CAD/CAM systems will have to look towards the Far East, as growth in this industry segment in countries like Japan is expected to outpace traditional markets in Europe and North America, a new report by the Millennium Research Group suggests.

According to the paper released by the Canadian market intelligence provider on Thursday, CAD/CAM markets in Europe will not show improvement before 2014, while Japan will see dramatic growth owing to under-penetration in dental offices and increasing interest by dentists in investing in the technology.

In addition, decreased reimbursement for conventional metal restorations by national health insurance will increase the competitiveness of new materials for manufacturing prosthetics, the report states.

Despite its recent economic troubles, Japan is currently the largest market for dental CAD/CAM and prosthetics in the Asia Pacific region after Australia and South Korea. Since the country has to import much of its CAD/CAM technology from abroad, the field is largely dominated by European and US manufacturers, such as Sirona Dental Systems, Nobel Biocare or 3M Espe. A few domestic companies have launched their own systems in recent years, such as Kuraray Noritake Dental’s KATANA system, which is now distributed worldwide.

Millennium Research Group predicts that the global market for dental CAD/CAM will exceed US$40 million by 2016, to constitute over one tenth of the overall market for dental equipment. With over 60 per cent, chairside systems like intra-oral scanners will most likely have the largest share in this segment, the company said.