

WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, April 2010



Total crude steel production for the 66 countries reporting to the World Steel Association in February 2010 was estimated to be 107.5 million tonnes, an increase of 24% on February 2009. The total for the two months to date in 2010 was nearly 28% up on the same period in 2009 at 221 million tonnes. However, excluding China, global crude steel production rose by almost 30% in the two months. All regions showed an increase in both the month and year to date with the largest regional increase being in North America, up 44% on the first two months of 2009.

In the European Union, crude steel production by the 27 rose by 28.6% in February, and by 32% to 27 million tonnes in the two months to date compared to the same period last year. German crude steel production rose by 34% in February, and by 33% in the year to date to 6.9 million tonnes. This strongly suggests that the German economy is recovering from the recession. Although we do not have trade data for 2010 yet, German steel exports rose in the last quarter of 2009 and imports were also up a bit on earlier months. Production in Italy was up in February by 28.5%, while the two months total was up 23% to 4.0 million tonnes. Spanish monthly production increased by 36%, with the year to date up 41% to 2.7 million tonnes. French steel production was only up 10% in February, although the two months total was up by 20% to 2.3 million tonnes. United Kingdom steel production increased by 17.7% in February, bringing the year to date to 1.7 million tonnes, an increase of 33%. UK steel imports peaked in October 2009 but then fell. UK exports peaked in September 2009 but have fallen off a bit since then despite the weakness of sterling. The only country to show a fall in steel production was Greece where monthly production was down 44%, and the two months total was down by 54% to 164 thousand tonnes.

Crude steel production in the rest of Europe was quite mixed. Turkish production in February rose by 1.6% with the year to date total up 1.8% to 3.9 million tonnes. In Serbia the year to date production more than doubled to 273 thousand tonnes; the Swiss two months total was up by 18.5% to 209 thousand tonnes.

ACEA, the European car manufacturers association, reported that car registrations in Europe rose by 3.2% in February, while the year to date total increased by 8%, to 2.1 million cars. German registrations were down 30% in February and by 19.5% in the two months to 376 thousand cars, while Italian registrations increased by 20.6% in the month and by 25.5% in the two months to 408 thousand cars. The French two months total rose 16% at 352 thousand cars, while in the UK the total was up almost 29% to 214 thousand cars. The Spanish two months total jumped by 33% to 161 thousand cars. These five countries accounted for 72% of total registrations in Europe.

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Passenger car production in the European Union fell by 12.6% in 2009 to 14 million cars, of which Germany made 5 million, 10% down on the 2008 total. France and Italy both made 1.8 million cars in 2009, while the UK total fell 31% to one million. The Czech Republic total, however, increased by 3.6% to 968 thousand cars.

In the CIS crude steel production increased by 7.7% in February, while the year to date total was up by 18.3% to 16.4 million tonnes. Russia's monthly total was up 8.3%, with the two months 20% up to almost 10 million tonnes. Russian exports of steel maintained a fairly high level in the last half of 2009 with December being one of the highest monthly totals in over a year. Exports of semis and hot rolled wide strip were particularly high, accounting for 74% of total exports in December. Ukrainian steel production rose by 10.7% in February, bringing the year to date total to 5.3 million tonnes, an increase of 19.2%. Exports of steel by Ukraine remained relatively stable during 2009, albeit at a slightly lower level than in 2008. January 2010 exports were still fairly high, although the February total dropped by 16% compared to January. In Kazakhstan the two month crude steel production total increased by 35.7% to 760 thousand tonnes, while Belarus steel production dropped by 26% to 325 thousand tonnes.

Turning to North America, US crude steel production jumped by 51% in February, and by 52% in the year to date to 12.2 million tonnes. Mexican steel production was 16% up in the month, and 25.6% up in the two months to date to 2.5 million tonnes. Canadian production was estimated to have increased by 20% in February, and by 21.6% in the year to date to 2 million tonnes.

US exports of steel picked up in the last 4 months of 2009 after the low point in the earlier part of the year, and this continued into 2010. US imports reached a low point in June 2009 but have picked up with the January 2010 total being the highest monthly total since January 2009, although it was still 30% below the January 2009 total.

In South America, there was a 48% increase in Brazilian crude steel production in February, with the year to date total up by 59% to 5.2 million tonnes. Argentinian production rose 32.7% in the two months to 717 thousand tonnes, while Venezuelan steel production in the year to date fell by 41% to 601 thousand tonnes. Production in Chile was 65% up in the two months to 253 thousand tonnes.

South African crude steel production rose in February by 16%, while the year to date total was up 32% to 1.4 million tonnes. Egyptian steel production increased by 12.7% in the two months to 956 thousand tonnes. Production in Iran actually only rose by 3% in February, and was flat in the year to date at just under 2 million tonnes. In Saudi Arabia steel production for the two months was almost 80% higher at 912 thousand tonnes.

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Crude steel production in the Far East rose in all 5 major countries. Chinese production increased by 22.5% in February and by 25.4% in the two months to 103 million tonnes. Japanese production jumped by 54% in February and by 44.7% in the year to date to 17.2 million tonnes. Indian production was up by 5% in February, and by 10% in the year to date to 10.3 million tonnes. South Korean steel production increased by 25% in the month, while the year to date total was up 29% to 8.5 million tonnes. Taiwanese production rose by 46% in February by 58% in the two months total to 3.3 million tonnes.

Japanese exports of steel reached a high point in December 2009 at 3.8 million tonnes, the highest monthly total since March 2008. It was more than double the February 2009 total which was the lowest point in 2009. Exports of steel in January 2010 were slightly down on December, but were still higher than most months in both 2009 and 2008.

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