 months of 2020.

Comparing the three-month period ending October 2020 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.8%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 5.3%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing October 2020 with October 2019, total exports to Asia as a whole went down by 2.3%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Thailand (-24.0%), Singapore (-20.3%) and Korea (-7.6%). 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 Vietnam (+15.3%) and Taiwan (+13.7%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the USA (-3.9%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to Germany (+3.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Korea (+21.3%), Taiwan (+15.5%), Singapore (+12.9%) and Thailand (+11.1%). Concurrently, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from Malaysia (-14.1%), Japan (-4.6%), the Mainland (-4.5%) and the USA (-4.1%).

For the first 10 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 (-17.9%), India (-17.5%), Singapore (-17.5%), Germany (-17.1%), Japan (-11.9%) and Korea (-10.9%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Taiwan (+8.8%) and the Mainland (+3.4%).

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 (-20.3%), the Mainland (-9.9%) and Japan (-7.0%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from Vietnam (+31.6%), Taiwan (+21.7%), Korea (+8.1%) and Singapore (+6.7%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing October 2020 with October 2019, 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 \$7.0 billion or -10.1%) and "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$1.5 billion or -20.4%). However, increases were registered in the values of total exports of "non-ferrous metals" (by \$3.1 billion or 155.9%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$2.5 billion or 7.3%), "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$1.5 billion or 11.1%) and "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$1.3 billion or 0.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$11.9 billion or 8.2%), "essential oils and resinoids and perfume materials; toilet, polishing and cleansing preparations" (by \$2.7 billion or 63.6%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$1.5 billion or 22.7%). However, decreases were registered in the values of imports of "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$6.2 billion or -9.4%), "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$2.2 billion or -9.7%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$1.1 billion or -7.8%).

For the first 10 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 \$71.6 billion or -11.9%), "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$40.7 billion or -21.5%), "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$34.9 billion or -26.2%) and "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$28.5 billion or -35.0%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$87.8 billion or 6.9%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$23.3 billion or 7.2%).

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 \$54.0 billion or -35.4%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$51.7 billion or -9.2%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$43.4 billion or -19.7%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$69.0 billion or 5.0%), "essential oils and resinoids and perfume materials; toilet, polishing and cleansing preparations" (by \$10.6 billion or 23.9%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$9.7 billion or 12.7%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports fell slightly in October from a year earlier, as exports to the Mainland and the US switched to mild declines. Exports to many other major Asian markets also declined. Nonetheless, exports to the EU turned to a moderate increase.

Looking ahead, while the Mainland economy is expected to post further strong growth, the deterioration of COVID-19 situation in a number of advanced economies will likely slow their recoveries and may hinder the revival of Hong Kong's exports. The development of China-US relations, geopolitical tensions and the Brexit negotiations 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 October 2020. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2017 to October 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 October 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 October 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 October 2020 will be released in mid-December 2020.

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