

Comparisons of Yangtze River Delta Region Definitions

As mentioned above, many analysts use a definition of the Yangtze River Delta region that includes Shanghai plus all of Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces. This is essentially an example of ‘looking for the lost keys under the street lamp’, or looking at statistics that are readily available instead of those that are most appropriate. The typical definition is inappropriate because it comprises far more than a compact, integrated economic zone. A better definition consists of Shanghai plus the areas of Jiangsu and Zhejiang that immediately surround Shanghai and the Delta described above.

The differences in main aggregates under the two different definitions of the Yangtze River Delta region can be substantial. The table shows that the land area, population, GDP, gross industrial output, imports, exports, utilised foreign direct investment, and retail sales of the second definition of the region are significantly smaller than those for the most common definition. In other words, getting a more precise definition is important to the overall conclusions that one might make in comparing the Yangtze River Delta region to other regions.

²⁴ *These figures are preliminary figures from statistics bureaux of China, Guangdong Province, Shanghai, Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province, and local jurisdictions in Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang Provinces.*

Defined Yangtze River Delta versus Sum of Shanghai Municipality, Jiangsu Province, and Zhejiang Province *

	Yangtze River Delta Region	Sum of Shanghai Municipality, Jiangsu Province, and Zhejiang Province	YRD % of Sum of City and Two Provinces
Land area 2004 (square kilometres)	109,648	210,742	52.03
Census population 2000 (million)	87.43	135.38	64.58
Registered population 2005 (million)	82.64	132.15	62.54
Total GDP 2005 (RMB billion)	3,389.67	4,078.11	83.12
Gross industrial output from state-owned enterprises and enterprises with over 5 million RMB in sales 2004 (RMB billion)	4,954.70	5,645.06	87.77
Total trade 2005 (US\$ billion)	502.75	521.71	96.37
Imports 2005 (US\$ billion)	226.72	231.18	98.07
Exports 2005 (US\$ billion)	276.03	290.52	95.01
Utilised FDI 2004 (US\$ billion)**	24.19	25.36	95.40
Retail sales of consumer goods 2005 (RMB billion)	1,061.19	1,330.49	79.76

Notes: * 2005 data for Chinese Mainland jurisdictions are preliminary data based on official sources.

** This figure might be overstated due to variations in reporting methods used by cities in Zhejiang Province.

Sources: Calculated from Shanghai Statistical Yearbook 2005, Jiangsu Statistical Yearbook 2005, Zhejiang Statistical Yearbook 2005, Statistical Yearbooks of jurisdictions in the Yangtze River Delta region 2005, and data from statistics bureaux, using the 16 city definition of the Yangtze River Delta region.

Comments

Many analysts tend to use an overly large definition of the Yangtze River Delta region. As a result, they tend to give a skewed picture of the comparison between the Pearl River Delta region and the Yangtze River Delta region. Often they wind up comparing a portion of a single province with two provinces plus a major municipality. In addition, as indicated above, they tend to compare the overly large definition of the Yangtze River Delta region with an overly small definition by using the Pearl River Delta Economic Zone rather than the full Greater Pearl River Delta region. This would not be so important except for the fact that foreign investors often take the information as a given and use it in their investment decisions without understanding exactly what is being covered and what is being compared.