WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, March 2013

Total crude steel production for the 62 countries reporting to the World Steel Association in January 2013 was estimated to be 125 million tonnes, which was an increase of just 0.8% on January 2012. If China is excluded, the remaining 61 countries showed a 2.4% decrease in crude steel production.

In the European Union crude steel production for the 27 in January fell by 5% on January 2012 to 13.5 million tonnes. In Germany, however, steel production rose by 5.4% to 3.5 million tonnes, while Italian production decreased by almost 20% to 1.8 million tonnes. French steel production fell by 1.3% to 1.4 million tonnes, while Spanish steel production was down by 2.5% to 1.1 million tonnes. In the UK, on the other hand, production increased by 23.5% to 828 thousand tonnes.

Steel exports by the 27 European Union countries outside the EU have shown a gradually rising trend from about 3 million tonnes in the first half of 2010 to about 3.5 million tonnes in the last half of 2012. Imports, on the other hand, have been much more variable averaging just under 2.5 million tonnes in 2010 peaking to 3.9 million tonnes in May 2011 and then dropping to 1.7 million tonnes in December 2011 before rising to 3 million tonnes and then falling again during 2012. Trade within the European Union showed an almost identical trend between exports and imports with exports averaging 8.7 million tonnes over the three year period and imports averaging 8.4 million tonnes.

Germany is the largest importer of steel in the European Union, but in 2012 its imports dropped by 15.4% to 22.9 million tonnes, although this was just above the 2010 total. 87% of Germany's imports in 2012 came from other EU countries, notably Italy, Belgium and France.

Outside of the European Union, steel production in Turkey decreased by 8.8% to 2.9 million tonnes, while Bosnian production rose by one third to 61 thousand tonnes. Norwegian steel production fell by 4% to 60 thousand tonnes. Turkish exports of steel rose by 10% in 2012 to 18.7 million tonnes, while their imports increased by 11.6% to 11.5 million tonnes. There was a sharp rise of 55% in the imports of semis in 2012 to 3.4 million tonnes, particularly in slabs, although the majority of semis imported were billets.

Registrations of new cars in Europe showed a decrease of 8.5% in January 2013 to a total of 918 thousand. German registrations showed a fall of 8.6% to 192 thousand units, while French registrations dropped by 15% to 125 thousand units. In the United Kingdom, however, registrations actually rose by 11.5% to 144 thousand units, while in Italy they dropped by 17.6% to less than 114 thousand units. Belgian registrations rose by 13.3% to over 50 thousand units, while Spanish registrations decreased by 9.6% to just under 50 thousand units. Dutch registrations dropped by 31% to 48 thousand units.

In Russia crude steel production was down by 5.7% compared to January 2012 at 5.7 million tonnes, while Ukrainian production fell by 4.4% to 2.7 million tonnes. Steel production in Kazakhstan fell by almost one half to 170 thousand tonnes. Russian steel exports rose by 8% in 2012 to 26.7 million tonnes over half of which was semis, which rose by 18%. Russia's largest market was the EU27 taking 11 million tonnes (41%) followed by Asia at 5.6 million tonnes (21%). Exports to the Middle East fell to 2.5 million tonnes (9.4%).

In North America January crude steel production decreased by 3%, with US production down by 5.8% to 7.3 million tonnes. Canadian steel production showed a slight rise of 1% to 1.2 million tonnes, while Mexican production rose by 5.6% to 1.55 million tonnes. US imports of steel rose by 16.9% in 2012 to 31.5 million tonnes following a 19.4% rise in 2011. In fact the 2012 total was the highest since the 2006 peak of 42 million tonnes. Nearly 7 million tonnes of the 31.5 million in 2012 were semis with a further 5 million tonnes of welded tubes. Although Canada supplied 17% of US imports in 2012, some 10 million tonnes, or 31.5%, came from Asian countries, particularly South Korea, Japan and China. Brazil accounted for 11.5% of total imports in 2012 with Mexico a further 8% and Russia 7%.

South American crude steel production fell by 3.2% in January, with Brazilian production down by 6.1% to 2.6 million tonnes. Argentinian steel production dropped by 19% to 321 thousand tonnes, while Venezuelan production jumped by 47% to 250 thousand tonnes.

In South Africa steel production was estimated to be 570 thousand tonnes in January, 4.5% below the previous January. However, in Egypt, production increased by 15% on January 2012 to 590 thousand tonnes. In the Middle East Iran's steel production was down 10% to 1.1 million tonnes while Saudi Arabia only showed a slight decline to 463 thousand tonnes.

Asian crude steel production for the five major countries in January was up by 4% with only South Korea showing a drop. China's increase was 4.6% to 59 million tonnes, while Japanese steel production rose by 2.7% to 8.9 million tonnes. Indian steel production increased by 3.8% to 6.6 million tonnes, and Taiwanese production was up by 5.4% to 1.8 million tonnes. South Korea, on the other hand, showed a slight drop in steel production to 5.75 million tonnes.

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