

WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, June 2015



Production of crude steel for the 65 countries reporting to the World Steel Association in April was estimated to be 135.4 million tonnes, a decrease of just 1.7% over April 2014. The total of the 4 months to date was 536 million tonnes, 1.7% below the January to April total in 2014. Excluding China, which accounted for 50% of world production in the first four months of 2015, steel production fell by 2.8% in April and by 2.2% in the four months.

In the European Union 28, crude steel production increased by 0.3% in April to 14.4 million tonnes compared to April 2014, but fell by 0.3% in the year to date to 58.1 million tonnes. Monthly production in Germany declined by 1.9% in April and by 2% in the January to April period to 14.7 million tonnes. Italian crude steel production decreased by 8.5% in April and by 9.6% in the year to date to 7.8 million tonnes. Steel production in France fell by 9% in the month, and by 3.6% in the four months to date to 5.3 million tonnes. Spanish production, on the other hand, rose by 6.4% in April, and the year to date total was up 2.9% to 5 million tonnes. In the UK, steel production was flat in April, while the 4 months total was down by 1.9% at 4.1 million tonnes. The Polish year to date total, however, was 14.8% higher at 3.2 million tonnes.

In the rest of Europe Turkish production increased by 3.9% in April, but fell by 6.5% in the four months to 10.4 million tonnes. Serbian steel production was 46% higher in the year to date at 314 thousand tonnes. The four months total for Norway was 205 thousand tonnes, 4.9% up on the previous year's total, while in Bosnia steel production was 2.5% higher in the year to date at 282 thousand tonnes.

New car registrations in Europe rose by 6.9% in April compared to the previous April, according to ACEA, the European Car Manufacturers Association, while the four months total showed an increase of 8.1% to 4.8 million cars. German registrations rose by 6.3% in April and by 6.4% in the year to date to over one million cars. UK registrations increased by 5.1% in April, while the year to date total was 6.4% up at 920 thousand. French registrations rose by 2.3% in April and by 5.6% in the year to date to 648 thousand cars. Italian registrations, however, jumped by 24.2% in April and by 16.2% in the four months to 578 thousand cars. The Spanish automotive market increased by 3.2% in the month, and by 24% in the January to April period to 350 thousand cars. These 5 countries accounted for 73% of the European market.

Crude steel production in the CIS countries fell by 4.7% in April, although Russian production rose by 3.2%. Ukrainian steel production, however, fell by 25%. This brought the year to date total for the CIS down by 4.9% with Russia's four month total up 5.2% at 24.3 million tonnes. Ukrainian steel production dropped by 30% in the year to date to 7.1 million tonnes. In Kazakhstan steel production was flat in the four months at 1.1 million tonnes.

On the North American continent US steel production fell by 9.8% in April and by 8.5% in the year to date to 26.3 million tonnes. Mexican steel production decreased by 2.6% in April, while the four months total decreased by 5% to 6.2 million tonnes. Canadian steel production showed a 2.7% increase in April, but was 0.3% down in the year to date, bringing the total to 4.1 million tonnes.

Crude steel production in South America was almost flat in April although Brazilian production rose by 4.4%. The year to date South American total was just 0.2% up at 14.8 million tonnes, of which Brazil was 11.3 million tonnes, an increase of 1.6% on 2014. Steel production in Argentina, however, fell by 21% in April, while the four months total declined by 9.1% to 1.6 million tonnes. Venezuelan production, on the other hand, rose by 8.1% in April, bringing the year to date total up 12.2% to 608 thousand tonnes. The Peruvian four month total was 3.6% higher at 378 thousand tonnes; however, Chile and Colombia both showed a drop in their four month total of 8.9% and 7.5% respectively to 356 thousand tonnes each.

In Africa and the Middle East Iran's production fell by 12.4% in April, while the year to date total was up by 3.4% to 5.4 million tonnes. South African steel production, however, decreased by 17.2% in April and was 11.5% down in the four months to 2.1 million tonnes. Egyptian production fell by 0.8% in April but was 7.7% up in the year to date to 2.4 million tonnes. Saudi Arabian steel production increased by 4.5% in April but was 2.4% down in the four months to 2 million tonnes. The Qatar year to date total decreased by 11.2% to 832 thousand tonnes.

Turning to the Far East, China's steel production fell by 0.7% in April, bringing the four months total down 1.3% to 270 million tonnes. Japanese crude steel production fell in April by 6.1%, while the January to April total decreased by 3.7% to 35.1 million tonnes. South Korean production declined by 6.6% in April with the year to date total down 5.5% to 22.7 million tonnes. In India production actually rose by 2.1% in April, bringing the four months total to 30 million tonnes, an increase of 6.7% over 2014. Crude steel production in Taiwan increased by 9.2% in April, and by 7.9% in the year to date to nearly 7.9 million tonnes.

Despite Chinese production falling in April, their exports increased by 11% compared to the previous month and by 13.6% compared to April 2014. April exports rose to just short of 8.5 million tonnes and while this was significantly below the 10 million tonnes in December and January, if the upward trend continues it will pose a threat to the global industry as they try to increase their share of various markets.

Other Asian countries still account for the majority of Chinese exports at almost 5 million tonnes in April, 58% of the total, while exports to North and South America were 1.2 million tonnes, some 14.3% of the total. However, exports to the European Union increased to nearly 700 thousand tonnes, 8.2% of the total, with a large increase to Italy. Outside of Asian countries Italy was the largest single market for Chinese exports in April.

Indian steel imports in the first two months of 2015 were almost double the equivalent 2014 total at just over 2 million tonnes. Flat products accounted for 70% the total imported in 2015, the bulk of which was hot rolled coil, plate and CR. 82% of India's imports came from other Asian countries, particularly China, South Korea and Japan.

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