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Japan

Solid Wood Products

Japan's Wood Furniture Imports - China Leads in 2000 2001

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Report Highlights:

Japanese wood furniture imports in 2000 grew 19.8% from previous year, the first increase in three years of stagnation, with China emerging as the top supplier accounting for 20% of total Japanese imports. Imported U.S. wood furniture, valued at about \$60 million, ranked 8th though it increased of 4% from 1999.

In the first positive direction in 3 years, Japanese furniture imports grew 17.2% in value to 329.1 billion Yen (approx. \$2.66 billion) in 2000. Wood furniture imports grew 19.8% to 164.7 billion Yen, accounting for 50% of the total import value. Imports from Asian countries grew 19%, from Europe 16.8%, from North America 9.7%, and from Oceania 0.6 %.

The most outstanding feature in 2000 was that China replaced Taiwan as Japan's top overseas supplier, accounting for almost 20% of Japan's furniture imports. Taiwan's competitive position as an exporter has diminished due to rising labor and production costs. On the other hand, China has aggressively pursued foreign capital and technology in furniture production supplemented with an abundant, cost-competitive labour force. Wood furniture comprised 54% of China's furniture exports to Japan, making the country Japan's top supplier of wood furniture as well.

Of the top 10 wood furniture exporters, 7 were Asian countries, taking market share from predominated European manufacturers.

Japanese imports of various furniture parts in 2000 also increased 12.9% from previous year, with wood furniture parts growing 7.7%. Many wood furniture parts imported consisted of wooden doors and window sashes for cabinets and shelves, ceiling boards for desks and tables, bed frames and flooring stock. China and Taiwan led the roster of top exporters.

The following is a historical summary of Japan's furniture import statistics and a report on top-10 exporters to Japan in 2000 by country and import value.

Japanese Furniture Imports By Year and Value		
Year	Value (Billion Yen)	% Change (Year-on-Year)
1990	178	+ 27.8 %
1991	188.6	+ 6.0 %
1992	181.3	- 3.9 %
1993	168.1	- 7.2 %
1994	207.8	+ 23.6 %
1995	230.3	+ 10.8 %
1996	297.6	+29.2 %
1997	329.1	+ 10.7 %
1998	294.9	- 17.6 %
1999	280.9	- 4.8 %
2000	329.1	+ 17.2 %

(Source: Ministry of Finance Customs Data)

Top-10 Furniture Exporters to Japan in 2000		
Country	Value (Million Yen)	% Change (00/99)
1) China	63897	+ 48.4 %
2) Taiwan	55096	+ 11.3 %
3) U.S.A.	41498	+10.8 %
4) Thailand	39059	+ 8.4 %
5) Malaysia	27081	+ 27.0 %
6) Indonesia	25407	- 2.6 %
7) Italy	17287	+ 22.2 %
8) Vietnam	10393	+ 22.5 %
9) Germany	7298	+ 17.0 %
10)Philippines	6849	+ 8.8 %
To-10 Wood Furniture Exporters to Japan in 2000		
1) China	34662	+ 55.2 %
2) Thailand	30065	+ 11.6 %
3) Malaysia	21781	+ 28.1 %
4) Taiwan	14873	+ 26.9 %
5) Indonesia	14657	+ 0.3 %
6) Italy	11730	+ 19.2 %
7) Vietnam	7774	+ 32.8 %
8) U.S.A.	6719	+ 3.5 %
9) R. of Korea	3728	- 5.8 %
10) Denmark	2628	- 2.7 %

(Source: Ministry of Finance Customs Data)

During the last decade, much of Japan's industrial manufacturing capacity has gone off-shore to Asian countries including electronics, automobiles, and engineered wood manufacturing, in search of greater cost saving. The furniture manufacturing sector has been no exception. As a result, much of U.S. hardwood exports, used primarily for furniture and interiors production in Japan, are sent to Japan's off-shore ports, used for furniture production in these neighbouring countries, and exported back to the Japanese market in the form of converted products or parts.

This off-shore production poses a challenge for U.S. hardwood exporters and shippers. Furniture trade flows are dictated by the principle of international comparative advantage. The U.S. hardwood industry must strengthen strategic marketing to deal with issues of selective customers and forming business partnerships.

End of report