

Mineral Industry Surveys

For information, contact:

E. Lee Bray, Bauxite and Alumina Commodity Specialist
 National Minerals Information Center
 U.S. Geological Survey
 989 National Center
 Reston, VA 20192
 Telephone: (703) 648-4979, Fax: (703) 648-7757
 Email: lbray@usgs.gov

Linda M. Barnes (Data)
 Telephone: (703) 648-7986
 Fax: (703) 648-7975
 Email: lbarnes@usgs.gov

Internet: <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/>

BAUXITE AND ALUMINA IN THE FOURTH QUARTER 2015

Imports of crude and dried bauxite in the fourth quarter of 2015 were 2.33 million metric tons (Mt), 20% less than those in the third quarter of 2015 and 16% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2014 (fig. 1). Jamaica (38%), Brazil (30%), and Guinea (30%) were the leading sources of crude and dried bauxite imports in the fourth quarter of 2015. Imports of crude and dried bauxite from Brazil, Guinea, and Jamaica during the fourth quarter of 2015 decreased by 22%, 6%, and 29%, respectively, compared with those in the third quarter of 2015. Imports of crude and dried bauxite in 2015 were 3% less than those in 2014.

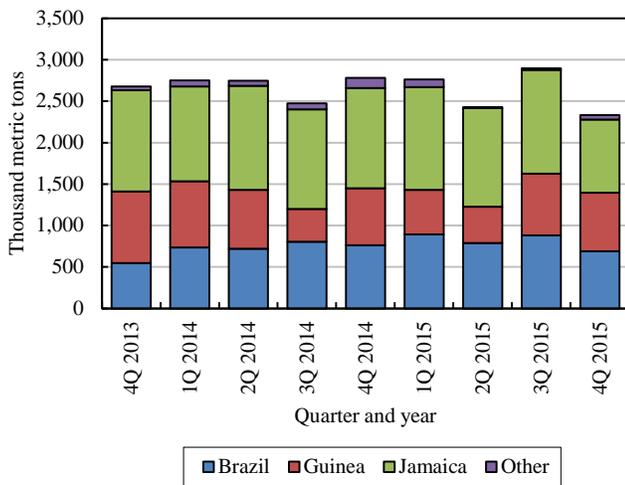


Figure 1. Quarterly imports of crude and dried bauxite from the fourth quarter 2013 through the fourth quarter 2015. Sources: Jamaica Bauxite Institute and U.S. Census Bureau.

Imports of alumina during the fourth quarter of 2015 were 280,000 metric tons (t), 29% less than those in the third quarter of 2015 and 18% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2014 (fig. 2). The leading sources of imported alumina during the fourth quarter of 2015 were Brazil (44%), Australia (34%), and

Suriname (8%). Alumina imports during 2015 were 4% less than those in 2014.

Exports of alumina during the fourth quarter of 2015 were 618,000 t, 5% more than those in the third quarter of 2015 and 18% more than those in the fourth quarter of 2014 (fig. 2). The leading destinations for alumina exported during the fourth quarter of 2015 were Canada (31%), Egypt (19%), Norway (15%), and China (12%). Alumina exports during 2015 were slightly more than those in 2014.

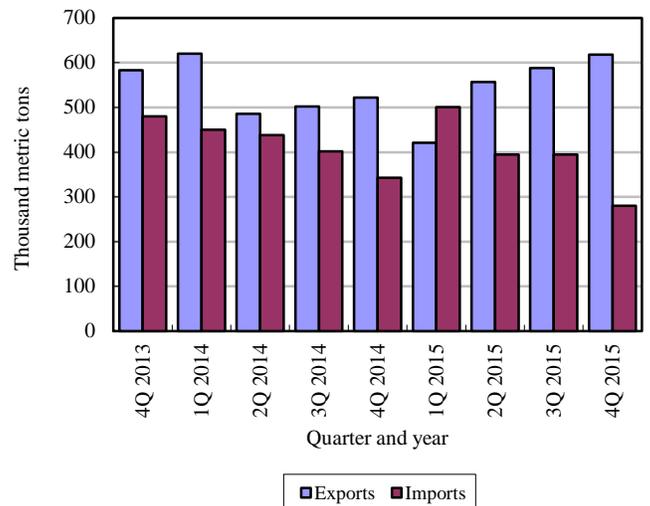


Figure 2. Alumina exports and imports from the fourth quarter 2013 through the fourth quarter 2015. Sources: Jamaica Bauxite Institute and U.S. Census Bureau.

Update

Alcoa Inc. announced that it would temporarily shut down the remaining 810,000 metric tons per year (t/yr) of operating capacity at the 2.3-million-metric-ton-per-year (Mt/yr) alumina refinery at Point Comfort, TX. In November 2015, Alcoa had announced that it would shut down an additional 1.2 Mt/yr of capacity at the refinery, 290,000 t/yr having been previously shut down. (See Bauxite and Alumina in the Third Quarter 2015.) Alcoa cited the need to close unprofitable capacity in

order to improve the cost position of its upstream portfolio in the face of lower aluminum prices. Once the shutdown is completed by the end of the second quarter 2016, Alcoa will have curtailed 3.3 Mt/yr of refining capacity since March 2015 (Alcoa Inc., 2016).

Sherwin Alumina Co. LLC, a subsidiary of Glencore International Ltd., filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on January 11, 2016. Under its proposed restructuring, Sherwin planned to continue to produce alumina at its 1.65-Mt/yr alumina refinery in Gregory, TX. Sherwin stated that it would continue contract negotiations with employees represented by the United Steelworkers (USW) union that had been locked out since October 11, 2014. Production from the alumina refinery would continue by management employees and temporary workers. However, on February 4, Sherwin notified the USW that the refinery would be shut down at the end of March because financing was withdrawn. (See Bauxite and Alumina in the Third Quarter 2015.) Glencore reported that alumina production from the refinery in 2015 was 15% less than that in 2014. The temporary shutdown of one of the five production units in June 2014 ahead of the lockout was cited for the decreased production (Glencore International Ltd., 2016, p. 8, 17; Sherwin Alumina Co. LLC, 2016a, b).

Noranda Aluminum Holding Corp. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on February 8, 2016. Under its proposed restructuring, Noranda planned to continue to produce bauxite from its mine in St. Ann, Jamaica, for use at its 1.2-Mt/yr alumina refinery in Gramercy, LA, and to sell to other refiners. Noranda planned to shut down the one potline still producing at the 263,000-t/yr New Madrid, MO, aluminum smelter in March. Two other potlines were shut down after an electrical supply circuit failure on January 7, 2016. (See Aluminum in November 2015.) Noranda's rolling mills would continue to produce products using aluminum slab from other sources, although

Noranda anticipated that they likely would be sold as part of the company's restructuring (Noranda Aluminum Holding Corp., 2016).

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

(Metric tons)

Country	2015					
	2014	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter– 4th quarter
Imports (for consumption):						
Brazil	3,030,000	894,000	788,000	881,000	691,000	3,250,000
Guinea	2,590,000	536,000	439,000	747,000	705,000	2,430,000
Jamaica ²	4,810,000	1,240,000	1,190,000	1,250,000	884,000	4,560,000
Other	327,000	91,100	10,200	17,100	51,000	169,000
Total	10,800,000	2,760,000	2,420,000	2,900,000	2,330,000	10,400,000
Exports:						
Canada	2,320	1,030	545 ^r	629	531	2,740
Mexico	672	--	--	--	--	--
Other	472	51	28	327	226	632
Total	3,460	1,080	573^r	956	757	3,370

^rRevised. -- Zero.

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

²Source: Jamaica Bauxite Institute.

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	2015											
	2014		1st quarter		2d quarter		3d quarter		4th quarter		1st quarter– 4th quarter	
	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other
Imports (for consumption):												
Australia	--	178,000	--	--	--	49,700	--	--	--	66,900	--	117,000
Brazil	--	45,000	--	--	40	--	-- ^r	--	--	--	40	--
China	78,500	14,500	25,900	2,580	16,100	2,900	1,750	6,370	12,400	2,890	56,100	14,700
Greece	--	109,000	--	--	--	-- ^r	--	26,400	--	--	--	26,400
Guyana	17,600	128,000	12,700	44,700	10,800	74,300	6,300	66,900	5,630	74,600	35,500	260,000
Other	28,200	1,100	141	343	15,500	272	9	232	15	237	15,700	1,080
Total	124,000	476,000	38,800	47,600	42,400	127,000^r	8,060^r	99,800	18,000	145,000	107,000	419,000
Exports:												
Canada	5,490	--	1,830	--	1,260	--	1,940	--	548	--	5,580	--
China	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2,040	--	2,040	--
Mexico	530	702	105	64	20	--	10	249	--	242	135	555
Other	1,280	71	168	2	253	56	60	--	67	32	548	90
Total	7,310	773	2,100	66	1,540	56	2,010	249	2,650	274	8,310	645

^rRevised. -- 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	2014	2015				1st quarter– 4th quarter
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th Quarter	
Imports (for consumption):²						
Australia	617,000	241,000	145,000	190,000	96,200	672,000
Brazil	216,000	79,600	94,100	105,000	123,000	401,000
Jamaica ³	10,700	9,510	28,200	--	--	37,700
Suriname	536,000	98,000	63,900	58,500	23,500	244,000
Venezuela	70,300	34,500	18,600	(4)	(4)	53,100
Other	182,000	39,000	46,100	42,000	38,200	165,000
Total	1,630,000	501,000	395,000	395,000	280,000	1,570,000
Exports:⁵						
Canada	607,000	175,000	213,000	214,000	191,000	793,000
China	72,900	1,040	1,160	31,200	73,200	107,000
Egypt	400,000	90,700	121,000	90,900	120,000	422,000
Georgia	86,300	--	15	(4)	(4)	15
Iceland	273,000	--	63,000	28,900	29,100	121,000
Mexico	102,000	22,900 ^r	24,500	20,200	19,800	87,400
Norway	357,000	71,500	90,500	91,000	92,200	345,000
Russia	86,800	216	121	381	122	840
Other	146,000	59,700 ^r	44,500	111,000	92,600	308,000
Total	2,130,000	421,000	557,000	588,000	618,000	2,180,000

^rRevised. -- 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: 211,000 metric tons (t) in 2014; 29,800 t in the first quarter of 2015; 54,000 t in the second of 2015; 31,000 t in the third quarter of 2015, and 28,800 t in the fourth quarter of 2015.

³Source: Jamaica Bauxite Institute.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

⁵Includes exports of aluminum hydroxide reported in calcined equivalent. As shipped, aluminum hydroxide: 128,000 t in 2014; 29,000 (revised) t in first quarter of 2015; 32,900 (revised) t in the second quarter of 2015; 27,300 t in the third quarter of 2015, and 22,600 t in the fourth quarter of 2015.

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