

South Carolina's 2011 Exports Jump 21 Percent

Gov. Nikki Haley, the South Carolina Department of Commerce, and the State Ports Authority recently announced the state's 2011 exports totaled more than \$24.6 billion in goods sold to 198 countries around the world. Figures represent a 21.4 percent increase over 2010 totals, and in 2011, South Carolina's 21.4 percent export growth ranked the state 14th in the U.S.

The state's top 10 export industries last year were vehicles, machinery, rubber, electrical machinery, plastics, paper and paperboard, organic chemicals, optics and medical equipment, wood pulp and cotton yarn and fabric. Of the top product sectors, the three experiencing the largest percentage increase were vehicles at a 52 percent increase, cotton yarn and fabric at nearly a 50 percent increase and electrical machinery at nearly a 25 percent increase.

"South Carolinians know how to make things - and we ship them the world over. Both Germany and Canada remain very important trade partners for South Carolina, and China is increasingly becoming a strong market for goods made in our state," said Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt.

South Carolina ranked first among U.S. states in tire exports, holding nearly 30 percent of the share of U.S.-made exported tires.

"South Carolina is poised to become the number one tire producing state in the U.S. and the tires that we make here are exported all over the world," said Pete Selleck, chairman and president, Michelin North America.

Posting a 36 percent increase from 2010, Germany overtook Canada again for the top spot as South Carolina's number one export market in 2011, purchasing nearly \$4 billion in products. Canada was a close second, purchasing more than \$3.7 billion in products. China remained at number three in 2011, purchasing more than \$3 billion. Rounding out the top 10 export markets in 2011 in order of rank were Mexico at number four, the United Kingdom, Australia, India, Brazil, Japan, and Saudi Arabia.

"Exporters in South Carolina's manufacturing and agricultural sectors benefit from access to competitive, deepwater port facilities," said Jim Newsome, president and CEO of the South Carolina Ports Authority. "Growing our export base is essential to generating jobs in the maritime industry and across the state."

South Carolina Commerce has also taken an active role in helping the state's small businesses and homegrown companies reach markets outside the U.S.

"The South Carolina Department of Commerce has raised the profile of our state and thereby lifted all its companies. With our highway and port infrastructure, our valuable timber commodity base, and most importantly our Commerce

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Department's unprecedented passion for growth, our family business took a leap of faith to explore export opportunities and have been richly rewarded as such," said Michael Johnson, CEO of Orangeburg-based Cox Industries.

How They Get The Job Done

According to Amy Love, Communications Director, SC Department of Commerce, South Carolina owes its success to a number of factors, from its strategic geographic location to a Department of Commerce that is willing to get aggressive. Staff writer Abbigail Kriebs spoke with Ms. Love about what the state is doing to encourage growth in exports.

Q: SC experienced a 21.4 percent increase in exports over 2010's figures. To what does SC owe this explosive growth?

Amy: Many U.S. states saw growth in exports in 2010, which indicates trends nationally. South Carolina is a state with a solid location for exports. We ranked number one in export of tires and automotive, so that points to where much of the growth comes from.

Q: What are you specifically doing as a department to encourage more exports?

Amy: South Carolina Commerce helps small- and medium-sized businesses take advantage of export opportunities as part of a State Trade and Export grant award from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Commerce has several upcoming workshops and seminars to help expanding businesses, including Introduction to NAFTA & the three new Free Trade Agreements, and a Panama & Colombia Export Seminar Series.

South Carolina is hosting an international trade conference May 20-22 in Myrtle Beach, SC, where more than 300 Canadian and U.S. business and government leaders will join the Governor to build on U.S.-Southeast-Canadian relations and business opportunities.

Historically, South Carolina has collaborated with export assistance organizations in the state and on the federal level, and formed the South Carolina International Trade Coalition a few years ago to strengthen those relationships.

Q: In order to be an exporting state, there has to first be a product to export. What have you been doing to encourage the production of goods within South Carolina's borders, specifically in the manufacturing sector?

Amy: South Carolina is a leader in the manufacturing renaissance. Until 2011, there had been a 10-year slide in manufacturing, hitting a bottom in January 2010. 2011 showed an upward trend in manufacturing employment, with an 11,600 increase (from 2010) in the number of people working in manufacturing. Commerce recruited more than 13,000 manufacturing jobs in 2011.

Q: What kinds of companies have you been targeting and how have you gotten

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them to come to your state? What incentives have you offered, and what makes SC an ideal location for these businesses?

Amy: Automotive and aviation are strong sectors in South Carolina, and we know how important a strong transportation, distribution, and logistics industry is to our overall economy. Commerce is part of a statewide initiative to coordinating strategic planning efforts for our state's highway and rail system.

South Carolina offers a wide range of incentives to support companies locating in the state - tax relief, training, infrastructure, and jobs creation.

Q: SC is unique in that it is a southern state on the ocean, with abundant shoreline for port cities and year-round warmer weather to maximize those ports all four seasons. Do you think this strategic location has attributed to your success?

Amy: South Carolina's strategic location is definitely part of our advantage. Our state is a mere two days' drive from nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population. This includes all major East Coast markets, plus Detroit, Chicago, and Dallas. South Carolina is crisscrossed by five interstate highways. The Port of Charleston has been at the center of global commerce and trade for three centuries. Being located on the coast gives South Carolina businesses a competitive edge in pricing because they can easily ship product.

Q: SC seems to have three major export audiences: Germany, Canada, and China. Why these three? Were they markets that SC sought out?

Amy: South Carolina has had a strong presence in the European markets for a long time. With offices in Germany and China, South Carolina has established good business relations across borders. Success breeds success, so when an international company like BMW decides to do business here and is successful, others like Continental Tire follow.

Q: South Carolina has now surpassed Michigan to be the number one exporter of automobiles. How? What companies are building in SC and why?

Amy: South Carolina ranked first among U.S. states in auto and tire exports, holding nearly 30 percent of the share of U.S.-made exported tires. BMW export values surged past \$7 billion in 2011, and they are the largest U.S. automotive exporter to the world.

About SC Department of Commerce

The South Carolina Department of Commerce works to recruit new businesses and help existing businesses grow. Commerce has been part of recruiting world-class companies to South Carolina such as Boeing, Bridgestone, Continental, Monster.com, Heinz, ZF Group, BMW, and Google Inc. Commerce also supports small and existing business, rural development initiatives, and offers grants for community development. For more information, visit www.SCcommerce.com [1].

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[1] <http://www.SCcommerce.com>