

Mineral Industry Surveys

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BAUXITE AND ALUMINA IN THE FIRST QUARTER 2009

Imports of crude and dried bauxite in the first quarter of 2009 were 1.75 million metric tons, 32% lower than those in the fourth quarter of 2008 and 35% lower than those in the first quarter of 2008, reflecting the continued downturn in domestic alumina production. Jamaica (43%), Brazil (26%), and Guinea (17%) continued to be the principal sources of imports in the first quarter of 2009. However, imports from Jamaica and Guinea declined by 35% and 34%, respectively, which accounted for most of the decline in total imports of crude and dried bauxite.

Imports of alumina during the first quarter of 2009 were 702,000 t, 22% higher than those in the fourth quarter 2008 and 9% higher than those in the first quarter of 2008, as domestic aluminum smelters used more imported alumina instead of alumina refined domestically. The leading sources of imported alumina during the first quarter of 2009 were Australia (40%) and Jamaica (23%). Imports from Jamaica increased by 104% compared with those of the prior quarter, accounting for most of the net increase of alumina imports during the first quarter of 2009.

Exports of alumina during the first quarter of 2009 were 193,000 t, 18% lower than those in the fourth quarter of 2008

and 37% lower than those in the first quarter of 2008. Alumina available to foreign aluminum smelters on the global market at prices lower than domestic refining costs was the primary reason for the decline in alumina exports. The leading destinations of alumina exported during the first quarter of 2009 were Iceland (48%) and Canada (38%). Exports during the first quarter of 2009 to Iceland increased by 56% but were offset by a decline of 47% in exports to Canada compared with exports in the prior quarter.

Suriname Aluminum Co. (Suralco) announced that alumina production would be reduced by 40% at the 2.2-million-metric-ton-per-year refinery in Paranam, Suriname. Reduced demand and lower prices for alumina and aluminum were cited as the reasons for the temporary production cut (Alcoa Inc., 2009).

Reference Cited

Alcoa Inc., 2009, Alumina production at Suriname refinery to be curtailed by 870,000 metric tons: Paranam, Suriname, Alcoa Inc. news release, May 5, 1 p.

TABLE 1
U.S. IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF CRUDE AND DRIED BAUXITE¹

(Metric tons)

Country	2008					2009
	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	Year to date	First quarter
Imports (for consumption):						
Brazil	419,000	554,000	464,000	501,000	1,940,000	456,000
Guinea	667,000	506,000	593,000	582,000	2,350,000	298,000
Guyana	179,000	284,000	131,000	128,000	723,000	62,700
Jamaica	1,130,000	1,140,000	1,110,000	1,050,000	4,430,000	755,000
Sierra Leone	280,000	112,000	115,000	272,000	779,000	115,000
Other	40,000	34,400	137,000	49,000	260,000	64,900
Total	2,710,000	2,630,000	2,550,000	2,590,000	10,500,000	1,750,000
Exports:						
Canada	2,400	2,060	1,990	1,690	8,140	1,160
Czech Republic	--	--	--	--	--	40
Germany	65	284	243	--	592	47
Ireland	--	--	144	2,740	2,880	--
Other	1,170	885	306	257	2,620	274
Total	3,640	3,220	2,680	4,690	14,200	1,520

-- Zero.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; data adjusted by the U.S. Geological Survey.

TABLE 2
U.S. IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF CALCINED BAUXITE, BY COUNTRY¹

(Metric tons)

Country	2008										2009	
	First quarter		Second quarter		Third quarter		Fourth quarter		Year to date		First quarter	
	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other
Imports (for consumption):												
Australia	--	--	--	98,300	--	--	--	63,400	--	162,000	--	--
Brazil	23,800	27,000	26,300	--	32,300	--	42,700	--	125,000	27,000	39,100	--
China	40,000	10,700	41,000	12,200	68,500	38,700	27,500	4,500	177,000	66,100	10,200	9,240
Dominican Republic	--	46,100	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	46,100	--	--
Greece	--	--	--	--	28,100	--	77	--	28,200	--	--	--
Guyana	13,800	114,000	11,800	72,500	2,880	51,400	10,300	67,100	38,600	305,000	2,850	41,700
Jamaica	--	--	--	47,800	--	--	--	47,500	--	95,300	--	--
Other	--	28,800	--	7,520	--	20	1,330	--	1,330	36,400	--	122
Total	77,600	227,000	79,000	238,000	132,000	90,100	81,900	183,000	370,000	738,000	52,200	51,100
Exports:												
Canada	1,060	--	692	129	2,200	--	2,580	--	6,530	129	2,530	--
Italy	--	--	--	177	--	--	--	--	--	177	--	--
Mexico	293	53	357	--	372	55	216	270	1,240	378	713	528
Other	17	51	308	17	311	33	173	30	809	131	154	1
Total	1,370	104	1,360	323	2,880	88	2,970	300	8,580	815	3,400	529

-- Zero.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; data adjusted by the U.S. Geological Survey.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF ALUMINA¹

(Metric tons, calcined equivalent)

Country	2008					2009
	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	Year to date	First quarter
Imports (for consumption):²						
Australia	188,000	262,000	237,000	243,000	930,000	283,000
Brazil	157,000	80,500	158,000	128,000	523,000	111,000
Jamaica	126,000	199,000	63,700	80,000	468,000	163,000
Suriname	69,100	57,100	81,500	56,300	264,000	105,000
Venezuela	62,500	26,300	40,200	25,100	154,000	--
Other	44,400	51,200	55,400	43,500	195,000	40,200
Total	646,000	676,000	636,000	577,000	2,530,000	702,000
Exports:³						
Canada	144,000	186,000	161,000	138,000	629,000	73,500
Iceland	105,000	85,700	61,000	59,200	311,000	92,400
Mexico	11,100	13,900	15,400	14,000	54,400	9,940
Netherlands	24,800	857	687	1,430	27,700	1,070
Norway	18	54	34,300	38	34,500	54
Other	22,900	25,000	23,300	21,500	92,600	15,800
Total	308,000	311,000	296,000	235,000	1,150,000	193,000

-- Zero.

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

²Includes imports of aluminum hydroxide reported in calcined equivalent. As shipped, aluminum hydroxide: 201,000 tons in 2008; 48,300 tons in the first quarter of 2009.

³Includes exports of aluminum hydroxide reported in calcined equivalent. As shipped, aluminum hydroxide: 76,600 tons in 2008; 13,700 tons in the first quarter of 2009.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; data adjusted by the U.S. Geological Survey.