

# The Italian market for plastics and rubber machinery, equipment and moulds

## Brilliant full-year forecast

The Italian Plastics and Rubber Processing Machinery and Moulds Manufacturers Association (Amaplast) has issued its annual market analysis and forecast. The industry association sees a positive trend that continues unabated in the Italian import-export market for plastics and rubber processing machinery, equipment and moulds.

According to analyses of ISTAT foreign trade data for January–September 2017 by the Amaplast Study Center, imports increased by 12 % and exports by 16 % over the same period in 2016. The increase in the active balance of trade now exceeds EUR 1.7 billion, adding seventeen percentage points. Thanks mainly to the positive trend in exports – recording double-digit growth throughout the full nine months of the ISTAT data – Amaplast estimates that production at year end could reach a new all-time record of EUR 4.5 billion (the previous record was EUR 4.25 billion in 2007), registering at least five percentage points in growth over 2016. “The success of Italian manufacturers of plastics and rubber processing machinery who have dominated the world market for decades along with their German colleagues is the result of the technological innovation offered to their customers, providing original, optimal solutions for production, recovery, and recycling of plastic and rubber products within an ‘Industry 4.0’ regime,” states Amaplast president **Alessandro Grassi**. Sales abroad – absorbing some 70 % of national production in the sector – demonstrate good performance for most machinery types, with the sole exception of plants for mono/multifilament and machines for foamed products. As regards core machinery, above average export figures are registered for thermoforming machines (+51 %) and extruders (+19 %). Flexographic printers (+27%) and various categories of auxiliary equipment such as mills, mixers, etc. also show good performance. Mould exports (+18 %) continue to increase, a category that represents nearly a third of the total.

## Europe

The Old Continent's share has grown to nearly 61 %, with the European Union accounting for 50 % of the total. The strongly positive performance in Europe (+20 %) is according to Amaplast attributable to

- significantly increasing sales to Germany (+25 %), Spain (+11 %) and France (+15 %), the three historical markets for Italian manufacturers, and
- strong continued recovery in sales to Russia (+109 %), finally bringing the country back into the top ten of export destinations.

## The Americas

The trend in exports to the Americas is more than satisfying (+12 %), thanks to new impulse in the NAFTA markets – particularly the United States, while Mexico's performance has shrunk – and to the lasting vitality of the South American markets, where Brazil appears to have achieved a stable recovery and has taken the lead.

## Asia

Sales continue to diminish to the two principal markets in the Middle East: Iran (-5 %) and Saudi Arabia (-34 %). Unfortunately, the excellent trend in the United Arab Emirates and Israel is not sufficient to counterbalance this, resulting in an overall negative result (-5 %). Exports to the Far East record overall modest yet positive growth (+4 %), averaged out over significant variations recorded year after year. China and India, the main markets in the area, still show negative or very weak trends (-11 % and +1 %, respectively). On the other hand, the Thai, South Korean and Japanese markets are characterized by strongly increasing demand.

## Africa

Africa as a whole absorbs less than 3 % of Italian exports of plastic and rubber processing machinery although in January–September sales increased (+22 %) mainly in Mediterranean countries, with Algeria and Egypt leading. “While we recognize the excellent performance in exports,” continues Grassi, “we must

not overlook the positive trend in the domestic market, represented both by increases in imports and by stability in the order books of our manufacturers, which have resumed impetus, especially in recent weeks, thanks partly to the incentives provided by the National Plan Industry 4.0. Indeed, complementing the ISTAT data on foreign trade, the latest full-year forecast survey completed among Amaplast members in early December 2017 highlighted a positive trend both in revenues – growing for most interviewees in the second half of this year – and in orders, particularly in November. Overall, 55 % of those surveyed foresee improvement in their 2017 year-end results with respect to the previous year.

## Sector exhibition

Through its service company **Promaplast srl**, Amaplast organizes **Plast 2018** (Milan, 29 May – 01 June 2018). Amaplast says that this fair is the industry's most important event in Europe for 2018, based on numbers from the last edition (1,584 exhibitors from 57 countries and 50,087 visitors from 115 countries). Together with the other four concurring events which join The Innovation Alliance (**Ipack-Ima, Meat-Tech, Print4All, Intralogistica Italia**), Plast 2018 will cover the entire fairgrounds in Rho-Pero. The fairs – all accessible with a single admission ticket – will feature the technological excellence of various complementary industries in a logic of integrated supply chain: from plastics and rubber processing to industrial moulding, from manufacturing to packaging, from custom graphics for packaging and labels to goods handling and storage. Plast 2018 will also include three satellite fairs: **Rubber 2018** (for the rubber segment), **3D Plast** (3D printing and associated technologies), and **Plast-Mat** (innovative plastics).

[www.amaplast.org](http://www.amaplast.org)

[www.plastonline.org](http://www.plastonline.org)

The Italian market for plastics and rubber machinery, equipment and moulds (in million euros)

	2016	2017 (estimates)
Production	4,230	4,500
Exports	2,970	3,200
Imports	850	900
Domestic market	2,110	2,200
Trade balance	2,120	2,300