

Market evolution: Earthmoving machinery (CN 8429) — 2015–2025

Introduction

Between 2015 and 2025, EU trade in self-propelled earthmoving machinery (CN 8429) underwent a deep structural transformation. While the total value of extra-EU exports edged up by only 7.9 %, imports more than doubled, flipping a €1.6 billion trade surplus into a €1.7 billion deficit. At the same time, EU domestic production expanded massively, absorbing a growing share of output and sharply reducing the bloc's traditional export orientation. This report describes and interprets the key dynamics, using the figures provided by the Trade Dashboard.

1. A Turning Tide: Surging Imports Drive a Historic Trade Balance Shift

Total imports doubled in value while exports grew only modestly

Extra-EU exports of earthmoving machinery rose from €4.61 billion in 2015 to €4.97 billion in 2025 (+7.9 %), but the exported quantity fell by 20.1 % (from 947 thousand to 756 thousand units). The average export price therefore climbed by 35.1 % (from €4 863 to €6 570 per unit).

Imports, in contrast, jumped from €2.97 billion to €6.65 billion (+124.1 %), while the imported quantity increased by 50.0 % (from 693 thousand to 1 039 thousand units). The import unit price also rose sharply, by 49.4 % (from €4 287 to €6 404).

Flow	Indicator	2015	2025	Change
Exports	Value (€ bn)	4.61	4.97	+7.9 %
	Quantity (k units)	947	756	–20.1 %
	Unit price (€)	4 863	6 570	+35.1 %
Imports	Value (€ bn)	2.97	6.65	+124.1 %
	Quantity (k units)	693	1 039	+50.0 %
	Unit price (€)	4 287	6 404	+49.4 %

Source: General Overview trade data

China emerges as the dominant supplier, reshaping EU import structure

The composition of imports changed radically. Imports from China exploded from €99 million in 2015 to €2 269 million in 2025, a 2 199 % increase, making China the top extra-EU supplier by a large margin. Other major partners also grew, but at much more moderate rates (Japan +30.9 %, United Kingdom +79.1 %, Korea +73.9 %). Only the United States saw a decline (–21.2 %).

Import partner	2015 (€ million)	2025 (€ million)	Change
China	99	2 269	+2 199 %
Japan	1 168	1 529	+30.9 %
United Kingdom	713	1 278	+79.1 %
Korea, Republic of	406	707	+73.9 %
United States	370	292	–21.2 %

Source: Top import partners

The EU’s trade balance swung from a surplus of €1.6 billion to a deficit of €1.7 billion

The mirror-image dynamics of exports and imports caused the trade balance to deteriorate by €3.3 billion over the decade. The EU moved from a net exporter (balance +€1 636 million in 2015) to a net importer (balance –€1 685 million in 2025). Correspondingly, the net-import-reliance ratio – which stood at –715.8 % in 2015 (indicating huge net exports relative to apparent consumption) – climbed to +1.1 % by 2024, as domestic production (see Section 2) rose to meet a much larger share of internal demand.

Source: Net import reliance

2. A Production-Led Transformation: The Shrinking Export Footprint

Domestic production of earthmoving machinery increased twenty-fold in volume

EU manufacturers massively expanded output. According to Prodcom data, the quantity of earthmoving machinery produced in the EU rose from 7 729 units in 2015 to 178 051 units in 2024 (the latest available year). The corresponding production value jumped from €0.46 billion to €10.21 billion. Even allowing for the shift from partial-coverage to rounded/

estimated data in later years, the scale of the increase – more than twenty-fold in units – is unmistakable.

Year	Production quantity (units)	Production value (€ million)
2015	7 729	457
2018	189 157	10 471
2021	205 983	10 104
2024	178 051	10 213

Source: EU production volumes

Export propensity halved as more output was absorbed domestically

The explosion of production was not primarily channelled into exports. The export-propensity ratio (extra-EU exports as a percentage of production value) fell from 161.4 % in 2015 to 55.5 % in 2024, a drop of 65.6 p.p. Meanwhile the trade-intensity ratio ((exports+imports)/production) declined from 135.4 % to 71.6 %, indicating a much larger domestic market that is increasingly served by local factories.

Source: Export propensity and trade intensity

Specialisation remains concentrated in a core of northern EU member states

In 2025, the most specialised EU reporters (measured by RSCA) were Austria, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and France. Germany, despite its large absolute trade volumes, showed only a slight positive specialisation (RSCA 0.03). Most central and eastern European members, as well as Spain and Portugal, exhibited negative specialisation scores, highlighting a clear geographic concentration of the sector's extra-EU engagement.

Source: Specialisation in earthmoving machinery

3. Price Spikes and Supply-Side Shocks: A More Volatile Trading Environment

Sharp import price increases hit key suppliers, particularly Japan and the United Kingdom

The surge in import values was amplified by significant unit-price shocks. The dashboard's anomaly detection flags a **+61.9 % price jump from Japan** in 2022 (with volumes simul-

taneously contracting), a **+21.9 % shock from the United Kingdom in 2021**, and a smaller but persistent rise for Korea. These events reflect post-pandemic supply bottlenecks, elevated shipping costs, and strong global demand for construction machinery.

Price shock	Entity	Year	Price shift	Value share at time of shock
Import price surge	Japan	2022	+61.9 %	37.5 %
Import price surge	United Kingdom	2021	+21.9 %	24.8 %
Import price increase	Korea, Republic of	2023	+5.3 %	15.5 %

Source: Price shock events

Volatility concentrated in Chinese and emerging-market trade flows

Looking at quantity volatility over the full period, imports from China stand out with a coefficient of variation (CV) of 0.68, far higher than the relatively stable flows from Japan (0.28) or the United Kingdom (0.18). Other emerging suppliers such as India (CV 0.94), Brazil (0.70), and Australia (0.74) also show highly erratic shipment patterns, creating additional planning challenges for EU buyers.

Source: Volatility by partner

Russia’s exit from the EU export market illustrates geopolitical risk

One of the clearest supply-side dislocations was the collapse of EU exports to Russia. After averaging roughly 35 thousand units per year from 2015 to 2022, the quantity fell to zero in 2024 and 2025 – a drop of 97.6 % from the baseline. The export price for the small remaining flow in 2023 rose by 21.8 % compared with the previous period, underlining how abruptly trade can vanish in response to sanctions and political shifts.

Source: Supply shock: Russia

Conclusion

Over the decade 2015–2025, EU trade in earthmoving machinery evolved from a sizeable export-oriented surplus activity into a balanced, import-heavy market. Chinese imports displaced traditional suppliers, a massive domestic production ramp-up absorbed a much larger share of EU demand, and the bloc lost its net-exporter status. At the same time, the market experienced sharp price shocks and heightened volatility from emerging suppliers, while geopolitical events such as the Russia exit removed entire export destinations. The result is a sector that is more self-sufficient in volume terms, yet newly exposed to external price dynamics and supply concentration risks.

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If you need advice on European trade policy, or representation for your interests in Brussels, feel free to contact me at support@tradedashboard.eu. You can find my CV at [this address](#).