

# Mineral Industry Surveys

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## ANTIMONY IN THE FOURTH QUARTER 2015

Imports of antimony products were 5,000 metric tons (t) in the fourth quarter of 2015, a 16% decrease from those in the third quarter of 2015, and a 25% decrease from those in the fourth quarter of 2014 (table 1). In 2015, imports of antimony products were 22,800 t, a decrease of 6% from imports in 2014. Antimony oxide comprised the majority of antimony imports during 2015, and the leading suppliers of antimony oxide to the United States were, in descending order of quantity, China, Thailand, Belgium, and Bolivia (fig. 1, table 2). China was the leading source of imported antimony metal (including alloys, waste and scrap) in 2015, accounting for 53% of imports (table 2). Exports of antimony during the fourth quarter of 2015 were 5% less than those in the preceding quarter and 3% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2014. In 2015, exports of antimony were slightly less than those in 2014 (table 1).

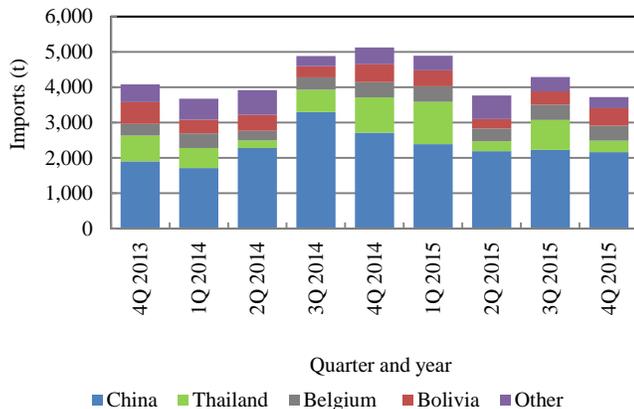


Figure 1. U.S. imports of antimony oxide from the fourth quarter of 2013 through the fourth quarter of 2015. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The average Platts Metals Week New York dealer price for antimony metal during the fourth quarter of 2015 was 290 cents per pound, 3% less than that during the third quarter, and 29% less than that in the fourth quarter of 2014. The average price of

antimony in 2015 was 327 cents per pound, a 23% decrease from that in 2014 (fig. 2, table 1).

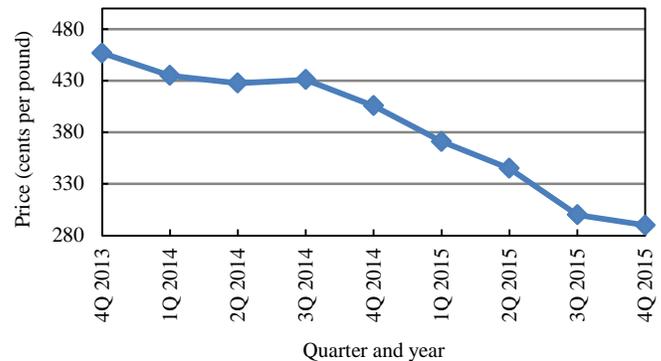


Figure 2. Average quarterly New York dealer price for 99.5% to 99.6% antimony metal from the fourth quarter of 2013 through the fourth quarter of 2015. Source: Platts Metals Week

U.S. Antimony Corp. (USAC) (Thompson Falls, MT) reported that it sold 280 t of antimony (as contained metal) during the fourth quarter of 2015, a 45% increase from that during the same quarter of 2014. In 2015, USAC sold 1,128 t of antimony, 44% more than in 2014. Sales included antimony produced in the United States and Mexico. On December 23, 2015, Hillgrove Mines Pty. Ltd. (Australia) announced the closure of its antimony mine in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. Hillgrove concentrates were processed at USAC's Madero smelter in Mexico and, prior to the mine closure, USAC stockpiled about a 4- to 5- month supply of concentrates. In the future, USAC planned to substitute antimony concentrates from mines in Mexico for those from Australia (U.S. Antimony Corp., 2016).

In November, China's Ministry of Commerce set the 2016 export quotas for antimony metal and trioxide at 54,400 t (metal content), 5,000 t less than that in 2015. It is unclear if the

previous quotas had any impact on the global antimony market in 2015 because, as was the case in 2014, most producers did not use all of their allocated export quotas (Xu, 2015).

According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, antimony mine production in China was 111,400 t in 2015, about 10% less than that in 2014. In 2015, total antimony metal and trioxide production was 200,800 t (not specified if this was metal content or gross weight), a 14% decline from that in 2014. The decline in production was attributed to reduced global antimony consumption and lower prices. Hsikwangshan Twinkling Star Co., Ltd. (one of the leading antimony mine and metal producers in China) and eight smaller producers in Hunan Province were required by the Government to consolidate and reduce antimony metal production capacity in 2016. The eight smaller producers were required to reduce combined metal production capacity to about 25,000 metric tons per year (t/yr) from 48,000 t/yr, and Hsikwangshan Twinkling Star was required to reduce production capacity at its smelter to 18,000 t/yr from 28,000 t/yr (Xu, 2016b, c).

### Update

In late February, Hsikwangshan Twinkling Star stopped producing antimony concentrate at its concentrator plant in Hunan Province and cut 250 jobs owing to price declines. The closure followed the reported February shutdown of its last operating antimony mine, the South Mine, in Hunan Province. The mine had the capacity to produce about 7,000 t/yr of antimony concentrates. Hsikwangshan Twinkling Star closed its other antimony mine in Hunan Province, the North Mine, in 2015. Hsikwangshan Twinkling Star estimated that it lost about \$59.7 million in 2015, substantially more than it lost in 2014, primarily owing to low antimony prices that, according to the

company, had fallen below average production costs for the industry (Metal Bulletin, 2016; Xu, 2016a).

As of early March, it was reported that the eight smaller antimony producers in Hunan Province had not yet consolidated operations or reduced their antimony metal production capacity (Xu, 2016a).

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TABLE 1  
SALIENT ANTIMONY STATISTICS<sup>1</sup>

(Metric tons, antimony content, unless otherwise specified)

	2015					
	2014	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter– 4th quarter
<b>Imports for consumption:</b>						
Ore and concentrate	365	59	62	109	90	320
Metal, alloys, waste and scrap (gross weight)	6,210	1,470	1,570	1,570	1,180	5,790
Oxide <sup>2</sup>	17,600	4,890	3,760	4,290	3,720	16,700
Total	24,200	6,420	5,390	5,970	5,000	22,800
<b>Exports:</b>						
Ore and concentrate	41	20	4	5	2	31
Metal, alloys, waste and scrap (gross weight)	1,570	214	506	399	316	1,440
Oxide <sup>2</sup>	1,670	368	455	442	488	1,750
Total	3,280	602	965	846	806	3,220
Price, average, cents per pound <sup>3</sup>	424.79	371.04	345.00	300.00	290.00	326.51

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits, except prices; may not add to totals shown.

<sup>2</sup>Antimony content was calculated by the U.S. Geological Survey.

<sup>3</sup>Source: Platts Metals Week. New York dealer price for 99.5% to 99.6% metal, c.i.f. U.S. ports.

TABLE 2  
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF ANTIMONY, BY CLASS AND COUNTRY<sup>1</sup>

(Metric tons, antimony content)

Class and country	2015							
	2014	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	October	November	December	January– December
<b>Ore and concentrate:</b>								
China	89	--	--	26	--	13	--	39
Italy	215	48	59	83	21	24	31	266
Other	61	11	3	--	--	--	1	15
Total	365	59	62	109	21	37	32	320
<b>Metal, alloys, waste and scrap (gross weight):</b>								
Bolivia	61	17	--	13	--	--	--	30
China	4,060	626	999	860	174	163	228	3,050
India	778	488	268	390	120	120	30	1,420
Japan	187	138	38	--	--	--	--	176
Mexico	291	48	106	104	13	59	51	381
United Kingdom	196	94	95	82	29	11	43	354
Vietnam	150	40	20	40	--	--	142	242
Other	485	20	40	82	--	--	--	142
Total	6,210	1,470	1,570	1,570	336	353	494	5,790
<b>Oxide:<sup>2</sup></b>								
Belgium	1,470	441	361	437	160	136	119	1,650
Bolivia	1,660	449	266	378	249	133	116	1,590
China	10,000	2,390	2,190	2,220	609	720	830	8,960
France	444	80	95	50	16	16	32	289
Japan	596	25	269	90	72	11	12	479
Mexico	935	297	165	247	85	27	41	862
Thailand	2,410	1,200	282	847	--	--	332	2,660
Other	87	17	135	15	5	--	3	175
Total	17,600	4,890	3,760	4,290	1,200	1,040	1,490	16,700
Grand total	24,200	6,420	5,390	5,970	1,550	1,430	2,010	22,800
Other antimony compounds (gross weight)	75	25	45	5	7	--	6	88

-- Zero.

<sup>1</sup>Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

<sup>2</sup>Antimony content was calculated by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.