



Nordic Steel Market is Steady



Market conditions are relatively steady across the Nordic region, according to MEPS. The volume of enquiries and orders, for hot rolled coil, has begun to reduce as the summer holiday season approaches. Supply chain participants do not expect any major changes in market conditions during the third quarter.

Commodity plate consumption is fair. Manufacturing has shown signs of recovery but the construction sector remains weak. Competition between suppliers has been increased by imports from Russia. Demand

for cold rolled coil is largely stable. Delivery lead times are now stretching beyond the summer break. Nevertheless, the producers have been unable to increase selling values, as yet. Drawing quality wire rod demand is satisfactory, albeit slightly below historical levels. Supply chain participants expect activity, during the next three months, to continue at a similar level. Consumption of structural sections is fair. Delivery lead times are quite long, the mills are sold out until the summer holidays. There is some upward pressure on rebar prices from higher scrap costs. Consumption is fair. However, imports from Russia and Belarus are plentiful. In Sweden, sales volumes to infrastructure and civil engineering projects are good.

Merchant bar market activity is steady and is expected to continue at the same level after the summer break. Sellers in Finland report some improvement in demand from the manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, in Norway, consumption from OEMs is steady at a mediocre level.

Tata Steel Tries to Avoid UK Strike

Tata Steel said it has approached British conciliation service Acas to resolve the pension dispute with its trade unions. "We have contacted Acas to bring in independent expertise in mediating a resolution to the UK pension dispute. We have requested Acas to immediately approach the National Trade Union Steel Coordinating Committee to ask them to attend talks," Tata Steel's European operations executive director of human resources Tor Farquhar said in a statement. Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law.



Trade unions representing workers of Tata Steel in the UK had announced "strike action" on June 22 over proposed changes in the company's pension scheme - the biggest industrial action in the UK in nearly three decades. "We have been talking to the trade unions since November 2014 to develop a fair and sustainable pension scheme for all UK employees.

The company and unions agree that changes need to be made to tackle the scheme's projected shortfall of up to £2 billion," Farquhar said. The company said industrial action, comprising an overtime ban and a work to rule, was scheduled to begin on June 16, with a one-day strike planned for June 22. "It remains the company's intention to provide a high quality and competitive pension scheme for our employees while continuing Tata Steel's significant record of investing in its UK assets so we can build a sustainable business here," he said. Tata Steel employs over 17,000 workers across four sites in Wales in Port Talbot, Newport, Flintshire and Carmarthenshire, as well as sites around England, including Corby, Hartlepool, Rotherham, Scunthorpe, Teesside and York. The threat of a strike is seen as a possible deterrent to future investment in the British steel industry, which has struggled to operate profitably despite government measures to help boost the sector. Tata Steel Ltd had posted a \$889-million quarterly loss on May 20, inflated by a hefty impairment on its UK business.

MMK Move Ahead with Blast Furnace Modernisation Programme



Russian steelmaker OJSC Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works (MMK) has completed the modernisation of its turbo blowing machine number 8 (TBM-8) and is now planning to overhaul its blast furnace number 9.

The modernisation of TBM-8 was completed in May and included the replacement of a steam turbine and all auxiliary equipment, such as reheaters, pumps and pipelines. The compressor was also

repaired and the unit was equipped with an automated control system enabling optimal operational modes for TBM-8. According to MMK, the upgraded equipment will reduce energy input costs in addition to enabling one of the mill's largest blast furnaces to operate stably throughout the year. TBM-8 provides high quality blast heating to the company's Blast Furnace number 10. MMK is planning to replace the cooling units and repair the lining of blast furnace number 9 with a view to increasing pig iron output and reduce cash costs. The Russian steelmaker has been busy overhauling other blast furnaces on-site. Blast furnace number 6 was reconstructed in 2013 while number 8's overhaul was completed in March this year. – Key components such as cooling units, housing, lining and hearth cooling pipes were replaced and a new 'ceramic bucket' protects the hearth and furnaces' carbon blocks, which will reduce heat losses and extend the hearth's service life, claims MMK. The new refractory linings on MMK blast furnaces are designed to increase intervals between repairs. Automation controls have been upgraded and new controllers installed.