

Italian machinery makers face slump

The Italian industry for machinery, equipment and molds for plastics and rubber closed 2025 with a 5% decrease in production, and with a value of €4.4 billion, according to the Amaplast Study Center, a trade association affiliated with Confindustria that brings together over 170 manufacturers.

This represents a slowdown with respect to the previous year (2024), where a limited deceleration was recorded. For comparison, the study reported that in 2024, Germany had already begun recording a significant slump in orders, sales and exports. Italian exports for the sector, which account for three quarters of production, also recorded a drop of 5%, coming in at just barely over €3.4 billion.

With respect to the weakness in sales abroad, Amaplast said imports of technology in 2025 recorded a surge of nearly 24% over 2024, confirming robust domestic demand. This is clearly due partially to the effects of the incentives implemented by the Industry 4.0 and 5.0 plans, in spite of difficulties in accessing them and delays in the enactment of the various associated implementation decrees. These issues are also critical in this first quarter of 2026 in the implementation of measures regarding the new “hyper-amortization” of investments in capital equipment through September 2028.

Given these dynamics, the balance of trade is significantly reduced: After the record of €2.65 billion reached in 2024, it has slipped back to €2.24 billion. The international context in 2025 was characterized principally by uncertainties caused by the introduction of U.S. tariffs which, beyond the “reciprocal” component, raise the tariffs on steel and aluminium components in certain types of machinery, and components and molds for plastics and rubber. The situation was worsened by the progressive devaluation of the dollar with respect to the euro. It deteriorated further with the outbreak of the war in the

Middle East, which has triggered an energy crisis that has already begun to have a strong negative impact on the European plastics and rubber processing industry by increasing the costs of natural gas, petroleum and raw materials, and generating uncertainties about the availability of materials.

The report says this situation is the source of significant concern among Italian manufacturers of plastics and rubber processing machinery, with a host of factors that threaten to compromise the propensity for investment in the domestic market and the European market; the latter historically the main destination for Italian exports, and challenges in store with the implementation of the new European Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR).

The report shows sales to Germany, which has always been Italy’s prime trade partner, have fallen for the second consecutive year. The German plastics and rubber industry recorded losses across the board in 2025 according to estimates by various trade associations: -4% by volume in polymer production; -2% for processed plastic products; -6% for rubber products; and -5% in revenues for machinery manufacturers.

Exports to processors in France, another major export destination in the EU, have also fallen off. Within the top ten destination markets, these negative trends have fortunately been compensated by an increase in sales to Spain, Poland and Romania.

As of last December, the above mentioned issues have not yet caused the feared collapse of Italian exports to the U.S., which has witnessed an increase of almost 9%. Sales to China have continued to increase at a steady pace; and those to India even more so, more than tripling in the past ten years. The growing incentives provided by the Make in India program have generated a strong acceleration of demand by local manufacturers, who require increasingly high quality techno-

logical systems. So this is a market with notable potentials, most of which have yet to be developed. The recently signed free trade agreement should facilitate this process.

On the other hand, sales to Turkey have plunged by one third, breaking a five-year robust growth trend; and those to Brazil performed even worse, -45%, although this is relative to the abnormally high peak in 2024, and actually represents a return to the average figures recorded in the previous period.

The Amaplast Study Center trade association is looking forward to the implementation of the EU-Mercosur treaty, which could inject new dynamism into trade with Brazil and South America generally.

Regarding product categories, exports overall have shown lackluster or diminishing performance for most machinery types, starting with extruders (falling from nearly €400 million to €350 million), blow molding machines (from €212 million to €198 million), flexography machines (from €181 million to 164 million) and molds (from €752 million to 721 million). Injection molding machines were the only ones to buck the trend, with sales rising from €194 million to 199 million.

In this complex situation, Amaplast member companies finished 2025 with a downturn in revenues on the order of 5 percentage points, while nevertheless succeeding in maintaining employment levels (+0.5%). Within this group, 54% of the companies closed the year with a drop in sales.

Amaplast Study Center’s report concludes that it has never been so difficult to venture forecasts for the coming months: There are too many unknowns that continue to arrive and overlap on the international level, aggravating the climate of uncertainty that companies are facing, with many historical destination markets characterized by greater difficulty of access.