

Ningbo Companies on the Global Stage

Ningbo's Global Trade Transformations,
Witnessed at the Canton Fair

By Jin Yuhan

The 137th China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) opened earlier this month, once again highlighting the importance of international trade. This year's Fair features 73,000 exhibition booths, with over 4,200 occupied by Ningbo companies—5.7% of the total, exceeding the city's share of national export contributions. Around 20,000 Ningbo business representatives are attending the event in Guangdong. In Ningbo, where one in every four people works in imports and exports, the city's strong focus on global commerce remains evident. As the fair progresses, important questions are being addressed.

Diversifying Markets
Amid Global Instability

"For us, there are no inherently good or bad markets. It depends on how we approach them," said Wang Jianming, overseas marketing director of Ningbo Handian Group. In light of global market instability, having a global presence and diversifying risk has become a core strategy for Ningbo's import and export businesses.

At Ningbo Kaibo Group Co., Ltd.'s booth, marketing director Chen Huimin was busy meeting with clients. "We are setting our sights back on regions like the Middle East, East Asia, and Africa—markets we hadn't focused enough on. New opportunities are coming up," Chen said, mentioning that she was in talks with a new client from South Africa.

Emerging markets, particularly along the Belt and Road and in the Middle East and Africa, are becoming new focal points for Chinese exporters' business expansion.

"We initially focused on mid- to low-end consumers, but as we entered higher-value markets like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, we saw our range of products, including refrigerators, air conditioners, and washing machines, being purchased for both household and industrial use," Wang explained.



The 137th China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair). [Photo by Sun Yuzhuo, Zhao Yu]

The era of the "one-size-fits-all" approach is over. Customizing products to fit local consumer needs has become essential for capturing new markets.

"We sometimes switch roles, acting as buyers to conduct market research in Africa. This helps us better align our products with local demand," said Xiao Xing, business manager at Ningbo Feilong Home Appliance Group Co., Ltd. The company, which has been operating in Africa for over 15 years, saw a 10% year-on-year increase in exports in Q1 2024.

For Ningbo's exporters, challenges also present opportunities—a chance to gain a competitive edge through proactive action. "Now is the time for Chinese firms to overcome supply chain barriers, position themselves as direct suppliers, and explore new global trade pathways," said Xu Zheng, general manager of Sinosure's Ningbo Yuci Branch.

Capitalizing on Global Green Energy Growth

Ma Zhaoshuang, global sales director of Ningbo Ulica Solar Co., Ltd., stood amidst a display of photovoltaic panels at the Fair, negotiating deals

with a client from Indonesia.

"This year, we've launched a new line of single and double-glass photovoltaic modules, ranging from 380 watts to 720 watts, targeting markets in Asia, Africa, and Latin America," Ma explained, pointing to the product lineup with varying power outputs.

The renewable energy sector is rapidly expanding as global demand for green energy grows. Whether a company manufactures solar cells, photovoltaic inverters, commercial grid-tied systems, or new energy storage solutions, international expansion has become crucial.

"We offer a ten-year warranty," Ma added. "And orders can start with just one unit."

Ningbo Qixin International Trading Co., Ltd., a leader in solar mounting systems with over 50% market coverage in the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region, has been showcasing its flagship products at the Fair since last year. The company now seeks to boost its competitive edge globally by offering exceptional after-sales services, on top of cost-effective performance.

"Competition is tough, but most of our offerings are customized. We ask for our clients' location, latitude, longitude, sunlight conditions, and photos of the

installation site. Our engineers then create tailored designs," said sales manager Bao Leqiong. This customer-centric approach has already helped the company gain clients from Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Turkey, and other countries within just two days.

In today's competitive market, attention to detail helps companies identify new global opportunities by addressing the unmet needs of clients. As the renewable energy industry enters a new phase, these companies are composing a new chapter of Ningbo's green success with their innovative strategies.

Dual Circulation Strategy Boosts Domestic and International Sales

While the pace of international expansion remains steady, a new shift is emerging: more exhibition booths now proudly display signs reading "Available for Domestic Sales". This signals a growing trend of products designed to succeed in both international and domestic markets, reflecting China's "dual circulation" strategy. With a population of 1.4 billion, China's vast domestic demand offers companies boundless potential.

The dryer from Ningbo Leshi Industry Co., Ltd. is a

perfect example of this cross-market appeal. "This year, we've launched a 3-kilogram rapid dryer tailored for homes with small children and pets. Both domestic and international buyers have shown strong interest," said sales director Qiu Fuzhong.

For export-oriented companies, the dual-track approach allows them to pivot between markets quickly.

Ningbo Jiulong International Trade Co., Ltd., located in Hall 13.1, has transformed their modest 9-square-meter booth into an eye-catching presence on the main aisle. "Since the 'dual circulation' strategy was announced, we've actively shifted focus to domestic sales. However, catering to both international standards and domestic requirements can be a challenge," recalled general manager Jin Enjing. By striking a fine balance price and quality, the company has successfully captured mid-to-high-end Chinese consumers, growing domestic sales from zero to 10% of total revenue.

As companies leverage their experience in meeting international standards to drive their own upgrades, the dual circulation paradigm is taking shape, injecting fresh momentum into both domestic and foreign trade.

A Homestay's
Role in Boosting Local
Seaweed Sales

By Zhao Yu

On the morning of April 22, the clatter of pots and pans echoed in the kitchen of Yi Heju Homestay in Qiucun Town, Fenghua District. After tidying up the guest rooms, Chen Na, the homestay owner, was busy testing out a new dish—seaweed-and-shrimp patties. "My team and I are working on a new menu. Last night, a guest suggested that we do some seaweed-based specialty dishes for the May Day holiday," Chen explained. The ingredients for the seaweed-and-shrimp patties include early-season seaweed and shrimp harvested locally, alongside farm fresh free-range eggs, corn, carrots, and more.

Chen, 36, is a well-known entrepreneur in Qiucun Town. In 2019, she returned to her hometown to start her own business. In July of last year, Chen became the new owner of Yi Heju Homestay, which has 10 guest rooms, including seven double-bed rooms. There are over 100 works of calligraphy and painting on display, creating a unique atmosphere. The kitchen serves mouthwatering seafood dishes.

Recently, Chen started selling local produce at the homestay's front desk: sun-dried fish, shrimp, seaweed, and canned braised bamboo shoots, all harvested and prepared by local farmers. "Right now, dried seaweed is the most popular," she said, holding up a bundle. "It's dark green and tender, with hardly any sand. After a quick soak, it can be used in salads, stir-fries, or soups."

Lately, local fishermen have been busy drying seaweed on the docks whenever the sun is out. Chen often drives over to hand-pick the best batches to sell at the homestay.

"Thanks to Chen Na, our seafood practically sells itself," said Yang Liu'en, a villager from Yingjiapeng Village, proudly displaying his sun-dried seaweed. In recent years, Chen has helped seaweed farmers in Yingjiapeng Village boost their sales online, using smart marketing strategies and eye-catching packaging design. Last year, through her efforts, over 1,500 kilograms of dried seaweed reached supermarkets, restaurants, and retail stores. "The sea near Qiucun Town is calm, with no silt or freezing, providing an ideal environment for seaweed growth," Chen said. Many customers come all the way from Shanghai, Hangzhou, and beyond, drawn by Qiucun's sea produce.

Currently, Qiucun Town produces over 900 tons of dried seaweed annually, with a total output value exceeding 8 million yuan.

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SPOTLIGHT

Ningbo-Central and Eastern Europe Trade Up
Nearly 20% in Q1 2025

By Jin Lu

Ningbo's trade with Central and Eastern European countries reached 15.29 billion yuan in the first quarter of 2025, a 19.8% year-on-year increase, according to data released by Ningbo Customs on April 22. Exports totaled 11.95 billion yuan, marking a 25.8% year-on-year rise, while imports amounted to 3.34 billion yuan, up 2.3%.

Electromechanical products led Ningbo's exports to the region, accounting for 7.88 billion yuan of the total, a

22.6% increase from Q1 of 2024. Top items in this category include household appliances, electrical equipment, and auto parts.

Timber and wood products were Ningbo's primary imports from Central and Eastern Europe, with a significant 57.6% year-on-year increase, totaling 120 million yuan in the first quarter. The region's abundant forest resources and established timber industry align well with China's demand.

This year marks the 13th anniversary of the China-

Central and Eastern Europe cooperation mechanism. Ningbo Customs reports that trade between Ningbo and CEE countries has grown notably, from 12.51 billion yuan in 2012 to 56.13 billion yuan in 2024.

From May 22 to 25, Ningbo will host the 4th China-Central and Eastern European Countries Expo and International Consumer Goods Expo. As the countdown to the event enters its final month, government and business leaders are hoping for even deeper two-way cooperation.



Products from Central and Eastern Europe countries. [Photo by Fu Chunyi]

