

Asia buys more German plastics and rubber machinery than the EU

According to a report by the VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery Association, more than one third of Germany's total exports of plastics and rubber machinery were supplied to Asia in 2009. Asia's share of the total increased from 29.1 % to 36.5 %. In terms of volume, however, exports to Asia fell by 17.2 %.

The individual regions of Asia showed different trends. With growth of 19.6%, exports to Central and South Asia were the only real bright spot on the entire export horizon. Deliveries to South-East Asia were only slightly lower than 2008, recording a drop of 3.6%. Those to the Near and Middle East fell by 21.4%, while East Asia was down by as much as 26.2%.

German exports of plastics and rubber machinery fell by 33.9% in 2009. Federal Statistical Office figures show that they amounted to EUR2,637million. The previous year they had risen by 4.6% to a record total of EUR3,989million. The collapse affected the major sales regions and all important markets to much the same extent. In Central America (-20.6%) the decline was less marked than in the 27 EU countries (-44.0%), the rest of Europe (-41.5%), North America (-38.7%) or South America (-39.5%) (fig.1).

What was gained in Asia was lost in the 27 countries of the EU, according to the report. Their share was down from 35.0% to 29.6%. The rest of Europe, North America and Africa all recorded slightly lower totals, declining from 13.8% to 12.2%, from 11.6% to 10.7% and from 2.7% to 2.6% respectively. Latin America's share grew marginally, from 7.1% to 7.2%.

Imports from foreign plastics and rubber machinery manufacturers to their customers in Germany declined by 36.7% to EUR539million. Import demand had not been as low as this since 2002 and 2003.

China once again topped the list of the most important markets for German plastics and rubber machinery in 2009, in spite of a 27.8% decline in German exports (tab.1). 13.5% of the total were supplied to the Chinese market. As in the previous year, the US took second place, although sales to that market were down by 41.7%. Russia (-42.1%) just about managed to hold on to third place, with India, up by 29.8%, catching up fast. As a result, the Asian subcontinent has shot up from 12th to 4th place in the table of sales markets. Others moving into the top 10 are Austria in 9th place (rising from 13th spot, -27.5%) and Mexico, which has climbed five places to 10th (-22.0%).

The largest supplier countries last year were once again Austria (-41.7%), Switzerland (-45.1%) and Italy (-31.1%), ahead of the USA (-18.3%). Despite a 28.2% decline in deliveries of Chinese machinery, China has moved up to 5th place. France fell back to 8th place.

Production, exports and imports give a German domestic market volume of EUR1,707million; down 29.0%, this represents a significant decline from the previous year's level and falls well short of the EUR2billion mark which was comfortably exceeded in the last two years. As a proportion of the domestic market, imports were down from 35.4% to 31.6%, the lowest value in the last ten years.

However, the association predicts double-digit growth for the years 2010 and 2011. The German plastics and rubber machinery industry is set to achieve sales growth of more than 11% in the current year, with a similar figure of just under 11% expected for 2011, according to the association.

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