

WORLD STEEL REVIEW

Iron & Steel Statistics Bureau, April 2015



Total crude steel production for the 65 countries reporting to the World Steel Association in February 2015 was estimated to be 128 million tonnes, an increase of 0.6% on February 2014. The total for the two months to date in 2015, however, was 1.3% down on the same period in 2014 at 261 million tonnes. Excluding China, global crude steel production decreased by 2.2% in February and by 1.1% in the two months. Europe, the CIS, North America and Africa all showed a decline in steel production in both the month and year to date.

In the European Union, crude steel production by the 28 fell by 1.8% in February, and by 2% to 27.9 million tonnes in the two months to date compared to the same period last year. German crude steel production was down 1.6% in February, and by 0.6% in the year to date to 7.2 million tonnes. Production in Italy decreased by 9.7% in February, while the two months total fell by 10.5% to 3.8 million tonnes. French monthly production, however, increased by 3.5%, although the year to date total was down by 4.2% to 2.6 million tonnes. In Spain steel production decreased by 4.4% in February, but was up by 3.4% in the two months to 2.4 million tonnes; while in the United Kingdom steel production fell by 4.8% in February, bringing the year to date total down 3% to 2.0 million tonnes. Poland's year to date total was down 18.3% to 1.1 million tonnes, while the Austrian total was up 2.2% at 1.3 million tonnes.

Crude steel production in Turkey in February was 12.2% down at 2.4 million tonnes with the year to date total down 11.3% at 5 million tonnes. Bosnian steel production, on the other hand, rose by 11.8% in the year to date to 155 thousand tonnes. Serbian steel production jumped by 34.3% in the year to date to 139 thousand tonnes.

ACEA, the European car manufacturers association, reported that car registrations in Europe rose by 7% in February, and the year to date total increased by 6.6%, to almost 2 million cars. German registrations were up 6.6% in February and 4.6% in the two months at 435 thousand cars, while French registrations rose by 4.5% in the month and by 5.3% in the two months to 281 thousand cars. The Italian February total, however, rose by 13.2% and the year to date was up by 12.3% to 267 thousand cars, while in the UK the February total increased by 12% and the two months total was up by 8.3% to 242 thousand cars. The Spanish two months total was 26.7% up at 155 thousand cars, while the Belgian total decreased by 4% to 92 thousand cars. These six countries accounted for 74% of total registrations in Europe.

In the CIS crude steel production decreased by 6% in February, while the year to date total was down 4% at 16.4 million tonnes. Russia's monthly total rose by 5.6%, while the two months were 6.6% up at 12 million tonnes. Ukrainian steel production, however, fell by 33% in February, bringing the year to date total to 3.5 million tonnes, a decrease of 29%. In Kazakhstan the two month crude steel production total fell by 14.9% to 464 thousand tonnes, while Belarus steel production rose by 29% to 424 thousand tonnes.

Turning to North America, US crude steel production fell by 7.9% in February, and by 4.1% in the year to date to 13.5 million tonnes. Mexican steel production also fell by 8.1% in the month, and by 4.9% in the two months to date to 3.1 million tonnes. Canadian production, on the other hand, rose by 5.6% in February, and by 7.2% in the year to date to 2.2 million tonnes.

US imports of steel in the first two months of the year were 25% higher than in 2014 at over 7.5 million tonnes, although February 2015 was 15.5% down on January at just under 3.5 million tonnes. Imports of HR wide strip were down by 31% compared to January, while welded tube imports fell by 47%. However, imports of semis rose very slightly to 724 thousand tonnes, 21% of total imports. Imports of galvanised sheet and strip rose by 16.9%.

In South America, there was a 2.3% increase in Brazilian crude steel production in February, with the year to date total up 5.1% at 5.6 million tonnes. Argentinian production, however, was 1% down in the month and 1.9% down in the two months to 763 thousand tonnes. Venezuelan steel production, on the other hand, jumped by 19.3% in the month and by 8.4% in the year to date to 304 thousand tonnes. Production in Chile was down 2.6% in the two months to 180 thousand tonnes, while the Colombian total increased by 7.9% to 167 thousand tonnes. Peruvian steel production remained roughly flat in the year to date at 178 thousand tonnes.

South African crude steel production in February decreased by 11.8%, while the year to date total was down by 10.7% to 1.05 million tonnes. Egyptian steel production, however, increased by 5.8% in February and by 8.7% in the two months to nearly 1.2 million tonnes. Production in Iran rose by 11.8% in February, and by 15.6% in the year to date to 2.8 million tonnes, while in Saudi Arabia steel production was 4.2% up in February and 3.4% up in the two months to nearly 1.1 million tonnes.

Crude steel production in the Far East varied in the 5 major countries. Chinese production increased by 3.4% in February, but was down by 1.5% in the two months to 131 million tonnes. Japanese production was 0.2% down in February and 2.2% down in the year to date to 17.5 million tonnes. However, Indian steel production rose by 5.6% in February, and by 7.2% in the year to date to 14.6 million tonnes. South Korean steel production decreased by 4.4% in the month, bringing the year to date total down 3.6% to 11 million tonnes. Taiwanese production rose by 2.2% in February and by 6.3% in the two months to nearly 3.8 million tonnes.

Chinese steel exports dropped to 7.7 million tonnes in February 2015, a fall of 25% compared to the peak month of January. However, this was still 62% higher than February 2014. Imports of steel were down 27% to 890 thousand tonnes compared to January. Exports to most regions are down in February; exports to other Asian countries were down by 16.7% to 4.7 million tonnes, exports to the middle east were down by 33% and exports to the European Union were down by 38%. The largest single export market was still South Korea followed by Vietnam and Indonesia.

China is still by far the largest exporter of stainless steel and in 2014 exported 3.8 million tonnes of the 20 million tonnes globally exported. Belgium, South Korea, Taiwan and Italy were the next largest exporting countries from 1.8 to 1.3 million tonnes in 2014. Of the 20 million tonnes exported in 2014, 8.2 million tonnes was CR plate, sheet and strip and 4.7 million tonnes was HR strip in coil. Tubes and fittings accounted for a further 2 million tonnes.

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