

## Exports down 5% in January but up 15% on annual basis

By Charlie Taylor

13 March 2015

Trade surplus down 10 per cent to €3.89bn from €4.3bn

Exports fell by 5 per cent or €443 million to €8.3 billion from December to January but were up 15 per cent on an annual basis, according to new figures published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

During the same period, imports declined by 1 per cent or €30 million, resulting in a 10 per cent or €413 million decline in the trade surplus to €3.89 billion. This compares with a €4.3 billion surplus in December.

On an annual basis, the value of exports rose by 15 per cent or €1 billion to €8 billion on the back of strong exports of medical and pharmaceutical products, which rose by 26 per cent or €425 million, and exports of organic chemicals, which increased by 18 per cent of €298 million.

The EU accounted for €4.1 billion or 52 per cent of all exports in January, while the US accounted for 24 per cent or €1.9 billion.

The value of imports rose by 5 per cent or €241 million to €4.7 billion from January 2014 to the same month this year. Imports of organic chemicals increased by 61 per cent or €179 million to €472 million, while car imports rose 32 per cent or €81 million to €338 million. Imports of petroleum and related materials decreased by 26 per cent over the year to €342 million.

The EU accounted for 58 per cent of the value of all imports in January, with 26 per cent coming from Great Britain. The US and China were the main non-EU sources of imports.

Alan McQuaid, chief economist at Merrion Capital said while the trade surplus declined from January to February it was still one of the highest positive balances recorded in the last couple of years.

He added that the weak euro will be beneficial to a huge exporting country such as Ireland, as will the close trading ties with both the US and UK.

“Although not as strong as 2014, we still see Irish exports of goods and services posting a high single-digit volume increase in 2015, which should help contribute to another 4 per cent plus GDP growth rate this year,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Irish Exporters Association (IEA) has partnered with a number of companies including AIB and PwC, to launch a new initiative for exporters.

The National Export Campaign (NEC) and National Export Hub (NEH) aims to increase the number of Irish businesses exporting for the first time, assist Irish businesses to enter new export markets and support Irish exporters to grow their exports in existing markets.

The NEH will also help companies to identify and connect with the appropriate supports acting as a signpost to the various government and private sector assistance available.

Eight breakfast seminars will be around the country this year, as part of the NEC, to increase awareness amongst SMEs around the benefits and challenges of exporting

Irish Exporters Association chief executive Simon McKeever said the SME export base has scope to grow significantly.

“Companies that increase their exports add to the Irish economy through direct and indirect job creation, influence the supply chain positively and drive increased spending both locally and nationally.”

<http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/exports-down-5-in-january-but-up-15-on-annual-basis-1.2138453>