

WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, May 2013



World production of crude steel in March 2013 rose by 1% to 135 million tonnes. The total of the 3 months to date was nearly 389 million tonnes, some 2.3% higher than the January to March period in 2012. However, excluding China, the monthly total was 3.8% lower than in March 2012, and the quarter total was 3.6% below the same quarter in 2012.

Crude steel production in the European Union 27 fell by 6.6% in March to 14.6 million tonnes compared to March 2012, and was also 5.4% down in the quarter at 41.5 million tonnes. German steel production was down by 2.2% in the month, but was only 0.3% down in the three months at 10.8 million tonnes. Italian production, however, decreased by 18.4% in March, and by 17.7% in the quarter to 6.1 million tonnes. French steel production fell by 9.6% in March, bringing the year to date total down 4.1% to 4 million tonnes. Spanish steel production fell by 2.3% in March, and by 3.6% in the three months to 3.6 million tonnes. However, UK steel production increased by 53% in March due mainly to the startup of the SSI works, and by 43% in the year to date to 2.7 million tonnes. Virtually every other country in the European Union showed a drop in March production.

Outside the European Union, Turkish production fell by 4.6% in March, and by 5.9% in the three months to 8.5 million tonnes, ahead of both Brazil and the Ukraine. First quarter production in Norway dropped by 17% to 157 thousand tonnes compared to Q1 2012, while Bosnian production was almost 25% up to 186 thousand tonnes.

Turkish imports of steel have risen in the last few months and the total in the first 2 months of 2013 at 2.3 million tonnes was 40% above the same period in 2012. Imports of semis doubled to 911 thousand tonnes and imports of hot rolled coil rose by a third to 650 thousand tonnes. Nearly half the semis imported in 2013 were low carbon billets with low carbon slabs accounting for a further 38%.

Virtually half of Turkish imports of steel in 2013 came from the CIS, particularly Russia and the Ukraine. The European Union accounted for a further 39% headed by France, the UK and Romania. Turkish imports of scrap in the first 2 months of 2013, however, were 24% less than in 2012 due to lower production.

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According to ACEA, the European vehicle manufacturers association, car registrations in the 29 European countries monitored fell by 10.3% in March, and by 9.7% in the first three months of 2013 compared to 2012. In Germany registrations dropped by 17.1% in March, bringing the three month total down 12.9% to 674 thousand units. UK car registrations, on the other hand, actually rose by 5.9% in March, with the quarter total up by 7.4% to 605 thousand units. In France registrations showed a decrease of 16.2% in the month, with the year to date total down 14.6% to 434 thousand units. Italian registrations were just 5% down in the month, bringing the year to date total down 13% to 355 thousand units. In Spain registrations fell by 14% in March, bringing the quarter total down 11.5% to 181 thousand units.

In the former USSR, Russia showed a decrease in steel production of 2.8% in the month and 4.8% in the quarter to 17.2 million tonnes. In the Ukraine production fell by 2.9% in March, but was just 0.4% up in the quarter to 8.4 million tonnes. Production in Kazakhstan fell by 32% in the quarter to 673 thousand tonnes while in Belarus production was down 6% to 606 thousand tonnes.

Crude steel production in the USA fell by 8.4% in March to 7.3 million tonnes, bringing the first quarter total down 7.6% to 21.5 million tonnes. Mexican production, however, rose by 1.3% in the month, with the three months total 3% higher at nearly 4.6 million tonnes. Canadian steel production was only 0.7% down in March, but 4.7% lower in the year to date at 3.4 million tonnes.

South American production was mostly down with Brazil showing a 7.6% fall in March with the year to date total down 4.4% to 8.3 million tonnes. In Argentina production decreased by 5.9% in the month bringing the three months total to 1.1 million tonnes, a drop of 17.4% on the first quarter of 2012. Venezuelan steel production, however, fell by nearly 22% in March, resulting in a 6.5% drop in the three months to 558 thousand tonnes. In Chile, on the other hand, March production was up by 3.2% with a 2.8% rise in the quarter to 443 thousand tonnes.

In Africa, the South African monthly total was down by 12.5%, and the total for the quarter fell by 11.3% to 1.65 million tonnes. The Egyptian March total was 11.3% down, but the three months total rose by 3.3% to 1.7 million tonnes. In the Middle East Iranian steel production rose by 4.5% in March, bringing the first quarter total down 2.8% to 3.5 million tonnes, while Saudi Arabian steel production increased by 1.5% in March, with the three months total up 0.7% to almost 1.4 million tonnes.

Of the five major Asian countries for which monthly crude steel production data are available three showed increased production in both March and the year to date. Chinese steel production increased by 6.6% in March to 66 million tonnes, while the three months total rose by 9.1% to 192 million tonnes, 49% of the world total in 2013. Japan's production rose by 1.3% in March, but the first quarter production was only 0.2% up to 26.6 million tonnes. Indian steel production in March was 6.5% higher, with the three months total increasing by 2.9% to 19.8 million tonnes. Production in South Korea,

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however, fell by 7% in March, bringing the year to date total down by 5.4% to 16.4 million tonnes. Taiwanese production was 4.6% lower in the month, and the first quarter total was 5.1 million tonnes, down by 3.1% on January to March 2012.

Imports of steel by Thailand in the first 2 months of 2013 rose by 38% to 2.9 million tonnes compared to the same period in 2012. Flat products accounted for over half of the steel imported in 2013 with hot rolled coil up by 57% to 956 thousand tonnes and zinc coated sheet and strip up by 68% to 363 thousand tonnes. Imports of semis rose by 18% to 684 thousand tonnes.

Other Asian countries accounted for 76% of Thailand imports in 2013 with Japan and China the largest suppliers. However, Thailand imported 331 thousand tonnes of slabs from the UK in 2013.

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