Highlights from the Fed's latest economic survey

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Highlights from the Federal Reserve's survey of economic conditions nationwide. The survey, released Wednesday and known as the Beige Book, is based on information collected from the Fed's 12 regional bank districts.

BOSTON

(This region covers Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and part of Connecticut.)

The region's economy grew. Manufacturers saw revenues rise, and many expect demand will improve gradually through the rest of this year. Some firms noted a "choppiness" in business activity. Retail sales were mixed, with many merchants worried about sagging consumer confidence. Most companies were holding the size of their work forces steady.

NEW YORK

(This region covers New York and parts of Connecticut and New Jersey.)

The economy showed more signs of strengthening. Tourism in New York City was robust, helped by a pickup in business travel. Manhattan hotels said occupancy rates rose to a record high for May and stayed strong in June. Broadway theater attendance was brisk. Retailers said sales met or beat expectations. Sales of clothing were healthy. But sales of big-ticket appliances were sluggish. Auto sales retreated a bit, but are up from a year ago. Factories reported some "leveling off" in activity. The commercial real estate market was mixed, although office leasing activity rose in New York City and vacancy rates dipped. The housing market was soft. More banks reported rising demand for consumer loans.

PHILADELPHIA

(This region covers Delaware and parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.)

Economic growth picked up slightly. Retailers saw sales gains as warm weather boosted purchases of summer clothes. Some merchants said jewelry sales grew, but many said home goods and expensive appliances were weak. Auto sales declined. Factories reported an increase in shipments. Makers of wood products and chemicals saw an increase in new orders, but other manufacturers said new orders held steady or declined.

CLEVELAND

(This region covers Ohio and parts of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky.)

Economic growth held steady. Factories said business was "leveling off." Steel production declined. Auto production was stable. Freight transportation executives reported "favorable" volume. Retail sales were flat or up slightly. Sales of clothing and food products were solid, while spending on discretionary goods weakened. Merchants were less optimistic about future sales. New home sales slowed.

RICHMOND

(This region covers Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and parts of West Virginia.)

Economic growth was described as either "mixed" or "modestly improving." Factory activity eased a bit. Tourism picked up. Some believed the gains were partly due to people switching vacations to the region because of the Gulf Coast oil spill. Retail sales weakened, with big-ticket purchases and shopper traffic plummeting. Some areas said home sales slowed with the expiration of the government's homebuyer tax credit. But other areas reported solid sales in the "upper-middle price bracket" and in suburban neighborhoods.

ATLANTA

(This region covers Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and parts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.)

Economic growth slowed. Tourism was generally positive, but there were concerns about the impact of the Gulf oil spill on the region. Miami and New Orleans indicated business travel was good. Clean-up crews, oil company workers and the National Guard booked hotel rooms in the areas, helping to blunt losses from would-be vacationers canceling their rooms because of the spill. Home sales weakened. Factories saw the pace of business slow.

CHICAGO

(This region covers Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and parts of Illinois and Indiana.)

Economic growth slowed. Retail sales edged up. Spending on food and other necessities rose, while shoppers cut spending on home goods and luxury items. Business spending moderated. Increased uncertainty about the direction of the recovery had a negative effect on consumer and business confidence, and in turn, their spending. Manufacturing softened. Steel production decreased. Makers of industrial metals noted receding activity. In agriculture, too much rain reduced hay production and damaged corn and soybean plants.

ST. LOUIS

(This region covers Missouri, Arkansas and Kentucky, and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee and Mississippi.)

Growth improved. Factory activity increased. Makers of furniture, plastics and metal pipe announced plans to expand operations and hire. Business in the services industry also increased. A major software publishing company announced plans to open a new facility in the region and hire. However, some in the education services, transportation and casino businesses planned to scale back operations and lay off workers. Home sales improved. Auto sales rose. In agriculture, farmers planned to harvest more acres of corn for grain, and rice, this year.

MINNEAPOLIS

(This region covers Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin and Michigan.)

The economy grew slightly. Retail sales increased modestly. Tourism was up slightly. However, Glacier National Park is expected to have a record year due to its 100 anniversary celebration. Activity in manufacturing, energy and mining all increased. So did agricultural activity. Price estimates were raised for corn, soybeans and wheat. Drought conditions across most of the region eased.

KANSAS CITY, Mo.

(This region covers Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and parts of Missouri and New Mexico.)

Economic growth held steady. Growth in manufacturing eased slightly. However, transportation and high-tech manufacturers reported solid growth in sales. Tourism rose and was expected to stay strong through the summer months. Retailers reported mostly flat sales but expected them to improve in the coming months. Commercial real estate weakened. In agriculture, corn and soybean crops were reported in generally good or better condition. In energy, growth in the number of active oil drilling rigs slowed.

DALLAS

(This region covers Texas and parts of New Mexico and Louisiana.)

The region's economy expanded moderately. Factories, especially those tied to the construction industry, saw a slowdown. Retailers saw solid sales growth. Department store sales were better than expected. Shoppers remain price conscious. The count of oil drilling rigs in the region rose - despite a drop of 39 rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. The share of oil drilling continues to rise. The share of natural gas-related drilling was surprisingly steady given high inventories and low prices. Builders of low and moderately prices homes reported a "significant drop off" in sales. In agriculture, cattle prices declined. The recent rainfall has boosted yields for Texas cotton, potentially pushing down prices.

SAN FRANCISCO

(This region covers California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona,

Hawaii and Alaska.)

Economic activity picked up slightly. Retail sales firmed a bit. Shoppers focused on necessities and lower priced items. Factory activity was mixed. Makers of semiconductors and other information technology products reported solid growth. But clothing makers said business was flat. The pace of home sales declined. Limited availability of "jumbo" mortgages held back sales of higher prices homes in some areas. In agriculture, orders and sales were robust for assorted crop and livestock products.

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