Auto Sales and Production in China Continue Growth Trend

Japanese automaker Honda reported record monthly production in China for November 2016. Honda CRV photo courtesy of Honda Motor Co.

Automotive sales and production in China increased in 2016, reflecting strong demand. The growth was fueled, in part, by a tax break on small-engine vehicles.

For the first 10 months of 2016, sales of automobiles topped 22 million units, 12.3 percentage points higher than the same period the previous year, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers says. Production increased 13.8 percent to 22 million from January to October, the latest period for which data is available.

The association said auto sales could increase 13 percent in 2016 over 2015, Reuters reported in December.

“Yale Zhang, managing director of Shanghai-based consulting firm Automotive Foresight, said demand for passenger cars ... will likely be weaker but still manage to grow 3 percent to 5 percent next year, compared to the 16 percent growth he predicts for China’s passenger car market for this year,” Reuters said.

In December, China’s Ministry of Finance extended a tax incentive for small-engine vehicles through 2017. The 7.5 percent purchase tax is higher than last year’s 5 percent, but it is below the normal 10 percent. While the Chinese market saw weaker sales in 2015, the tax incentive spurred growth, news reports say.

Ford Motor Co., of Michigan, USA, sold a record 1.27 million vehicles in 2016 in China, up 14 percent from 2015. That total includes sales by joint ventures Changan Ford Automobile and Jiangling Motors Corp. and sales of Ford models imported to China, Ford says.

“We have built some great sales momentum in China, particularly in the second half of 2016, on the strength of our expanded vehicle lineup,” Peter Fleet, Vice President of Marketing, Sales and Service, Asia Pacific, said in a press release. “Record numbers of customers are choosing our 3-row Edge crossover, elegant Taurus sedan, Explorer premium SUV and Lincoln luxury vehicles.”

General Motors (GM), of Michigan, USA, and its joint ventures delivered a record 3.9 million vehicles in China in 2016, an increase of 7.1 percent from the previous high in 2015.

“In 2016, GM’s SUV deliveries surged 45 percent from a year earlier to 673,409 units. Its comprehensive SUV portfolio includes the Buick Envision and Baojun 560, which were among the segment leaders with year-on-year growth of 52 percent and 116 percent respectively,” GM said in a press release.

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Pyrotek Provides Sheet Ingot Casters with Critical Consumables

RFM Skim Dams
Pyrotek's skim dams made of reinforced fibreglass material (RFM®) can help improve total ingot recovery and ingot quality by preventing oxides from entering the rolling surface, which can often lead to oxide patches or cracks on the ingots.

RFM is denser than calcium-silicate board, which allows the RFM skim dam to sit lower in the melt, stopping more oxides from flowing under the skim dam and entering the ingot.

Because it's a high-strength composite material, RFM can be formed with relatively thin cross sections, providing larger interior dimensions as well as the ability to fit into tight spaces. It can be custom designed for various ingot shapes and mounting styles.

The material is non-wetting to molten aluminium and offers excellent crack and erosion resistance. With proper maintenance and the use of a boron nitride coating, RFM skim dams last up to three times longer than similar products.

Distribution Troughs
Pyrotek's distribution trough refractory materials and backup insulation are durable and help prevent heat loss while channeling molten metal.

The metal facing refractory materials are non-wetting, resistant to thermal shock and reduce heat loss during transport of molten metal. If properly maintained and coated, such as with ZYP Boron Nitride Lubricat®, the trough refractory materials can outlive similar products.

Finally, Pyrotek's trough backup insulation, Wollite 30ST-1 or Pyrocast 450, can be poured into place to fill openings between hot-facing refractory and other backup layers or the steel equipment shell. It provides excellent insulation and a leak barrier to any metal that seeps behind the refractory or between joints. Because it expands as it foams and puts the refractory under slight compression, it helps to protect against crack propagation and catastrophic failures of the refractory liners.

Casting Lubricants
Lubricants provide critical slip interfaces between molten metal and direct-chill casting moulds. The unique electrically charged Perlube™ lubricants Pyrotek provides can reduce the volume needed for metal casting compared to generic oils like rapeseed, canola and castor.

These lubricants are supplied globally through Pyrotek's network of distribution centres.

For all of these consumables, Pyrotek consults with sheet ingot casters to determine the optimal products for their operations.

Pyrotek.com

Rusal and Fellow Russian Company Join to Establish Facility to Produce Cables and Wires
Russian aluminium producer UC Rusal and Russian cable product company ELKA-Cable have agreed to establish the new Bogoslovsk Cable Plant, a jointly-owned facility for producing cables and wires.

The new facility will be established at a site currently occupied by Rusal's Bogoslovsk aluminium smelter. Once the new plant reaches full capacity, it will be making more than 4000 tonnes of aluminium products per year. Those products will include oil-submersible cables, flexible cables and disposable wires and self-supporting insulated wires.

"This joint venture will enhance our presence in the cable and wire sector, which is among the largest and fastest-growing aluminium consumption segments," Alexey Arnautov, a director of new projects at Rusal, said in a press release.

Equipment foundation work began late last year.

British Car Production Increases in 2016
The UK's Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders, says UK car production reached a 17-year high in 2016, with over 1.72 million vehicles. For 15 manufacturers, total production rose 8.5 percent over 2015.

Growth was primarily generated by overseas demand. About eight out of 10 cars made in the UK are now exported, the society says. Demand increased 47.2 percent in 2016 in the USA, the UK's largest export destination after the European Union. Notable growth was also seen in Turkey, Japan and Canada. Chinese growth was modest at 3.1 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaguar Land Rover</td>
<td>489,923</td>
<td>544,401</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nissan</td>
<td>476,589</td>
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<td>MINI</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Honda</td>
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<td>134,146</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vauxhall</td>
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<td>118,182</td>
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<td>All Makes</td>
<td>1,587,677</td>
<td>1,722,698</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders
Hydro Acquires Remaining Shares in Bauxite Mine

Norsk Hydro ASA, of Norway, has completed the acquisition of Vale’s remaining stake in the Paragominas bauxite mine in northern Brazil. Hydro’s net payment totaled USD$113 million, the company says. Hydro now owns 100 percent of the shares.

Vale says the transaction is connected to its aluminium asset sale announced in February 2011. According to Hydro’s website, Paragominas has deposits to support 41 years of mining activities. It also says the mine produces 9.9 million tonnes of bauxite per year.

Auto Sales and Production in China Continue Growth Trend

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company’s sales globally. The automaker has 11 joint ventures, two foreign enterprises and more than 58,000 employees in China, the company says. France-based PSA Group sold 618,000 in China and Southeast Asia in 2016.

In December, joint venture Dongfeng Peugeot broke a monthly record with 43,800 deliveries to customers, mainly due to the success of the Peugeot 4008 SUV, PSA Group says.

Elsewhere in Asia, sales of the group’s Peugeot brand grew 72 percent in the Philippines and 40 percent in Singapore last year. The Citroën brand continued to grow in Southeast Asia.

Honda Motor Co. recorded record production in November in China, climbing 26.3 percent to 132,401 units, compared to the same month the previous year. Production increased to 1.1 million units during the first 11 months of 2016, up 28.9 percent from the same period of 2015, Honda says.

“Production in regions outside of Japan experienced a year-on-year increase for the fourth consecutive month (since August 2016), setting record-high production for the month of November. This includes record-high production for the month of November in North America, Asia and China,” the Japanese automaker said in a press release.

Retail volumes for Jaguar Land Rover vehicles in China rose 36 percent in December 2016, the strongest monthly performance on record. The UK-based company attributes the growth partly to the introduction of the XFL, the first SUV Jaguar developed for Chinese customers. “Customer response has been very positive this year, resulting in record retails across most of our key regions. These results mark significant steps in Jaguar Land Rover’s strategy to become a truly global business and meet the growing international demand for its two iconic brands,” Andy Goss, Jaguar Land Rover Group Sales Operations Director, said in a press release. “I am confident that in 2017 our British lineup will continue to expand.”

Chinese sales of BMW and MINI vehicles increased 11.2 percent to 472,705 vehicles from January to November 2016. Sales in Asia, including China, increased 9.5 percent to 680,540 vehicles during the first 11 months of last year compared to the same period in 2015, BMW Group says.

Production of Nissan vehicles in China increased to 1.2 million units from January to November 2016, up 10.6 percent from 1.1 million from the same period the previous year. Sales increased 9.3 percent during the first 11 months of the year to 1.2 million units, Japan-based Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. says.

China’s Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd. said the group’s total sales volume for 2016 reached 765,851 units, up about 50 percent from the same period of 2015. The automaker sold a monthly record of 108,320 units in December, a more than 100 percent increase over December 2015.

China-based Great Wall Motor Co. sold 923,923 vehicles during the first 11 months of 2016, up 22 percent from 756,964 during the same period in 2015. Production increased 23 percent to 952,463, Great Wall says.

INFINITI set a monthly record with 41,590 vehicles sold in November in China, an increase of 3 percent over the same month of 2015. Hyundai Motor Co., of South Korea, says its Chinese sales of its Elantra, Tucson and other models increased steadily last year.
KS HUAYU AluTech GmbH, a Neckarsulm, Germany-based die caster, is expanding its facility to meet customer demand. The company is a joint venture between Rheinmetall Automotive AG and HUAYU Automotive Systems (part of China’s SAIC Group).

KS HUAYU says it has received an influx of orders for aluminium die castings and has expanded its product offerings, prompting the need for a new foundry. While it primarily manufactures components for vehicle power trains, it anticipates increased demand for additional parts like suspension-strut mounts and transverse links.

“While expanding its business in engine block castings, KS HUAYU will also broaden its focus on products for non-internal-combustion engine vehicles. Given our casting expertise, we already are a sought-after partner in the production of structural components as well as the highly complex aluminum parts needed in electric vehicles,” Lothar Schneider, head of the castings business at Rheinmetall Automotive, said in a press release.

KS HUAYU was recently awarded a major contract by a German original equipment manufacturer to make aluminium components for battery boxes. Production for the EUR665 million (USD70 million) order is expected to begin mid-2018, the company says. “Weighing around 9 kilograms, these components serve to hold the rechargeable battery cells installed in two electrically powered vehicles of this OEM. These are a crossover SUV and a high-power sports limousine. Both feature all-electric drive and are presently destined for the European market,” Rheinmetall said in a press release.

To meet demand, KS HUAYU is adding 5000 square metres (53,800 square feet) of floor space, which includes a new 3400-square-metre (36,600-square-foot) foundry. Production is expected to begin in July 2018, KS HUAYU says. In addition to the “double-digit million euro” construction project, the company plans to add new die casting machines and other equipment. The facility’s aluminium smelting capacity also will be increased to 100 tonnes per day, Rheinmetall says.

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Pyrotek has relaunched its global website at a new address, pyrotek.com. The website is designed to be a user-friendly resource for customers and prospects. Pages featuring products and services are organized by customer process, making navigation fast and intuitive.

Users can be connected to a local application engineer by clicking links on each page or by using the “Contact Us” page.

While Pyrotek has provided advanced technology and engineered solutions to the aluminium industry for 60 years, the new website also presents the wide range of other industries it serves, from glass to graphite. The site also includes information about Pyrotek’s mission, events, news and more.

Over time, Pyrotek will increase the level of content hosted on the website. While the site was launched in English, content in additional languages also will be added for the worldwide markets it serve.

Pyrotek’s team in Turkey recently received an Excellent Overall Performance supplier award from CMS, the country’s largest wheel caster. Manager Murat Ozaydinli, middle left, and Sales Manager Arzu Kizilok received the award on behalf of Pyrotek. As part of CMS’s Supplier Day celebration, Pyrotek Sales Engineer Aytaç Ergun gave a presentation about the company.

Alcoa Increases Revenues in Fourth Quarter

Alcoa Corp., a Pennsylvania, USA-based producer of bauxite, alumina and aluminium products, says revenue was up 9 percent to USD$2.5 billion in the fourth quarter of 2016. This reflected higher volumes in the company’s rolled products business, Alcoa says.

“Rising alumina and aluminium prices improved the bottom line, our alumina segment had exceptional profit growth in a stronger market environment and doubled margins, while our bauxite business also increased profits and reported robust margins,” Roy Harvey, CEO of Alcoa, said in a press release.

The company reported a net loss of USD$125 million for the fourth quarter, a result of costs to streamline its portfolio, however.

Separately, Alcoa announced last month that it intends to permanently close the Suralco alumina refinery and bauxite mines in Suriname.

“As we enter 2017, we also continue to streamline and strengthen our portfolio to better focus on our businesses and the growth opportunities ahead,” Harvey said.

Alcoa plans to continue to operate the Afobaka hydroelectric facility, which supplied power to the Suralco operations.

Hyundai Ranked First in Passenger Car Sales in Chile

South Korean automaker Hyundai Motor Co. sold more passenger cars than any other manufacturer in Chile in 2016, according to a list by the National Automotive Association of Chile. This is the first time Hyundai has reached chart-topping status in this market, selling 31,398 units.

While passenger cars such as the Accent, with 10,987 units sold, and the Grand i10, with 5464 units, comprise most of the sales, the new Tucson SUV took the highest-selling SUV title with 3716 units, Hyundai says.
Two Wheel Makers Introduce New Aluminium Products for Heavy Duty Vehicle Aftermarket

Two wheel manufacturers recently launched new product lines for the heavy duty vehicle aftermarket. Accuride Corp., of Evansville, Indiana, USA, has introduced a wheel made with its new, proprietary Quantum 99 Alloy that is 20 percent stronger than the company’s previous alloy. The new alloy allowed Accuride to reduce the weight of its wheel by 11 percent to 18 kilograms (40 pounds).

“Maxion Wheels developed the forged aluminium commercial vehicle four-wheel product line in response to the market’s growing need for lighter vehicles as a means of reducing fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions,” Accuride President and CEO Rick Dauch announced at Heavy Duty Aftermarket Week 2017 in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. “As the latest step in our efforts, we’re excited to introduce our next-generation Quantum 99 alloy and 40-pound aluminium wheel. … Quantum 99 will serve as the foundation of a new series of lightweight aluminium wheels.”

Testing showed the new wheel has twice the fatigue life of other 18-kilogram (40-pound) wheels on the market. It will initially be available at the standard size of 57 x 21 centimetres (22.5 x 8.25 inches).

The new wheel will be available during the third quarter of 2017, and additional wheels using Quantum 99 will be added later, Accuride says. Separately, Maxion Wheels, of Novi, Michigan, USA, has launched a forged aluminium truck wheel product line for the North American market. “Maxion Wheels developed the forged aluminium commercial vehicle four-wheel product line in response to the market’s growing need for lighter vehicles as a means of reducing fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions,” Maxion said in a press release.

The company will begin offering a standard-sized aftermarket wheel—57 x 21 centimetres (22.5 x 8.25 inches)—in the next few months with other sizes to follow. The standard size weighs 20.5 kilograms (45 pounds).

“Our forged aluminium truck wheels are built for today’s toughest road conditions,” Donald Polk, President of Maxion Wheels, Americas, announced at Heavy Duty Aftermarket Week. “Maxion Wheels’ commercial vehicle wheel product strategies will continue to focus on minimizing corrosion, reducing weight and offering more styling alternatives.”

Pyrotek Improves Its Cast Iron Protection Tube for Thermocouples

Pyrotek has improved the quality of its cast iron thermocouple protection tubes by altering its manufacturing process in an effort to advance the temperature sensing technology relied on by aluminium producers globally. Pyrotek’s new proprietary method increases the protection tube’s dimensional consistency, wall thickness and productivity.

The cast iron protection tubes all undergo ultrasonic testing to ensure they meet Pyrotek’s highest standards for wall thickness and uniformity. Additionally, a layer of enameling can be added to help resist oxidation. Pyrotek’s wide range of thermocouples and thermocouple protection tubes are manufactured at multiple Pyrotek plants around the world. Field engineers work with customers to determine the best thermocouples and protection tube materials for each application.

pyrotek.com

Car Companies to Add Thousands of Jobs in USA

Three vehicle manufacturers plan to add thousands of jobs in the USA over the next several years due to investments and other efforts. FCA US LLC, the USA subsidiary of Italy-based Fiat Chrysler Automobiles N.V., plans to add 2000 jobs as part of the second phase of its industrialization effort that includes investing USD1 billion in its Michigan and Ohio plants. The company is also expanding its Jeep lineup.

“The conversion of our industrial footprint completes this stage of our transformation as we respond to the shift in consumer tastes to trucks and SUVs, and as we continue to reinforce the USA as a global manufacturing hub for those vehicles at the heart of the SUV and truck market,” Sergio Marchionne, CEO of FCA N.V., said in a press release.

Michigan, USA-based General Motors (GM) will invest USD1 billion more in its USA manufacturing operations. “A combination of 1500 new and retained jobs are tied to the new investments,” GM said in a press release.

The company also plans to move production of axles for full-size pickup trucks to Michigan from Mexico, which would create 450 jobs in the USA. “As the USA manufacturing base increases its competitiveness, we are able to further increase our investment, resulting in more jobs for America.” GM Chairwoman and CEO Mary Barra said in a press release.

Over the last four years, GM has created 25,000 jobs in the USA, some of which have been shifted from other countries. Insourcing IT jobs, streamlining its engineering operations and other moves will help create more than 5000 jobs in the USA over the next few years, GM says.

Meanwhile, Japan-based Toyota plans to add 400 jobs at its Princeton, Indiana, USA, plant. The company is investing USD600 million to modernize the plant, which will meet growing demand for its Highlander midsize SUV. The Indiana plant produced over 400,000 vehicles in 2016, the highest volume in 20 years. The plant upgrade is expected to begin in late 2019, Toyota says.

Automakers to Form Joint Ventures in India

PSA Group, a France-based automaker, and India’s CK Birla Group have agreed to form two joint ventures to produce and sell vehicles and components in India by 2020. PSA will hold a majority stake in a joint venture being formed with Hindustan Motor Finance Corp. Ltd. to assemble and distribute PSA-brand vehicles.

In the second agreement, PSA will operate a 50-50 joint venture with CK Birla affiliate AVTEC Ltd. to make and supply powertrain parts.

Both facilities will be based in India’s Tamil Nadu state. Initial production capacity will be 100,000 vehicles per year, PSA says.

Alba Hits High with Sales and Production Record

Aluminium Bahrain B.S.C. (Alba), an aluminium smelter based in Bahrain, says it was able to reach record metal production of 971,400 tonnes in 2016. The production figure was up 1.1 percent compared with 960,600 tonnes in 2015.

Tim Murray, Alba CEO, said in a press release that the mark was reached despite “tough market conditions.” Alba sold 974,000 tonnes of aluminium in 2016, up 2.3 percent from 2015.

For the fourth quarter of 2016, sales increased 1.5 percent to 256,500 tonnes from 252,600 tonnes in the same quarter of 2015.
Aluminium and Foundry Operations Use Pyrotek’s Hydraulic Ladle System to Improve Metal Transfer

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capabilities of the truck to control the speed and acceleration of the tilt. That inevitably leads to sloshing of the metal and accompanying safety concerns.

During a pour with a standard crucible, the centre of gravity changes throughout the tilting using a fork lift truck. Because of this, the operator must raise the crucible while tilting it to pour the metal into a furnace.

“Because the operator has less to worry about with Pyrotek’s hydraulic ladle system, this also reduces the chances for overfills and the subsequent safety and cleanup issues,” says David Ransdell, a USA-based application engineer for Pyrotek. One of the advantages of the Pyrotek hydraulic ladle design is the spout, which offers a fixed point for metal flow. Operators are able to place the spout in the area they want to fill and simply begin the process. The ladle within the hydraulic system uses a Pyrotek-made precast liner, which can be kept in stock for replacements or in case of emergencies. “It is much easier to tear out a precast shape as there are not loads of anchors throughout the refractor,” Ransdell says.

Alternatively, most operations will experience downtime of 3–5 days during replacement of a cast-in-place refractory system. Replacing a precast shape can be done in one day, or even in one shift in some cases, saving significant downtime and resources.

Pyrotek’s hydraulic ladle system provides further value because of its insulation for molten metal. The use of an engineered refractory lining configuration allows for optimal shell temperatures and molten metal heat retention. Pyrotek uses software that can provide analysis of potential heat loss for a given refractory package. “We have done these analyses in the past and the heat-loss savings can be significant,” Ransdell says.

Case Study

Pyrotek engineered a hydraulic ladle system for a permanent mould die casting customer in Georgia, USA, improving the way aluminium is fed into its crucible holding furnaces. Because of the hydraulics, the transfer ladle filling design provided a more predictable and smoother tilting action for a consistent pour. Pyrotek’s hydraulic ladle system allows the operator to control the speed and acceleration, ensuring a safe and smooth fill.

Prior to using the hydraulic ladle system, the customer relied on pumps and troughs. Using that system, the customer experienced freezing metal and acceleration, ensuring a safe and smooth fill.

Pyrotek’s hydraulic ladle system provides a smoother metal transfer.

Pyrotek’s underheated immersion furnace is the proven solution for die casters.

• Improve casting quality
• Increase thermal efficiency
• Lower energy and maintenance costs

Pyrotek is the leader in underheated furnace technology, with over 100 furnaces installed in North America.