

## Pruning saws: Releases highlight safety, performance

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Foldable constructions that prevent injury are increasing. Various angle settings and harder blades facilitate operation.

Aiming for differentiated products, China's cutting tools industry is releasing safer and more efficient designs. At many companies, this is in line with efforts to move upmarket, which have not slowed despite difficult business conditions.

Few makers are keen on pursuing the low end, since this means exporting to markets such as Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Demand in these regions is not as high compared with that of North America and the EU. For instance, in hand saws, the latter two regions account for more than half of overseas sales.

The latest models for the midrange and high end include foldable saws. In these constructions, the blade can be hidden when the tool is not being used, allowing these to be safely stored or packed for hiking or camping trips.

Such products are designed to open only at the push of a button for added protection. To prevent injury during cutting, Green Guard Industry Co. Ltd has integrated a hand protector in its compactible releases.

Convenience is also a key consideration in product development. In this regard, some makers have launched saws with multiple angle settings. Green Guard's TBA model, for instance, can be adjusted to cut at 90 to 180-degree slants.

For a number of companies, R&D work revolves around the basics. These suppliers are enhancing tool performance by providing treatments that can enhance the hardness and durability of the blade or the sharpness of the teeth. Undergoing these processes raises the unit price by 3 to 10 percent.

### Adapting to changes

Besides enhancing user safety and convenience, suppliers are boosting competitiveness by adjusting their operations to meet clients' time to market and pricing requirements.

With regard to the first, production processes are being streamlined to be able to accommodate changes in lead times at no extra charge. This stems primarily from customers' requests to move deliveries forward or backward, depending on current market conditions, to minimize business risk.

In keeping with this measure, companies generally begin manufacturing only after order confirmation or payment. As such, a number have begun implementing lean systems to cut inventory costs.

In terms of pricing, suppliers choose one of two options.

The first is to keep the price validity period short, usually one month, to revise for increases in raw material costs. Carbon and stainless steel, in particular, are on the rise once again. From \$530 and \$2,210 at the end of April, respectively, these surged to \$615 and \$2,855 per ton in July. Another round of adjustments is expected in coming months.

Some companies are moving in the opposite direction, preferring to keep prices stable for as long as possible. At these makers, quotes are valid for at least three months and may even be maintained for up to one year.

## Products & prices

Hand saws and knives are the two major exports of China cutting tools industry.

For the former, the selection includes hack, bow, back and concrete saws. Prices start at \$2 and increase based on the material and specifications of the model.

In many companies, the blade is offered in 45 carbon steel, high-carbon steel, or the 65Mn or SK-5 alloy grades. These undergo various treatments to improve cutting performance and rust resistance, and extend service life.

Designs feature two- or three-edge teeth that are typically punched or grinded. In addition, blades for concrete saws are coated with tungsten carbide.

With knives, options for pruning trees, cutting branches or twine and other general-purpose applications include foldable and nonfoldable models. Prices in this line can reach \$10 per piece, depending on the materials of the blade and handle.

## Industry overview

Mainland China is home to more than 2,000 suppliers of cutting tools. Of these companies, over 90 percent are privately owned, while the rest were established with investment from Taiwan or Hong Kong.

Small plants constitute about 70 percent of the manufacturing base. With fewer than 100 workers, these operations generate less than \$1 million in sales annually.

Midsized suppliers, or those with factory areas spanning 2,000 to 10,000sqm, have yearly revenue ranging from \$1 million to \$10 million. They employ up to 800 people, including at least two R&D specialists and two QC inspectors. At these companies, 40 to 60 percent of production processes are done in-house.

Larger entities have facilities for most manufacturing requirements, including mold making. Among their workers, more than 20 are assigned to product development. A similarly sized group conducts QC inspection and testing.

Regardless of capability, suppliers typically manufacture hand saws or utility knives with two or three other tools, often pliers, screwdrivers and chisels. Most ship models via trading companies, but there are several midsize and large operations utilizing their own export rights to do so.

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Contact suppliers in this article

Green Guard Industry Co. Ltd

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Winplus International Co. Ltd

Yangjiang Pute Hardware Co.,Ltd

Note: All price quotes in this report are in US dollars unless otherwise specified. FOB prices were provided by the companies interviewed only as reference prices at the time of interview and may have changed.

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var newURL =
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var finalURL = newURL;
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