

WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, June 2010



Production of crude steel for the 66 countries reporting to the World Steel Association in April was estimated to be 121.7 million tonnes, an increase of 36% over April 2009. The total of the 4 months to date was 467.8 million tonnes, 32% above the January to April period in 2009.

Excluding China, which accounted for just under 46% of world production in the first four months of 2010, the increase in April was 44%, with the four months total up by 38%.

In the European Union 27, crude steel production was up by 64% in April at 15.4 million tonnes compared to April 2009, and up by 44% in the 4 months to date to 58 million tonnes. All the EU countries showed a rise in production in April, with only Greece showing a drop in the year to date. Monthly production in Germany more than doubled in April, and rose by 62% in the January to April period to 14.8 million tonnes. Italian crude steel production increased by 58% in April, and by 37% in the year to date to 8.8 million tonnes. Steel production in France jumped by 76% in the month, and by 38% in the four months to date to 5.2 million tonnes. Spanish production was up 36% in April, while the year to date rose by 37% to 5.9 million tonnes. In the UK, steel production increased by 34% in April, bringing the 4 months total up 25% to 3.5 million tonnes. Greece's monthly production rose by 47%, although the year to date total was down 15% on 2009.

While German steel production almost doubled in March and more than doubled in April, steel exports in March rose by 49% to 2.4 million tonnes, its highest monthly total since September 2008. Exports of zinc coated steel and wire rod showed significant increases in April and were Germany's largest exports ahead of hot rolled wide coil. Germany's largest market in April was the European Union which accounted for 77% of total exports; the USA and Iran were the next largest markets.

In the rest of Europe Turkish production increased by 21.5% in April and by 11% in the four months to 8.5 million tonnes. The four months total for Serbia doubled to 416 thousand tonnes with the Swiss total up 47% to 420 thousand tonnes.

Turkish steel exports were 1.6 million tonnes in March 2010, almost double the January total. However, this was still 7.7% lower than the March 2009 total. Deformed reinforcing bars were the largest export in March at 618 thousand tonnes, although this was below most months in 2009. The second largest export in March was semis (mostly billets), which at 422 thousand tonnes was the largest monthly total since May 2004. 74% of the March total went to Middle East and North African countries, with a further 18% going to Bangladesh.

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New car registrations in Europe fell by 6% in April compared to the previous April, according to ACEA, the European Car Manufacturers Association, while the four months total showed an increase of 6.7% to 4.7 million cars. The fall in April is attributed to the ending of Government support through scrappage schemes coupled with difficult economic conditions. Registrations in Germany, the largest market, fell by 31.7% in April, with a 25% drop in the year to date total; the German scrappage scheme was one of the most productive, hence the large drop. In Italy, the second largest market, registrations fell by 15.7% in April, although the four months total rose by 13.4% at 827 thousand cars. French registrations, however, showed a slight increase in April, with the year to date total up 13% to 786 thousand. In the UK the monthly total increased by 11.5%, and the four months total rose by 24% to 760 thousand cars. The Spanish four month total, however, jumped by 43% to 380 thousand cars.

Crude steel production in the CIS countries rose by 28% in April, with Russian production up 29% and the Ukraine total up 39%. This brought the year to date for the CIS up 21.6% with Russia's four month total up 24% to 21.4 million tonnes. Ukrainian steel production rose by 23% in the year to date to 11 million tonnes. In Kazakhstan, however, steel production fell by 1.7% in the four months to 1.2 million tonnes.

On the North American continent US steel production jumped by 79% in April and by 67% in the year to date, bringing the year to date total to 26.4 million tonnes. Canadian steel production increased by 83% in April, while the four months total was up 46% to 4.3 million tonnes. Mexican steel production was up one third in both April and the year to date, bringing the total to 5.6 million tonnes.

Crude steel production in South America rose by 37.6% with Brazilian production up 57% in April and 59% in the year to date to 10.7 million tonnes. Steel production in Argentina increased by 53% in April, while the four months total was up 47% to 1.6 million tonnes. Venezuelan production, however, fell by 34% in April, with the year to date total down 55% at 739 thousand tonnes.

In Africa and the Middle East most countries showed an increase in steel production. Iran's production rose by 6% in April, although the year to date total was flat at 3.9 million tonnes. South African steel production increased by 15% in April, while the four months total was up by 26% to 2.75 million tonnes. Egyptian production rose by 11% in the year to date to 2 million tonnes, while Saudi Arabian steel production was 31% up in the four months to 1.8 million tonnes.

Turning to the Far East, China's steel production increased by 27% in April, bringing the four months total up 25% to 213.9 million tonnes. Japanese crude steel production jumped by 57% in April, while the January to April total rose by 52% to 35.5 million tonnes. South Korean production was up 23% in April with the year to date total at 18.0 million tonnes, 27.5% up on the same period in 2009. In India, however, production only rose by 1.8% in April, bringing the four months total to 21.6 million tonnes, 10% higher than in 2009. Crude steel production in Taiwan was estimated to have more than doubled in April, making the year to date total 153% higher at 11.3 million tonnes.

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Chinese exports of steel in March reached their second highest monthly total since October 2008 at 3.26 million tonnes. There were particularly large rises in exports of hot rolled wide strip to 769 thousand tonnes, and also hot rolled bars at 229 thousand tonnes. China's largest market in March was South Korea which accounted for 28% of total Chinese exports. India was the second largest at 10%.

Japanese steel exports reached their highest monthly total ever at 4.1 million tonnes. As with China, Japan's largest market in March was South Korea which took 1.1 million tonnes (27% of the total), followed by Thailand and Taiwan, both taking 422 thousand tonnes. 84% of Japan's March exports went to other Asian countries.

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