

Container and cruise sectors shine at Marseilles Fos

Deepsea container traffic cheered leading French cargo port Marseilles Fos in the nine months to the end of September, rising 25% compared with last year, while passenger numbers were boosted by a 20% increase from the cruise sector.

Difficulties in other cargo sectors left total throughput 15% down on 61.77 million tonnes, marked by sharp drops in oil, dry bulk and liquid bulk volumes.

The rise in deepsea box trades saw 420,481 teu through Fos, although the overall container increase was pegged to 5% on 660,631 teu due to a slump in intra-Mediterranean traffic handled in the Marseilles eastern harbour area.

Container tonnage rose 4% to contribute 6.5MT to the general cargo total of 10.8MT – a fall of 7% for the period, with ro-ro still 9% down on 3.1MT due to Mediterranean market conditions and conventional trades remaining 40% worse on 1.2MT because of reduced demand for steel products.

Oil and gas volumes ended the third quarter on 43.55MT, a 9% deficit marked by crude imports falling 13% to 29.9MT. Crude traffic plummeted by 46% in September alone due to the previous month's fracture in the pipeline to Swiss and German refineries. Refined products dropped 5% to 8.8MT and LPG fell 3% to 1.35MT, but LNG remained buoyant with 16% growth to 3.5MT.

Despite the reopening of a major furnace in August, dry bulks continued to suffer from a decline of more than 50% in demand for steel industry raw materials, finishing the nine months on just 5.16MT – a full 5MT down on last year.

September produced a 47% rise for liquid bulks and encouraged hopes of a recovery in chemicals industry demand. Throughput for the period reached almost 2.3MT, reducing the year-on-year deficit by six points to 17%, with biofuels showing a 51% increase on 0.8MT.

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Passenger throughput went up 3% to 1.76 million after cruise numbers soared by 20% to 495,000 passengers – including 73,000 (+49%) in September – thanks to regular calls by MSC and Costa mega-ships. Ferry carryings fell 2% on almost 1.3m, with deficits on Algeria and Tunisia services contrasted by a 2.7% rise to 738,00 passengers on the Corsica route.

For port images, see Espace presse/Phototheque at www.marseille-port.fr