

### **Italian stone industry: exports up 9.4% in the first half of 2022**

After ending 2021 with heavy growth in exports (+19.9% from the previous year and +1.3% from 2019, with full recovery of pre-pandemic levels), in the first half of this year the Italian stone industry again registered a hefty increase in foreign sales. According to official sector statistics processed by the Confindustria Marmomacchine Studies Center, in the first half of 2022 aggregate exports of stones and stone technologies Made in Italy – accounting for more than 70% of the stone/techno stone industry – there was a 9.4% upturn from the same period last year, with foreign sales reaching 1.565 million euros. In detail, there was a double-digit rise in exports of natural stones (+17.7%), while exports of machinery and complementary equipment backslid a bit (-3.9%).

In the first half of the year Italy's exports of marbles, travertines, granites and natural stones in general increased in value by 17.7% from the same period the previous year, rising to 1,036.3 million euros. Driving exports were finished and semi-finished products – those with the highest added value – whose foreign sales grew by 21.8% from the first half of 2021, reaching 845.6 million. Doing well, but to a lesser extent, were exports of raw stone (+2.5%), for worth of 190.7 million.

Where destination markets were concerned, China remained the top buyer of raw blocks from Italy, with imports worth 93.7 million (-7.6% from the first 6 months of 2021), accounting for about 50% of Italy's total raw stone exports, followed by India with 22.9 million (+85.3%). As for finished goods, the United States ranked first, with purchases worth 251.9 million and a record increase of 37.8%. There was robust growth on the other major markets, too: in Germany (+14.7%, 83.5 million), France (+27.9%, 62.6 million), Switzerland (+12.1%, 50.9 million), Saudi Arabia (+51.4%, 33.5 million), Austria (+12.4%, 23.6 million), the United Arab Emirates (+36.7%, 22.5 million), Australia (+19.7%, 17.7 million) and Canada (+13.3%, 17.2 million). The only exception was the United Kingdom, where imports from Italy lessened by 15.1% (28.5 million).

In regard to stone technologies, in the first half of 2022 Italy's exports of machines, installations, tool and other equipment to quarry and process natural stones reached worth of 529 million euros, 3.9% less than from January to July 2021. In fact, in 2021 Italian stone technology purveyors had seen an annual 18.5% increase in foreign sales, taking them back to pre-pandemic levels (+0.3% from 2019).

Heading the ranking of destination markets for stone technologies Made in Italy was again the United States, whose imports in the first 6 months of the year were up by 26.5% from the same period in 2021, reaching 92.1 million euros. There were also good increases in exports to France (+48.9%, second technology buyer with 32.3 in purchases), Germany (+13.2%, fourth with 30.6 million), India (+91%, fifth with 26.9 million), Brazil (+99%, seventh with 24.9 million), Canada (+23.3%, eighth with 23.7 million) and Turkey (+60%, tenth with 17.5 million). There were fewer sales to Spain (-6.8% but it was still in third place with 32.3 million) and Poland (-6.4%, sixth with 26.8 million) while the largest decrease in sales of machinery and equipment was to the United Kingdom (-35.4%, ninth with 20.8 million).

On the general level we remind readers that the Italian stone industry – covering both materials and technologies – has more than 3,200 companies employing 34,000 people. In 2021 sector revenue amounted to more than 4.1 billion euros, some 3 billion of it in exports – confirming Italian companies' strong propensity to exportation, accounting for 71.4% of production – with an annual trade balance of nearly 2.6 million euros.

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