

External merchandise trade statistics for May 2023

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (June 27) the external merchandise trade statistics for May 2023. In May 2023, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 15.6% and 16.7% respectively.

In May 2023, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 15.6% over a year earlier to \$327.6 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 13.0% in April 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 16.7% over a year earlier to \$354.0 billion in May 2023, after a year-on-year decrease of 11.9% in April 2023. A visible trade deficit of \$26.4 billion, equivalent to 7.5% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in May 2023.

For the first five months of 2023 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 16.3% over the same period in 2022. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 13.4%. A visible trade deficit of \$175.0 billion, equivalent to 9.8% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first five months of 2023.

Comparing the three-month period ending May 2023 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.3%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 2.6%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing May 2023 with May 2022, total exports to Asia as a whole dropped by 18.2%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Malaysia (-38.4%), India (-30.7%), the Philippines (-29.6%), Japan (-26.4%), Taiwan (-24.7%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-17.5%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations in other regions, in particular Germany (-32.9%) and the USA (-17.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-46.4%), Singapore (-34.8%), Vietnam (-29.1%), Malaysia (-28.5%), Thailand (-26.3%) and the Mainland (-10.3%).

For the first five months of 2023 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Japan (-25.3%), Singapore (-23.0%), the Mainland (-20.4%), Taiwan (-20.4%) and India (-19.3%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in

the value of total exports to the United Arab Emirates (+10.4%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-40.1%), Singapore (-30.7%), Thailand (-22.6%), Vietnam (-20.2%), Taiwan (-19.2%) and the Mainland (-8.8%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing May 2023 with May 2022, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$35.5 billion or -19.0%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$14.6 billion or -33.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$41.0 billion or -21.0%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$12.9 billion or -35.1%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$5.5 billion or -12.6%).

For the first five months of 2023 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$189.9 billion or -20.2%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$60.4 billion or -28.1%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$29.6 billion or -13.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$187.2 billion or -19.7%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$53.9 billion or -30.1%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$30.0 billion or -13.2%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports fell further in May 2023 from a year earlier amid the weak external environment. Exports to all major markets fell by varying degrees.

Looking ahead, the weakness in the advanced economies will continue to pose challenges to Hong Kong's exports, though the faster growth of the Mainland economy should provide some offset. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for May 2023. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2020 to May 2023, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for May 2023 are shown in Table 4, whereas the values of imports of goods from 10 main suppliers are given in Table 5.

Tables 6 and 7 show the values of total exports and imports of 10 principal commodity divisions for May 2023.

All the merchandise trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the periods of comparison. A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external merchandise trade for May 2023 will be released in mid-July 2023.

The May 2023 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in May 2023 and will be available in early July 2023. Users can browse and download the report at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020005&scode=230).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4691).

[HKSAR search and rescue team awarded inaugural Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance \(with video\)](#)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government announced today (June 27) that the HKSAR search and rescue team was awarded the inaugural Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance.

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, said, "I announced the launch of the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance in the 2022 Policy Address to give recognition to meritorious and exemplary teams or individuals in the civil service on a regular basis, with a view to encouraging civil servants to constantly strive for excellence. It also aims to allow the public to have a better understanding of the Government's work and the excellence of the civil service."

In February this year, a strong earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck

Türkiye, resulting in serious casualties. The HKSAR Government immediately deployed the HKSAR search and rescue team to carry out search and rescue operations in quake-stricken areas in Türkiye. The 59-strong search and rescue team comprised members from the Security Bureau, the Fire Services Department (FSD), the Department of Health and the Immigration Department. The team, bringing along two search and rescue dogs and rescue equipment with a weight of about eight tonnes, went to the quake-stricken areas in Türkiye and rescued four people and found six bodies under debris after a search and rescue operation that lasted for 216 hours.

Mr Lee said, "The search and rescue team faced difficulties and dangers of different kinds on the ground, including threats of aftershocks, safety risks posed by collapsed structures, severely damaged roads and very cold weather. The team, however, did not let go of any opportunity to save lives. Team members risked their own lives to accomplish an extremely challenging mission. They carried out the search and rescue work with a strong passion for life and great professionalism, and the operation demonstrated good cross-departmental teamwork. The team has truly lived up to the very spirit meant to be commended by the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance. I believe that the Hong Kong community at large would join me in paying tribute to the search and rescue team members."

The Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, extended heartfelt congratulations to the HKSAR search and rescue team for being awarded the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance. She said, "The 59-strong team worked in unity to overcome all the difficulties in the quake-stricken areas in Türkiye and rescued four people. They have demonstrated the glory of humanity and the spirit of commitment that civil servants should uphold. The work of the team has told the world an inspiring and touching story of Hong Kong civil servants. Their selfless devotion is a source of pride for Hong Kong people. The Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance not only recognises outstanding teams and individuals, but also encourages all colleagues in the civil service to take the awardees as role models and make ongoing efforts to strive for excellence."

Leading the search and rescue team, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of the FSD, Mr Yiu Men-yeung, was very pleased that the team was awarded the first Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance. Mr Yiu expressed gratitude to the HKSAR Government for affirming the team's efforts in the rescue operation in the stricken areas in Türkiye, as well as the China search and rescue team for all the assistance provided. He said, "I am most grateful to all team members for their committed work, as well as colleagues providing us with support in Hong Kong. While the operation is now completed, we will continue to be dedicated to our duties in our different positions, and give our best to serve the country, the HKSAR Government and the Hong Kong people."

The nomination exercise for the inaugural Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance commenced in March this year. The Civil Service Bureau invited bureaux to nominate outstanding teams or colleagues for the honour. The response was overwhelming and more than 20 nominations were received.

Many nominations involved cross-bureaux or cross-departmental collaboration, fully showcasing the teamwork of the civil service.

The selection process is meticulous. After being made by the respective Directors of Bureaux, the nominations were considered by a selection committee chaired by the Secretary for the Civil Service and with members comprising two Permanent Secretaries, a representative from the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Information Services. The committee carefully considered each nomination and put forward its recommendations to the Chief Executive. After considering the committee's recommendations, the Chief Executive made his decision on which teams or individuals should be awarded.

A video featuring interview remarks by the Chief Executive and introduction to the awarded team and its challenging mission will be uploaded to the Chief Executive's Facebook page, Instagram and Weibo. Members of the public are welcome to view the video.

The award presentation ceremony for the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance will be held in mid-July. The awarded team will be presented with an award certificate at the ceremony, and each of its members will be presented with a commendation certificate signed by the Chief Executive. Details of the ceremony will be separately announced.

FEHD strives to crack down on sale of chilled or frozen meat disguised as fresh meat (with photo)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has all along been committed to combating the sale of chilled or frozen meat disguised as fresh meat, and today (June 27) raided a licensed fresh provision shop (FPS) in Sha Tin District suspected of selling frozen meat as fresh meat.

During the operation, FEHD officers raided a licensed FPS in Kwong Yuen Market, Sha Tin, and marked and sealed about 175 kilograms of fresh and suspected frozen beef for further investigation. A beef sample was collected for testing for preservatives, and prosecution will be commenced if sufficient evidence is collected. The licensee of the FPS is suspected of breaching the licensing condition for the display and sale of frozen meat as fresh meat, and the FEHD is proceeding with the cancellation of the FPS's licence.

FEHD officers also initiated a prosecution against the operator of the FPS for dirtiness at the premises, while a verbal warning was also given for

non-compliance with the relevant licensing condition for failing to provide delivery notes for inspection.

An FEHD spokesman said, "Selling of chilled or frozen meat disguised as fresh meat breaches the licensing condition and causes food safety problems. Also, the operation of these profiteers is unfair to other shops that comply with the requirements."

The spokesman added, "Anyone selling chilled meat or frozen meat without permission commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment on conviction. The department will continue to conduct regular inspections at licensed FPSs and market meat stalls, and will actively handle the complaints received. In detecting any irregularities, the FEHD will carry out immediate investigations and take appropriate enforcement actions. In addition, the FEHD also proactively investigates suspected violations from time to time, and conducts surprise inspections and enforcement actions as necessary. If there is sufficient evidence, prosecutions will be initiated and follow-up action will be taken against a breach of licensing conditions or tenancy agreements. The licences of FPSs breaching their licensing conditions may be cancelled, while the tenancies of market meat stalls breaching their tenancy agreements may be terminated."

â€‹The spokesman stressed that the FEHD is very concerned about the situation, and has been committed to combating the sale of chilled or frozen meat disguised as fresh meat by taking stringent enforcement actions against the violations.



[Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo \(with video\)](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (June 27):

Reporter: Two questions. Firstly, because this is your first year in office, could you tell us, how would you rate in the past year your achievements and also inadequacies, if any, under your leadership? And can you share with us your goals for the coming year? And secondly, about the award. You just mentioned the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance. Could you share with us the criteria and the reason for the rescue team to have won this award? Thank you.

Chief Executive: It's almost one year since I assumed the Office of the Chief Executive. My experience and feeling about this year is that there are a lot of things that require us to do. The demand of the work is heavy. But the meaning of the work that I'm required to do is also most important. We have lost three years' time because of COVID, and also because of the 2019 violence and chaos. There are a lot of things we would have liked to do, but didn't do as we wished because of the two problems.

We have to really chase back the time, so the things that we want to do, of course, amount to really a lot. That will mean full commitment by myself and my team, and we will ensure that we will contribute our best – our efforts, our time and energy – to ensure that this is done properly.

All the decisions I make affect everybody in society, so it is a heavy burden, a heavy responsibility that I must discharge very carefully to ensure that decisions I make have taken into consideration all the factors. That is why I emphasise on the need to listen to different views, and I have been accepting views. At the end of the day, of course, I have to make decisions out of the different opinions, but I will take the overall interests of Hong Kong to make the decisions.

My second take on this one year's work is in deciding what to do and how we go forward. It is important that decision-makers are willing to make decisive decisions even if the decisions may not be pleasant to everyone. At the end of the day we need to make decisions, because indecision is the worst outcome. Despite the fact that there may be a lot of times when we roll out new measures and make new decisions, particularly in respect of issues that are controversial, there will be a high chance that we'll have to make decisions even if there are some sectors of the community who may not agree, but I think in almost all decisions by the Government, it will be very difficult to have a matter which receives 100 per cent unanimous decision or opinion. We have to make decisions after consulting, after listening to respective views and then make a decisive decision.

I think people are also very reasonable and pragmatic. When I meet people in districts, they are very realistic about the fact that some of the problems may not be solved immediately, or they know that even if there is a good intention of the Government trying to solve a particular problem, it will take a process and it will take time. People are being so reasonable. It is important that we explain more why we make a particular decision and explain why we have to consider this as a priority issue and also tell of the remedial measures or the mitigating measures that we are introducing, so that the people know that for the overall interests of Hong Kong, the Government has come to this decision. What does it mean to me? It means that

communication and attitude are important. This is the belief that I have and I will continue to do my governance of Hong Kong under that belief.

There are things that I think meet my expectation more. There are things we need to work harder, of course. The things that I think we have matched the expectation higher is in regard to the attraction of talents. We have set a target for attracting 35 000 talents in each year, but in five months we have approved already 49 000 such applications. It's likely that we will be able to meet the target quite a lot.

Of course, I'm glad that the resumption of normal travel with the Mainland and also our connection with the world have brought back the vibrancy, happiness, and economic impetus to Hong Kong. As people saw in the past months, tourism has come back; we have already hit the targets of achieving what we want in respect of tourism. Of course we are somewhat constrained by our capacity, but the capacity is catching up quickly. The 10 million-target of tourists visiting Hong Kong has already been reached in five months. We are positive that growth will continue in respect of tourism and consumption. And they will be the driving engines for growth in the coming year.

We are optimistic that this year it will be a positive growth between 3.5 and 5.5 per cent, which will reverse the contraction of last year. Of course, the economic situation around the world is not bright, and also geopolitical complexity is another challenge, but we have the national development strategies to support our growth, the Greater Bay Area development and also Belt and Road opportunities.

I'm optimistic that consumption and tourism will help boosting our economic performance. In fact, the median income of families has already shown a 2.1 per cent increase in the first quarter. I hope the trend will continue, and I think the trend will continue in the direction of positive upward trend.

In the coming years, of course, the challenges remain on, first of all, land and housing provision. This has been the most challenging task for the Government over the years. We'll have to continue working hard. For the targets I've set in my Policy Address, some are short-term, but most of them are long-term and relate to a five-year period. We have set various targets, and we are progressing, I think, in general positively in respect of all the things that we have promised to do.

Also, I think we need to do more to open up opportunities for Hong Kong's economic development, so we have to work hard to tell the world of Hong Kong's opportunities. I will be making visits overseas together with Hong Kong delegations. These are things that we'll be working hard. Of course, developing local talents, developing their skills so that the local workforce will be more equipped and more trained, will be another target of the Government in the coming period of time.

In regard to the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance, in my statement I've already described the importance and the purpose of the

award is to really encourage government teams or civil servants to do their best, so as to achieve a level of excellence. There will always be the better; there will never be the best, but it is important they will act in accordance with a belief of continuous improvement and with the goal of always striving for excellence. I will use the awardees as examples to tell the civil service what are the things I want them to do. It is through awarding the actual team whose work will tell the exemplary stories of what I would like to promote and I would like the civil service to subscribe to and work to. It is a level of excellence that I want them to take as their day-to-day culture and doctrine. The selection committee of course sets high standards, and these include a level which is beyond general standard. It means a high level of co-operation. It means an attitude for doing beyond what is just basically required. These are all standards that will be taken into consideration in looking at the cases, but the cases will be judged based on their own merits, and based on the circumstances at the time.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Hong Kong Housing Authority approves extension of rent concessions for eligible non-domestic tenants

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

To tie in with the Government's latest relief measures announced by the Financial Secretary in February 2023 to ease the operating pressures of businesses, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA)'s Commercial Properties Committee (CPC) today (June 27) approved to extend the rent concession for the HA's eligible non-domestic tenants/licensees and carpark users for the monthly parking of commercial vehicles for another six months from July 1 to December 31, 2023, but with the amount of concession reduced from 75 per cent to 50 per cent.

The CPC also approved that the HA's tenants/licensees may continue to apply to the HA for a 100 per cent rent concession for the period during which their operations at the premises concerned are required to be closed under anti-epidemic regulations and directions of the Government.

"The same coverage as endorsed by the CPC earlier will continue to apply during this round of extended rent concession period. The grant of rent concessions for supermarkets/superstores, convenience stores, personal stores and fresh/chilled/frozen food stores up to a maximum of 50 per cent will be subject to tenants' applications and production of proof of sales drops," a spokesman for the HA said.

"To assist small businesses, the said requirement is not applicable to shop premises let to individuals, and all shop stalls irrespective of whether they are let to companies or individuals. In other words, tenants/licensees of these premises will continue to enjoy the 50 per cent rent concession in the same way as other eligible HA non-domestic tenants/licensees," he said.

In view of the positive outlook of Hong Kong's economy on the recovery path to normalcy, members also endorsed to cease the transitional arrangement in dealing with the tenancy renewal of retail and factory tenancies starting from July 1, 2023. Instead, normal tenancy renewal arrangements will be resumed and monthly licences at existing rents will no longer be granted.

It is estimated that around 8 200 of the HA's non-domestic tenants/licensees, including about 2 700 retail tenants/licensees; 1 230 factory tenants/licensees; tenants/licensees of some 80 advertising signboards and some 40 tenancies of bus kiosks; and about 4 100 carpark users, will benefit from the extension of rent concessions.

The CPC has earlier approved multiple rounds of rent concessions for the HA's eligible retail, factory and non-domestic tenants, following the Government's measures to support enterprises and relieve people's financial burden.

The rent foregone for the 50 per cent rent concession for six months is estimated to be around \$496 million.

The maximum total rent foregone for rent concessions granted by the HA to its eligible non-domestic tenants/licensees for the 51-month period from October 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023, is estimated to be around \$5,220 million.