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News from the trade

Swiss embroideries and the export trade

Since 1945, the export of Swiss embroideries has increased considerably; the total value of goods sent abroad rose from 48,5 millions in that year to 80,3 millions in 1946. The average value of goods exported increased from frs. 94.— to frs. 98.—, or by about 5%. Last year, however, wages had to be raised in the industry to correspond to higher cost of living (as compared with the 1938 index) and cost of production increased accordingly, an increase which could only be compensated by developing the export trade. The margin of profit in the embroidery industry has consequently been reduced.

The most important items of the export trade are: firstly, embroidered cotton fabrics, allover, handkerchiefs, collars, motifs, etc.; secondly, embroidered silk fabrics. Both these items were evaluated at over 29 million francs each. As regards the latter (Customs reference 451), the importance of the figures quoted are due to the fact that staple fibre handkerchiefs are included; these were in great demand early in 1946 although buyers always preferred cotton and linen lines whenever they were available. On the other hand, the export of staple fibre allover, so suitable for summer wear, remained fairly stable. Designs and embroideries on tulle have been in great demand. In the cotton embroidery section (Customs reference 388), pride of place was held by allover, handkerchiefs ranking second. The demand for collars, cuffs, dickies, motifs and braids also increased. Embroideries on tulle and guipure, particularly, were increasingly sought after during the second half of the year; fashion circles greatly appreciate these lines for trimming. Chain-stitch braids, insertions and embroideries also seemed to be gaining favour.

In the table below, official statistics are given for each type of goods:

	1945			1946		
	in 100 kilos	in 1000 Sw. frs.	Average value	in 100 kilos	in 1000 Sw. frs.	Average value
Feather-stitch embroideries (trimmings)	313	2739	87	627	5939	95
Feather-stitch embroideries (on tulle and etched)	258	4653	180	480	8662	180
Feather-stitch embroideries (other types)	1618	19686	121	2579	29502	114
Embroideries on linen	36	824	228	71	1260	177
Embroideries on silk	2834	19962	70	3893	29634	76
Embroideries on wool	—	14	—	—	26	—
Machine-made embroideries total	5059	47878	94	7650	75023	98
Hand-made embroideries	5	117	234	17	282	166
Chain-stitch embroideries (curtains)	56	381	68	98	796	81
Chain-stitch embroideries (other lines)	27	352	130	133	1275	96
Feather-stitch fabrics	98	1044	106	250	2927	117
Total exports	5245	49772	94	8148	80303	98

Europe absorbed 20% of the total exports of Swiss embroideries. Sweden proved the biggest buyer on the Continent and imported 6 million francs worth; exports to Belgium showed the biggest increase — 140,000 francs worth in 1945 and 3½ millions in 1946. In this case, however, imports were used for reconstituting stocks and the influence of the increased buying power of the Belgian Congo was strongly felt. France absorbed goods to the value of 1,7 million francs, although this figure does not correspond to the actual demand of that country; by the end of the year, however, a larger import quota was obtained. Taking world markets into consideration, the United States were the most important buyers of Swiss embroideries, although their imports increased by only 15% as compared with 1945, although Switzerland, on her side, increased her total exports by 60%. Exports to Latin America developed in a most encouraging fashion, especially in regard to Brazil, the Argentine and Mexico. In 1946, exports to British Dominions and Colonies revived, although Great Britain herself (before the war, the second largest consumer of Swiss embroideries) only granted a very small import quota at the end of the year. Canada increased her exports to two million Swiss francs; the Union of South Africa, which had purchased only Sw. frs. 630,000 worth of embroideries in 1945, imported 6,7 million francs worth last year. British India and Ceylon are also important customers of this Swiss industry, even though their import quotas are far from sufficient to meet the demand on their markets.

The facts and figures quoted above are contained in the 1946 Annual Report of the *Swiss Union of St. Gall Embroidery Exporters*. The report, which gives many interesting economic and social details about the industry, opens with a clear, concise survey of Switzerland's general economic situation in 1946, seen in the light of international events.