

Copper: China October trade snapshot

Imports of copper concentrate in October fell by 21% month-on-month to 1.69mln tonnes, but total imports year-to-date have seen moderate growth

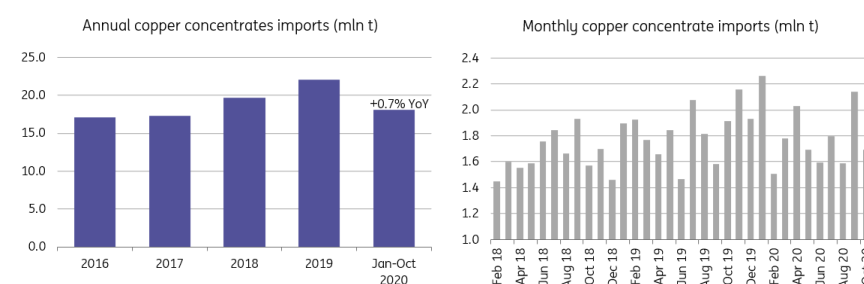


Source: Shutterstock

Imports of copper concentrate in October fell by 21% MoM to 1.69mln tonnes, and total imports in the first 10 months have registered a small gain year-on-year. According to SMM reports, the reduced imports last month were chiefly due to rejected shipments due to high fluorine content concentrate from Indonesia. Year-to-date, Chile remains the largest copper concentrate supplier to China, accounting for 35%, with exports to China growing by 3% YoY to 6.4mln tonnes. However, imports from Peru, the second-largest supplier to China, have decreased by 19% to almost 4mln tonnes.

It is worth noting that Chinese imports of Australian copper concentrates fell by 54% MoM to 40kt in October (Jan-Oct. 757kt, -8% YoY). However, this coincides with unofficial reports that authorities have told Chinese importers to stop buying concentrate from Australia.

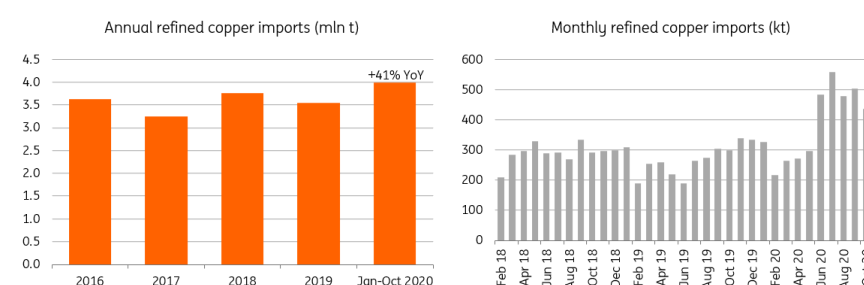
Fig 1. China copper concentrate imports



Source: China Customs, ING

Refined copper imports also fell in October to 437kt (-16% MoM), which is in line with earlier reports of a slower pace in clearing copper as a result of closed arbitrage. Instead, bonded warehouse inventory has grown. Total imports in the first 10 months have increased to almost 4mtn tonnes, up by 41% YoY. Imports of alloys such as brass and bronze remain elevated and have jumped by 134% YoY to 306kt; meanwhile during the same period, imports of copper anode have grown by 31% YoY to 804kt.

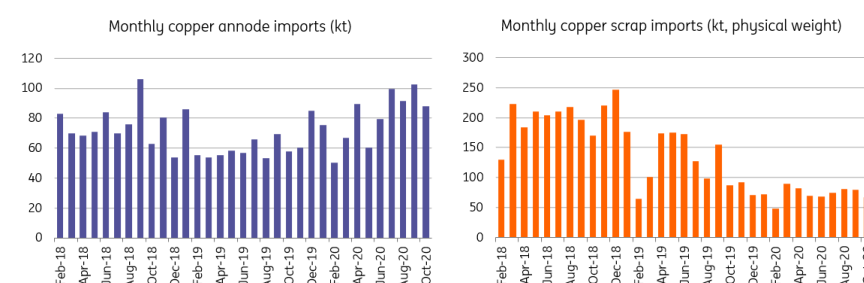
Fig 2. China refined copper imports



Source: China Customs, ING

Copper scrap imports continued to fall for a second straight month. Total scrap imports over the first 10 months have fallen by 45% YoY to 734kt (physical weight).

Fig 3. China copper scrap and annode imports



Source: China Customs, ING