

Mineral Industry Surveys

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IRON ORE IN DECEMBER 2012

U.S. mine production of iron ore in December 2012 was 4.65 million metric tons (Mt), slightly less than that in November. Production was 150,000 metric tons (t) on a daily average basis, slightly less than that of November 2012 and nearly the same as that of December 2011. U.S. iron ore shipments were 5.50 Mt in December 2012, 21% higher than those in November 2012.

Shipments were 177,000 t on a daily average basis, 17% more than those of November and 9% less than those of December 2011. Mine stocks at the end of December 2012 were 824,000 t less than those held on November 30, a decrease of 27%. U.S. exports of iron ore were 758,000 t and U.S. imports were 338,000 t.

Domestic Production

The Lake Carriers Association began maintenance on repair facilities and shipyards on the Great Lakes in December to ensure continuous operation during the upcoming shipping season. Investments were estimated to cost as much as \$3 million per vessel. The majority of the construction was expected to take place after January 15 and last through early March, while the locks at Sault St. Marie, MI, are closed (Lake Carriers Association, 2012).

World Production

China's average import prices for iron ore fines at 62% iron content spot price (cost and freight Tianjin port) recovered to \$128.87 per dry metric ton in December 2012, a 7.08% increase from that of November 2012 (Index Mundi, 2012), furthering the recovery from September's low of \$99.47 per ton of fines, the lowest price since November 2009.

Vale S.A. completed the maiden voyage of their second Valemax vessel to the Port of Sohar in Oman. Four Valemax 400,000-t dry-bulk cargo ships were expected to be in operation

by the first quarter of 2013 with service to Oman allowing Vale to meet greater consumption needs in North Africa, India and the Middle East (Maritime Activity Reports, Inc., 2012).

Fortescue Metals Group Ltd. announced plans to resume a capacity expansion project, estimated to cost \$9 billion, aimed at increasing production capacity to 155Mt by the end of 2013 (Blas, 2012). In early December, a 25% stake in Nullagine Mine was sold to joint-venture partner BC Iron Ltd. by Fortescue for \$199 million (Winning, 2012).

Iron ore stock inventories declined to 71 Mt at blast furnaces throughout China, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics, the lowest level in more than 2 years (Els, 2013).

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TABLE 1
U.S. PRODUCTION AND SHIPMENTS OF IRON ORE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 5% or more of manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Production		Shipments	
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2011, December	4,630	53,600	6,040	54,200
2012:				
January	4,170	4,170	3,840	3,840
February	4,270	8,450	725	4,560
March	4,290	12,700	2,130	6,690
April	3,980	16,700	5,150	11,800
May	4,430	21,100	5,750	17,600
June	4,200	25,300	5,270	22,900
July	4,250	29,600	5,730	28,600
August	4,350	33,900	5,220	33,800
September	4,340	38,300	4,670	38,500
October	4,750	43,000	4,460	42,900
November	4,580	47,600	4,530	47,500
December	4,650	52,200	5,500	53,000

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

²Excludes byproduct ores.

TABLE 2
U.S. PRODUCTION, SHIPMENTS, AND STOCKS OF IRON ORE IN DECEMBER^{1,2}

(Thousand metric tons, unless otherwise noted)

State	Production		Shipments ³		Stocks ⁴	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Michigan	1,170	1,150	1,700	1,300	1,480	1,370
Minnesota	3,460	3,500	4,340	4,200	1,380	831
Total	4,630	4,650	6,040	5,500	2,860	2,200

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

²Excludes byproduct ore.

³Includes rail and vessel.

⁴Includes usable (marketable) material at mines, concentrators, pelletizing plants, and loading docks. Excludes stocks of crude ore at mine and concentrates at agglomerating complexes.

Note: An imbalance of production and shipments compared with stock changes indicates an adjustment at the mines of 27,500 metric tons.

TABLE 3
CANADA: SHIPMENTS OF IRON ORE^{1,2}

(Thousand dry metric tons)

Period	Newfoundland and Labrador	Quebec	British Columbia	Total
2011:				
December	1,340	2,200	1	3,540
January–December	15,800	19,800	59	35,700
2012:				
January	1,240	1,420	1	2,650
February	1,400	1,150	1	2,550
March	1,030	1,880	(3)	2,910
April	1,460	1,450	4	2,900
May	1,320	1,780	3	3,100
June	1,320	2,290	3	3,620
July	1,390	1,550	3	2,940
August	1,410	1,620	2	3,030
September	1,280	2,040	4	3,330
October	1,210	1,430	3	2,650
November	1,460	1,800	5	3,260
December	1,410	1,970	3	3,380
January–December	15,900	20,400	34	36,300

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

²Includes production from steel plant waste oxides.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: Natural Resources Canada.

TABLE 4
U.S. PRODUCTION OF PIG IRON AND RAW STEEL, BY TYPE OF FURNACE¹

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Pig iron production, blast furnace		Raw steel production			
	Monthly	Year to date	Basic oxygen furnace		Electric furnace	
			Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2011, December	3,190	32,800	2,840	31,700	4,290	52,100
2012:						
January	3,080	3,080	2,780	2,780	4,630	4,630
February	3,050	6,130	2,660	5,440	4,490	9,120
March	3,430	9,560	3,060	8,500	4,530	13,700
April	2,920	12,500	3,190	11,700	4,640	18,300
May	3,320	15,800	2,900	14,600	4,590	22,900
June	2,970	18,800	2,570	17,200	4,270	27,200
July	2,930	21,700	2,580	19,700	4,390	31,500
August	2,860	24,600	3,180	22,900	4,450	36,000
September	2,440	27,000	2,720	25,600	4,090	40,100
October	2,260	29,300	2,700	28,300	4,090	44,200
November	2,820	32,100	2,480	30,800	3,960	48,100
December	2,900	35,000	2,550	33,400	4,270	52,400

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

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

TABLE 5
U.S. EXPORTS OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY OF DESTINATION AND TYPE^{1,2}

(Thousand metric tons)

Country of destination and type of product	2011	2012					
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	December	4th quarter	1st quarter- 4th quarter
Canada	7,050	1,290	1,850	1,590	395	1,640	6,370
China	3,190	814	1,820	1,020	247	458	4,110
Colombia	16	1	--	--	--	--	1
France	430	--	--	--	--	--	--
Germany	81	--	--	--	3	3	3
Japan	--	--	--	--	5	37	37
Mexico	51	48	98	240	107	255	641
Spain	187	--	--	(3)	--	--	(3)
Switzerland	46	--	--	--	--	--	--
Other	8	5	1	(3)	(3)	6	12
Total	11,100	2,160	3,770	2,860	758	2,400	11,200
Concentrates	628	148	449	411	172	320	1,330
Coarse ores	1,740	554	499	123	49	148	1,330
Fine ores	208	114	10	87	(3)	38	249
Pellets	8,470	1,340	2,810	2,240	537	1,870	8,260
Briquettes	(3)	(3)	(3)	--	(3)	--	(3)
Other agglomerates	1	(3)	1	(3)	(3)	23	23
Roasted pyrites	3	1	1	(3)	(3)	(3)	3
Total	11,100	2,160	3,770	2,860	758	2,400	11,200

-- Zero.

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

²Includes agglomerates.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY AND TYPE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country of origin and type of product	2011			2012		
	January–December	December		January–December		
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
Argentina	74	--	--	81	11,400	140.43
Brazil	562	--	--	739	94,700	128.09
Canada	3,910	338	48,600	3,810	587,000	154.15
Chile	165	--	--	104	15,500	148.86
China	(4)	--	--	(4)	115	5,750.00
Finland	4	--	--	4	278	69.50
France	--	--	--	(4)	9	453.45
Germany	(4)	--	--	(4)	11	134.88
India	--	--	--	(4)	2	48.00
Latvia	--	--	--	(4)	3	3,150.00
Mexico	27	--	--	47	5,630	119.74
Netherlands	--	(4)	2	(4)	2	303.71
Norway	(4)	--	--	(4)	72	299.73
Peru	14	--	--	44	4,620	104.89
Russia	(4)	--	--	--	--	--
South Africa	147	--	--	91	11,300	124.62
Sweden	81	--	--	72	9,000	124.97
Trinidad and Tobago	8	--	--	--	--	--
Ukraine	(4)	--	--	(4)	15	54.17
United Kingdom	--	--	--	76	10,100	132.87
Venezuela	278	--	--	75	8,340	111.16
Total	5,270	338	48,600	5,140	758,000	147.50
Concentrates	796	1	34	862	99,600	115.52
Coarse ores	42	11	176	51	2,730	53.45
Fine ores	731	(4)	72	363	49,300	135.73
Pellets	3,650	326	48,400	3,860	606,000	157.05
Briquettes	12	--	--	--	--	--
Other agglomerates	34	--	--	(4)	115	5,750.00
Roasted pyrites	4	--	--	4	303	75.75
Total	5,270	338	48,600	5,140	758,000	147.50

-- Zero.

¹Data, with the exception of the dollars per ton column, are rounded to no more than three significant digits, may not add to totals shown.

²Includes agglomerates.

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 7
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE IN DECEMBER 2012^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Country of origin	Type of product						Total
	Concentrates	Coarse ores	Fine ores	Pellets	Briquettes and other agglomerates	Roasted pyrites	
Canada	1	11	(3)	326	--	--	338
Netherlands	--	--	(3)	--	--	--	(3)
Total	1	11	(3)	326	--	--	338

-- Zero.

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

²Includes agglomerates.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 8
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE PELLETS, BY COUNTRY¹

Country of origin	2011		2012			
	January–December	December		January–December		
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons	Value ² (thousand dollars)	Thousand metric tons	Value ² (thousand dollars)	Value ² (dollars per ton)
Brazil	244	--	--	284	40,700	143.27
Canada	3,410	326	48,400	3,500	555,000	158.65
United Kingdom	--	--	--	76	10,100	132.87
Total	3,650	326	48,400	3,860	606,000	157.05

-- Zero.

¹Data, with the exception of the dollars per ton column, are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 9
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE,
BY CUSTOMS DISTRICT^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

(Thousand metric tons)

Customs district (code no.)	January–December		December
	2011	2012	2012
Baltimore, MD (13)	1,710	1,450	--
Buffalo, NY (09)	(3)	--	--
Charleston, SC (16)	--	(3)	--
Chicago, IL (39)	675	689	--
Cleveland, OH (41)	2,110	2,210	326
Detroit, MI (38)	16	(3)	--
El Paso, TX (24)	18	--	--
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	83	54	--
Laredo, TX (23)	1	--	--
Los Angeles, CA (27)	(3)	(3)	--
Mobile, AL (19)	13	48	--
New Orleans, LA (20)	616	618	--
New York, NY (10)	(3)	(3)	--
Norfolk, VA (14)	1	--	--
Ogdensburg, NY (07)	1	(3)	--
Philadelphia, PA (11)	4	4	--
Port Arthur, TX (21)	--	27	--
San Francisco, CA (28)	5	--	--
Seattle, WA (30)	--	37	11
St. Albans, VT (02)	1	1	1
Tampa, FL (18)	15	3	--
Total	5,270	5,140	338

-- Zero.

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

²Includes agglomerates.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 10
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF IRON ORE PELLETS,
BY CUSTOMS DISTRICT¹

(Thousand metric tons)

Customs district (code no.)	January–December		December
	2011	2012	2012
Baltimore, MD (13)	1,420	1,260	--
Buffalo, NY (09)	(2)	--	--
Chicago, IL (39)	10	41	--
Cleveland, OH (41)	2,110	2,210	326
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	44	--	--
New Orleans, LA (20)	70	345	--
Total	3,650	3,860	326

-- Zero.

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

²Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.