55% and 70%, depending on economic and trade conditions and the specific equipment needs. With Mexico's trade liberalization policies, imports increased significantly, from $47.9 million in 1987 to $58 million in 1988, but dropped again to $30.8 million. The following table shows imports by category for the 1987-1989 period. It is interesting to note that almost all categories experienced a reduction in 1989, in particular casting equipment and other foundry equipment, parts for rolling mills and furnaces, while rolls for rolling mills increased significantly.

TABLE 2
IMPORTS OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE
IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY
(5000 dollars)

	1987	1988	1989
Converters	-	612.2	3.7
Ingot moulds & ladles	1,013.1	746.3	1,489.1
Casting machines	21,691.2	9,752.7	2,855.5
Other moulding equipment	468.3	151.6	466.4
Parts	4,359.1	1,027.1	80.9
Tube mills	1.2	5.8	1,354.7
Hot or hot/cold rolling mills	405.4	3,773.8	723.7
Cold rolling mills	0.4	43.1	177.5
Rolls	4,791.7	1,755.8	10,527.6
Parts for rolling mills	6,747.5	25,850.7	7,640.1
Furnaces	7,345.5	5,406.0	4,615.8
Parts furnace	1,095.4	5,356.1	232.3
Slag transporters	17.6	1,951.7	619.3
TOTAL	47,936.4	57,953.9	30,785.6

Source: Import data by Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial

There are traditionally large year to year fluctuations in imports because the large expansion projects occur irregularly, depending on general economic conditions and availability of financing. At the same time, the long useful life of the equipment extends its purchasing cycle and translates into important purchases of parts for replacement, maintenance or upgrading of existing technology.