



# Fifth Wave Monthly

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She has many titles and affiliations, but the newest is Chairperson of Turkish Machinery exporters' union (known in its home country as MAiB). The subject is none other than our esteemed friend Sevda Kayhan Yilmaz (people who know her call her Sevda or SKY, as her initials spell). Her main job in Konya, Türkiye is Chairperson of Kayahan Hidrolik Makine, a family-owned business she runs after she took the reins from her father years ago, but her new title comes after 20 years of

working as a volunteer for MAiB at trade shows and conferences around the world, spreading the word about the quality and technology of Turkish machines.

She is the first woman elected to this office, which runs a semi-government association. Three other women were elected to the board as well. While the board is elected, the staff belongs to the Ministry of Trade. "There are 27,000 members in the organization," she explains. Each machine exporter must be a member.



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# Turkish machinery exporters get a willing and able ally

May 15, 2026

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"My primary responsibility," Yilmaz says, "is to enhance the global competitiveness of our machine industry, and to ensure the sustainable growth of its exporters. In this role, I maintain close engagement with the industry while also ensuring effective coordination with public institutions and government. This group will shape export strategies that develop target markets, addressing challenges that will be faced by our members, and positioning the sector accurately on the international stage. Equally important is representing the voice of the industry by providing data-driven, rational policy recommendations to decision makers."

## A silver year

Soon Turkish Machinery will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary—with Yilmaz as its fifth leader (board terms last four years). Volunteering for 80% of the lifetime of an organization comes with lessons. “My experience has made one thing very clear. Sustainable success is driven not by individual effort, but by collective intelligence and coordination. My new role is a reflection of the sector’s shared vision.”

After two decades of work toward increasing exports, the results are exciting. “In the last eight years, we have almost doubled our machine exports.” In fact, in terms of U.S. machine trade with Türkiye, no other country—including China—has increased its export percentage more than Türkiye. From 2006 to now, growth in exports of Turkish machinery is a staggering 814%, starting at \$35 million and 2026 expected exports at \$320 million.

What can she do to increase value to the organization? “I want to elevate our sector toward a higher value-added structure. It is no longer sufficient to focus so solely on increasing the export values. We need to improve the technology. We also need to increase the production of energy efficient machinery.

“We will also expand digitalization and data-driven export methods,” she continues. “And we will prioritize initiatives to strengthen the global perception of the sector. We have done so in Europe through a unified branding approach. Our next project focuses on the United States and North America. We will position the Turkish machine industry not as a price-driven competitor, but a sector recognized for quality engineering, operational excellence, sustainability, and reliability.” She notes that reliability becomes more important now, as we have seen the global supply chain become vulnerable.

Will things change for Yilmaz? “I am very accustomed to doing this job <supporting the machine industry>,” she reveals. “This is a lifestyle for me, I mean besides my own job. It’s a very important part of my life. I don’t feel that it will be an extra responsibility, because for 20 years I have adopted this responsibility. It’s a marathon, really. I am carrying the flag until the next person comes forward.”