

## Aluminium market dislocation temporarily distorts trade flows

The market dislocation between London and Shanghai has pushed more than 30kt of primary aluminium exports out of Chinese bonded zones. A sudden surge in alumina is also possible but unlikely to be sustained



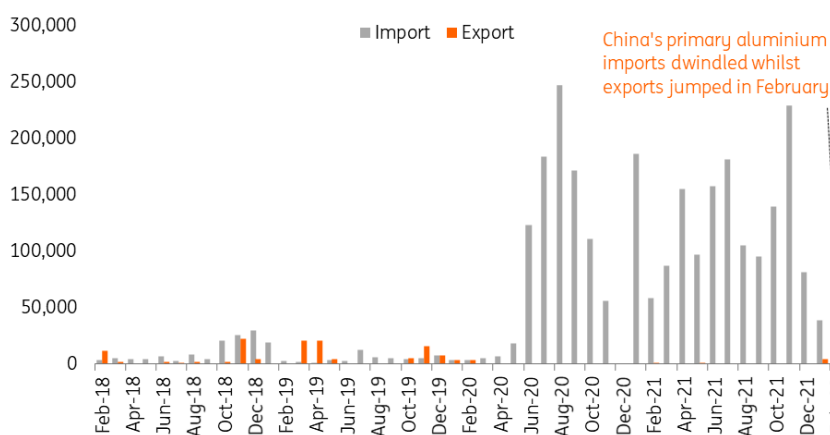
The current market dynamics should encourage China's exports of aluminium products

The Russia-Ukraine war has exacerbated the market dislocation between London and Shanghai. As we have pointed out before, the China market has been on the soft side post-Chinese New Year due to weaker seasonal demand, and more recently the Covid outbreaks have forced some traders to maintain a wait-and-see approach, which has weighed on the prices in Shanghai market. On the other hand, however, the war continues to disrupt the supply chain as self-sanctioning put in place by supply chain participants, from banks to shippers, has further tightened the physical liquidity on top of an already-stretched market. Subsequently, the world market, excluding China, has continued to tighten, reflected in the rising physical premium from Europe to the North American markets.

The market dislocation has temporarily redrawn the trade landscape which previously saw China as an importer of primary aluminium. The latest trade data for the first two months of this year provide some evidence. Reversing the strong imports over the last two years, China's exports of primary aluminium jumped to more than 30kt during the first two months, compared to only 1.6kt

during the same period of 2021.

## China primary aluminium exports jump in February (tonnes)



Source: China Customs, ING

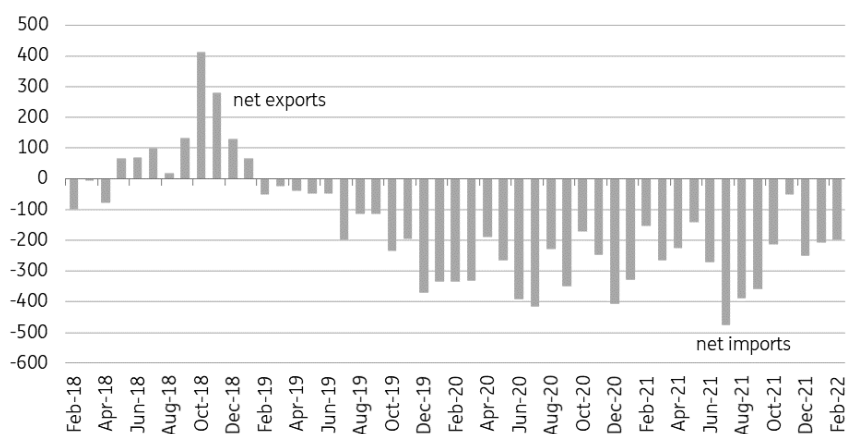
However, exported primary aluminium is likely due to opportunistic selling, and this is not homemade Chinese aluminium. This aluminium is believed to be pre-imported ingots sitting in the Chinese bonded warehouses, which are exempt from China's export tax when they leave the bonded zones. Therefore, instead of waiting for the opportunity to enter the Chinese domestic market, they are now incentivised to take advantage of the physical reverse arbitrage in other markets.

As for the domestic primary metal, it would need a further incentive to spur exports, bearing in mind the 15% export tax on top of the pricing. In other words, this would need the London Metal Exchange (LME) market to further outperform the Shanghai Futures Exchange (ShFE), or physical premiums to rise further.

For the time being, the base case here is that China imports may remain subdued, but massive exports of domestic ingots seem less likely. However, should Russian aluminium be further disrupted due to either self-sanctioning or curtailment at Rusal due to raw material shortages, that could take out up to four million tonnes of supply, and spur market dislocation, thus attracting some Chinese exports to fill the gap.

Meanwhile, we think the current market dynamics should encourage China's exports of semis and aluminium products, supporting domestic demand.

## China alumina net im/exports (tonnes)



Source: China Customs, ING

China is a net importer of alumina, though there are precedents when exports surge amid market dislocations incentivising exports.

The raw material market is also full of uncertainty. We noted earlier that the physical market alumina liquidity has started to shrink. The risks rose further after Australia banned exports to Russia, leaving Rusal little room to manoeuvre in seeking alternative alumina feed to fill the gap. Such a ban only adds to the risks of production curtailment in Russia. Exports of alumina from China are possible, as seen back in 2018, but any potential spike in exports is unlikely to be sustained. As Chinese smelters seek steady restarts to take advantage of the decent margins right now, their demand for alumina is poised to rise, supporting the raw material's pricing in the onshore market.

### Author

**Alissa Lefebvre**

Economist

[alissa.lefebvre@ing.com](mailto:alissa.lefebvre@ing.com)

**Deepali Bhargava**

Regional Head of Research, Asia-Pacific

[Deepali.Bhargava@ing.com](mailto:Deepali.Bhargava@ing.com)

**Ruben Dewitte**

Economist

+32495364780

[ruben.dewitte@ing.com](mailto:ruben.dewitte@ing.com)

**Kinga Havasi**

Economic research trainee

[kinga.havasi@ing.com](mailto:kinga.havasi@ing.com)

**Marten van Garderen**

Consumer Economist, Netherlands  
[marten.van.garderen@ing.com](mailto:marten.van.garderen@ing.com)

**David Havrlant**  
Chief Economist, Czech Republic  
420 770 321 486  
[david.havrlant@ing.com](mailto:david.havrlant@ing.com)

**Sander Burgers**  
Senior Economist, Dutch Housing  
[sander.burgers@ing.com](mailto:sander.burgers@ing.com)

**Lynn Song**  
Chief Economist, Greater China  
[lynn.song@asia.ing.com](mailto:lynn.song@asia.ing.com)

**Michiel Tukker**  
Senior European Rates Strategist  
[michiel.tukker@ing.com](mailto:michiel.tukker@ing.com)

**Michal Rubaszek**  
Senior Economist, Poland  
[michal.rubaszek@ing.pl](mailto:michal.rubaszek@ing.pl)

**This is a test author**

**Stefan Posea**  
Economist, Romania  
[tiberiu-stefan.posea@ing.com](mailto:tiberiu-stefan.posea@ing.com)

**Marine Leleux**  
Sector Strategist, Financials  
[marine.leleux2@ing.com](mailto:marine.leleux2@ing.com)

**Jesse Norcross**  
Senior Sector Strategist, Real Estate  
[jesse.norcross@ing.com](mailto:jesse.norcross@ing.com)

**Teise Stellema**  
Research Assistant, Energy Transition  
[teise.stellema@ing.com](mailto:teise.stellema@ing.com)

**Diederik Stadig**  
Sector Economist, TMT & Healthcare  
[diederik.stadig@ing.com](mailto:diederik.stadig@ing.com)

**Diogo Gouveia**

Sector Economist

[diogo.duarte.vieira.de.gouveia@ing.com](mailto:diogo.duarte.vieira.de.gouveia@ing.com)

**Marine Leleux**

Sector Strategist, Financials

[marine.leleux2@ing.com](mailto:marine.leleux2@ing.com)

**Ewa Manthey**

Commodities Strategist

[ewa.manthey@ing.com](mailto:ewa.manthey@ing.com)

**ING Analysts**

**James Wilson**

EM Sovereign Strategist

[James.wilson@ing.com](mailto:James.wilson@ing.com)

**Sophie Smith**

Digital Editor

[sophie.smith@ing.com](mailto:sophie.smith@ing.com)

**Frantisek Taborsky**

EMEA FX & FI Strategist

[frantisek.taborsky@ing.com](mailto:frantisek.taborsky@ing.com)

**Adam Antoniak**

Senior Economist, Poland

[adam.antoniak@ing.pl](mailto:adam.antoniak@ing.pl)

**Min Joo Kang**

Senior Economist, South Korea and Japan

[min.joo.kang@asia.ing.com](mailto:min.joo.kang@asia.ing.com)

**Coco Zhang**

ESG Research

[coco.zhang@ing.com](mailto:coco.zhang@ing.com)

**Jan Frederik Slijkerman**

Senior Sector Strategist, TMT

[jan.frederik.slijkerman@ing.com](mailto:jan.frederik.slijkerman@ing.com)

**Katinka Jongkind**

Senior Economist, Services and Leisure

[Katinka.Jongkind@ing.com](mailto:Katinka.Jongkind@ing.com)

**Marina Le Blanc**

Sector Strategist, Financials

[Marina.Le.Blanc@ing.com](mailto:Marina.Le.Blanc@ing.com)

**Samuel Abettan**

Junior Economist

[samuel.abettan@ing.com](mailto:samuel.abettan@ing.com)

**Franziska Biehl**

Economist, Germany

[Franziska.Marie.Biehl@ing.de](mailto:Franziska.Marie.Biehl@ing.de)

**Rebecca Byrne**

Senior Editor and Supervisory Analyst

[rebecca.byrne@ing.com](mailto:rebecca.byrne@ing.com)

**Mirjam Bani**

Sector Economist, Commercial Real Estate & Public Sector (Netherlands)

[mirjam.bani@ing.com](mailto:mirjam.bani@ing.com)

**Timothy Rahill**

Credit Strategist

[timothy.rahill@ing.com](mailto:timothy.rahill@ing.com)

**Leszek Kasek**

Senior Economist, Poland

[leszek.kasek@ing.pl](mailto:leszek.kasek@ing.pl)

**Oleksiy Soroka, CFA**

Senior High Yield Credit Strategist

[oleksiy.soroka@ing.com](mailto:oleksiy.soroka@ing.com)

**Antoine Bouvet**

Head of European Rates Strategy

[antoine.bouvet@ing.com](mailto:antoine.bouvet@ing.com)

**Jeroen van den Broek**

Global Head of Sector Research

[jeroen.van.den.broek@ing.com](mailto:jeroen.van.den.broek@ing.com)

**Edse Dantuma**

Senior Sector Economist, Industry and Healthcare

[edse.dantuma@ing.com](mailto:edse.dantuma@ing.com)

**Francesco Pesole**

FX Strategist

[francesco.pesole@ing.com](mailto:francesco.pesole@ing.com)

**Rico Luman**

Senior Sector Economist, Transport and Logistics

[Rico.Luman@ing.com](mailto:Rico.Luman@ing.com)

**Jurjen Witteveen**

Sector Economist

[jurjen.witteveen@ing.com](mailto:jurjen.witteveen@ing.com)

**Dmitry Dolgin**

Chief Economist, CIS

[dmitry.dolgin@ing.de](mailto:dmitry.dolgin@ing.de)

**Nicholas Mapa**

Senior Economist, Philippines

[nicholas.antonio.mapa@asia.ing.com](mailto:nicholas.antonio.mapa@asia.ing.com)

**Egor Fedorov**

Senior Credit Analyst

[egor.fedorov@ing.com](mailto:egor.fedorov@ing.com)

**Sebastian Franke**

Consumer Economist

[sebastian.franke@ing.de](mailto:sebastian.franke@ing.de)

**Gerben Hieminga**

Senior Sector Economist, Energy

[gerben.hieminga@ing.com](mailto:gerben.hieminga@ing.com)

**Nadège Tillier**

Head of Corporates Sector Strategy

[nadege.tillier@ing.com](mailto:nadege.tillier@ing.com)

**Charlotte de Montpellier**

Senior Economist, France and Switzerland

[charlotte.de.montpellier@ing.com](mailto:charlotte.de.montpellier@ing.com)

**Laura Straeter**

Behavioural Scientist

+31(0)611172684

[laura.Straeter@ing.com](mailto:laura.Straeter@ing.com)

**Valentin Tataru**

Chief Economist, Romania

[valentin.tataru@ing.com](mailto:valentin.tataru@ing.com)

**James Smith**

Developed Markets Economist, UK

[james.smith@ing.com](mailto:james.smith@ing.com)

**Suvi Platerink Kosonen**

Senior Sector Strategist, Financials  
[suvi.platerink-kosonen@ing.com](mailto:suvi.platerink-kosonen@ing.com)

**Thijs Geijer**

Senior Sector Economist, Food & Agri  
[thijs.geijer@ing.com](mailto:thijs.geijer@ing.com)

**Maurice van Sante**

Senior Economist Construction & Team Lead Sectors  
[maurice.van.sante@ing.com](mailto:maurice.van.sante@ing.com)

**Marcel Klok**

Senior Economist, Netherlands  
[marcel.klok@ing.com](mailto:marcel.klok@ing.com)

**Piotr Poplawski**

Senior Economist, Poland  
[piotr.poplawski@ing.pl](mailto:piotr.poplawski@ing.pl)

**Paolo Pizzoli**

Senior Economist, Italy, Greece  
[paolo.pizzoli@ing.com](mailto:paolo.pizzoli@ing.com)

**Marieke Blom**

Chief Economist and Global Head of Research  
[marieke.blom@ing.com](mailto:marieke.blom@ing.com)

**Raoul Leering**

Senior Macro Economist  
[raoul.leering@ing.com](mailto:raoul.leering@ing.com)

**Maarten Leen**

Head of Global IFRS9 ME Scenarios  
[maarten.leen@ing.com](mailto:maarten.leen@ing.com)

**Maureen Schuller**

Head of Financials Sector Strategy  
[Maureen.Schuller@ing.com](mailto:Maureen.Schuller@ing.com)

**Warren Patterson**

Head of Commodities Strategy  
[Warren.Patterson@asia.ing.com](mailto:Warren.Patterson@asia.ing.com)

**Rafal Benecki**

Chief Economist, Poland  
[rafal.benecki@ing.pl](mailto:rafal.benecki@ing.pl)

**Philippe Ledent**



Senior Economist, Belgium, Luxembourg  
[philippe.ledent@ing.com](mailto:philippe.ledent@ing.com)

**Peter Virovacz**

Senior Economist, Hungary  
[peter.virovacz@ing.com](mailto:peter.virovacz@ing.com)

**Inga Fechner**

Senior Economist, Germany, Global Trade  
[inga.fechner@ing.de](mailto:inga.fechner@ing.de)

**Dimitry Fleming**

Senior Data Analyst, Netherlands  
[Dimitry.Fleming@ing.com](mailto:Dimitry.Fleming@ing.com)

**Ciprian Dascalu**

Chief Economist, Romania  
+40 31 406 8990  
[ciprian.dascalu@ing.com](mailto:ciprian.dascalu@ing.com)

**Muhammet Mercan**

Chief Economist, Turkey  
[muhammet.mercan@ingbank.com.tr](mailto:muhammet.mercan@ingbank.com.tr)

**Iris Pang**

Chief Economist, Greater China  
[iris.pang@asia.ing.com](mailto:iris.pang@asia.ing.com)

**Sophie Freeman**

Writer, Group Research  
+44 20 7767 6209  
[Sophie.Freeman@uk.ing.com](mailto:Sophie.Freeman@uk.ing.com)

**Padhraic Garvey, CFA**

Regional Head of Research, Americas  
[padhraic.garvey@ing.com](mailto:padhraic.garvey@ing.com)

**James Knightley**

Chief International Economist, US  
[james.knightley@ing.com](mailto:james.knightley@ing.com)

**Tim Condon**

Asia Chief Economist  
+65 6232-6020

**Martin van Vliet**

Senior Interest Rate Strategist  
+31 20 563 8801

[martin.van.vliet@ing.com](mailto:martin.van.vliet@ing.com)

**Robert Carnell**

Regional Head of Research, Asia-Pacific

[robert.carnell@asia.ing.com](mailto:robert.carnell@asia.ing.com)

**Karol Pogorzelski**

Senior Economist, Poland

[Karol.Pogorzelski@ing.pl](mailto:Karol.Pogorzelski@ing.pl)

**Carsten Brzeski**

Global Head of Macro

[carsten.brzeski@ing.de](mailto:carsten.brzeski@ing.de)

**Viraj Patel**

Foreign Exchange Strategist

+44 20 7767 6405

[viraj.patel@ing.com](mailto:viraj.patel@ing.com)

**Owen Thomas**

Global Head of Editorial Content

+44 (0) 207 767 5331

[owen.thomas@ing.com](mailto:owen.thomas@ing.com)

**Bert Colijn**

Chief Economist, Netherlands

[bert.colijn@ing.com](mailto:bert.colijn@ing.com)

**Peter Vanden Houte**

Chief Economist, Belgium, Luxembourg, Eurozone

[peter.vandenhoute@ing.com](mailto:peter.vandenhoute@ing.com)

**Benjamin Schroeder**

Senior Rates Strategist

[benjamin.schroeder@ing.com](mailto:benjamin.schroeder@ing.com)

**Chris Turner**

Global Head of Markets and Regional Head of Research for UK & CEE

[chris.turner@ing.com](mailto:chris.turner@ing.com)

**Gustavo Rangel**

Chief Economist, LATAM

+1 646 424 6464

[gustavo.rangel@ing.com](mailto:gustavo.rangel@ing.com)

**Carlo Cocuzzo**

Economist, Digital Finance

+44 20 7767 5306

[carlo.cocuzzo@ing.com](mailto:carlo.cocuzzo@ing.com)