

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1951)
Heft: [1]: 25th anniversary of Textile suisses

Artikel: The position of textile products in the swiss foreign trade
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798746>

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The Position of Textile Products in the Swiss Foreign Trade

The textile industry occupies a very important place in Switzerland's foreign trade. During the course of the last few years, annual imports and exports of textiles amounted to a total of more than 1 billion Swiss francs.

and silk. Swiss fabrics are outstanding for their quality, their elegance and the properties they receive during the finishing processes, and they are used for the most varied purposes, either dyed in fashionable colours or



Billion Swiss Francs

This high figure is however not completely made up of exports, but also to an almost equal extent of imports of foreign textiles, raw materials and finished products. In imports, the major part is naturally formed by raw materials and semi-finished products, for Switzerland possesses practically no source of supply of its own of textiles. But it is often wrongly thought that Switzerland, a country which is known for its textile production, buys only raw materials from abroad. A glance at the statistics of the trade however shows very clearly that it is not only a good client as regards textile raw materials, such as cotton, wool, raw silk, cellulose for the manufacture of rayon, flax, hemp and jute, but that it also imports finished articles in large quantities and to a considerable value. Thus Switzerland, which practises an open door policy as regards imports, has during the last few years bought annually from abroad 80 to 100 million Swiss francs' worth of fabrics of all kinds, particularly woollen and cotton. It also imports large quantities of hosiery and clothing to the value of about 25 million francs a year. In addition it imports annually about 25 million francs' worth of foreign carpets. When an annual import of 50 to 70 million francs' worth of yarns is added to these figures, Switzerland's imports of manufactured textile products amount to between 200 and 250 million francs.

These few details show clearly that Switzerland is not only an exporter but also an importer of manufactured textiles, which seems to be unknown to certain countries which try to hinder the entry of Swiss textile products into their country by means of high customs duties and other discriminatory measures.

The major part of Switzerland's exports of textiles is made up to-day of fabrics, mainly in cotton, rayon

in the form of very novel prints. During the last few years Swiss exports of fabrics have amounted on an average to more than 200 million francs a year. St. Gall embroidery is a speciality of the Swiss textile industry; the fine quality and very high artistic level of their designs has created a great demand for them all over the world, in the form of allovers, vaporous blouses, collars, edging, embroidered handkerchiefs, etc. Due to the popularity of embroidery in the field of fashion at the present moment, the Swiss embroidery industry has seen its exports rise again during recent years to some 60 to 70 million francs a year. Among the Swiss textile articles traditionally exported, let us mention silk ribbons, clothing and hosiery as well as yarns and twists of all kinds. During the last few years exports of clothing and hosiery, both very high standard products as regards fashion, have made very satisfactory progress.

The more textile products Switzerland is able to export the more raw materials, semi-manufactured products and manufactured articles of the same branch it will be able to import again from abroad. Unfortunately, at the present moment this principle of reciprocity is not sufficiently taken into account; happily the European Payments Union has recently made possible a renewed intensification of trade in the field of textiles and it is to be hoped that the freeing of trade will make still further progress to the advantage of the economies of the countries concerned.

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