

Mineral Industry Surveys

For information, contact:

Christopher A. Tuck, Iron Ore Commodity Specialist
 National Minerals Information Center
 U.S. Geological Survey
 989 National Center
 Reston, VA 20192
 Telephone: (703) 648-4912, Fax: (703) 648-7757
 Email: ctuck@usgs.gov

Michelle B. Blackwell (Data)
 Telephone: (703) 648-7943
 Fax: (703) 648-7975
 Email: mblackwell@usgs.gov

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

IRON ORE IN JULY 2015

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in July 2015 were 3.12 million metric tons (Mt) and 4.61 Mt, respectively (fig. 1, table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 101,000 metric tons (t), about the same as that of June 2015 and 37% less than that of July 2014. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 149,000 t, slightly greater those of June and 29% less than those in July 2014. Mine stocks at the end of July 2015 were 15% less than those held in June and 4% less than those held in July 2014. As of July 2015, four iron ore mines and one iron nugget facility were either shut down or idled, resulting in reduced production and shipments.

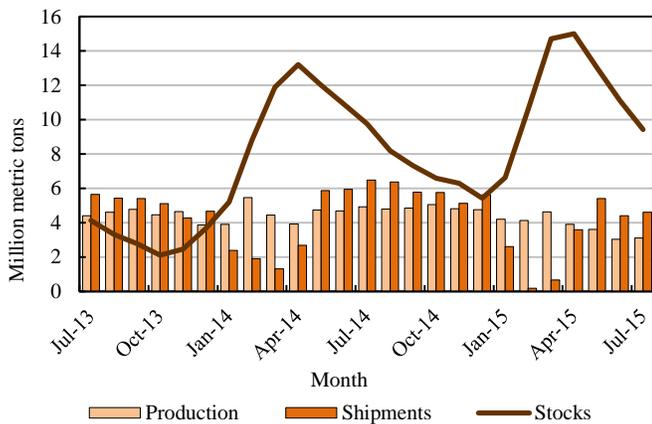


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from July 2013–July 2015. Source: U.S. Geological Survey

Monthly iron ore data are reported as gross weight unless otherwise noted and do not include iron metalics such as pig iron, direct-reduced iron, hot-briquetted iron, or iron nuggets. Data for iron metalics can be found in the Iron and Steel and the Iron Ore chapters in Minerals Yearbook, Volume I, Metals and Minerals.

U.S. exports of iron ore were 1.11 Mt in July 2015, 56% greater than those in June and 20% less than those in July 2014. U.S. imports of iron ore were 401,000 t in July 2015, 6% less

than those in June 2015 and 42% greater than those in July 2014 (fig. 2).

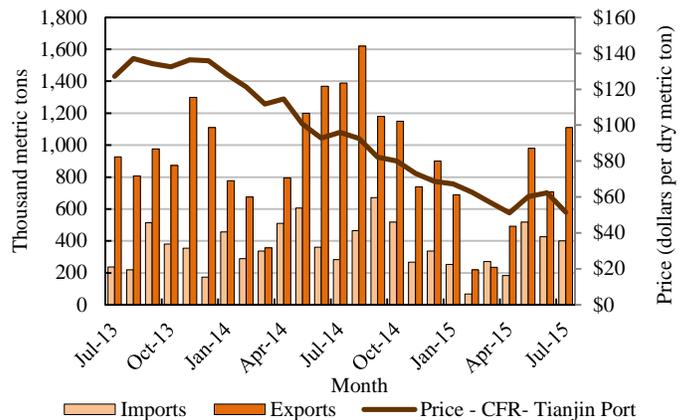


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for iron ore import fines, 62% iron content CFR, at Tianjin Port, from July 2013–July 2015. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Index Mundi, undated.

Industry News

U.S. Steel Corp. began to restart idled portions of the Minntac Mine, returning all employees to work. The company’s production throughout North American flat-rolled steel facilities would require additional iron ore pellets. The company stated that the recall was based on internal inventory rebalancing needs rather than improvements in the industry. U.S. Steel’s Keetac Mine remained temporarily idled. The Minntac and Keetac Mines have annual capacities of 16 Mt and 6 Mt, respectively (DePass, 2015).

Cliffs Natural Resources Inc. planned to idle operations at United Taconite by the end of August 2015. The mine’s annual capacity was 5.4 Mt, and it produced 4.9 Mt in 2014. Cliffs 2015 production forecast was reduced to 19 Mt, a 1.5 Mt reduction. This was the sixth iron ore mine to shut down or to be idled in 2015. Representatives for the company stated that indicators showed potential reductions in steel imports and increases in domestic steel production in the second half of 2015.

Cliffs also planned on retrofitting United Taconite's production equipment while idled, allowing the facility to produce a flux taconite pellet that incorporates limestone. The pellets would be produced for ArcelorMittal USA's domestic steel mills. This flux pellet has been produced at the Empire Mine* in Marquette County, MI, which is scheduled to shut down by the end of 2016.

Cliffs planned to begin construction at the Northshore Mine in Silver Bay, MN, allowing the facility to produce pellets ideal for conversion into direct-reduced iron (DRI), called DR-ready pellets, within a few years. The company agreed to supply DR-ready pellets to Nucor Steel Louisiana, LCC's DRI facilities in Louisiana and Trinidad. Additional DRI pellet production facilities were expected to be built elsewhere on the Great Lakes (Myers, 2015).

List services and Web feed subscribers are the first to receive notification of USGS minerals information publications and data releases. For information on how to subscribe, go to <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/>.

References Cited

- DePass, Dee, 2015, U.S. Steel begins calling back laid-off workers at Minntac plant: Star Tribune [Minneapolis, MN], July 25. (Accessed October 9, 2015, at <http://www.startribune.com/u-s-steel-begins-calling-back-laid-off-workers-at-minntac-plant/318431961/>.)
- Myers, John, 2015, United Taconite to idle, 420 jobs impacted: Duluth [MN] News Tribune, July 29. (Accessed October 9, 2015, at <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/news/iron-range/3806928-united-taconite-idle-420-jobs-impacted>.)

* Correction posted on November 20, 2015.

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

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Production		Shipments ³		Stocks
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	End of Month
2014:					
July	4,930	30,000	6,490	25,400	9,770
August	4,790	34,800	6,370	31,800	8,190
September	4,860	39,700	5,780	37,600	7,320
October	5,050	44,700	5,770	43,400	6,600
November	4,810	49,500	5,130	48,500	6,290
December	4,770	54,300	5,630	54,100	5,430
2015:					
January	4,210	4,210	2,610	2,610	6,640
February	4,130	8,340	194	2,810	10,600
March	4,640	13,000	670	3,480	14,700
April	3,910	16,900	3,600	7,080	15,000
May	3,620	20,500	5,400	12,500	13,000
June	3,030	23,500	4,400 ^r	16,900 ^r	11,100 ^r
July	3,120	26,700	4,610	21,500	9,420

^rRevised.

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

²Excludes byproduct ores and iron metallics.

³Includes rail and vessel.

TABLE 2
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
2014:						
July	2,930	18,700	2,630	17,400	4,760	32,200
August	2,920	21,600	2,600	20,000	4,840	37,100
September	2,740	24,300	2,550	22,500	4,560	41,600
October	2,690	27,000	2,340	24,900	4,700	46,300
November	2,740	29,800	2,400	27,300	4,480	50,800
December	2,860	32,600	2,490	29,700	4,350	55,200
2015:						
January	2,760	2,760	2,380	2,380	4,500	4,500
February	2,310	5,070	1,980	4,370	3,870	8,370
March	2,390	7,460	1,990	6,360	4,050	12,400
April	2,330	9,790	1,990	8,340	4,080	16,500
May	2,530	12,300	2,180	10,500	4,310	20,800
June	2,670	15,000	2,340	12,900	4,180	25,000
July	2,830	17,800	2,460	15,300	4,200	29,200

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

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

TABLE 3
U.S. EXPORTS OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY AND TYPE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country and type of product	2014			2015		
	January–July Thousand metric tons	July		January–July Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
		Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)			
Canada	3,980	1,090	\$84,800	3,920	\$355,000	\$90.59
Mexico	1,050	17	1,730	470	32,500	69.16
Other	1,510	--	--	37	3,180	85.84
Total	6,540	1,110	86,500	4,430	391,000	88.26
Concentrates	1,180	16	1,970	72	8,770	121.85
Fine ores	60	(4)	12	16	1,740	108.94
Pellets	4,800	1,080	84,000	3,930	356,000	90.70
Other	507	7	587	416	24,400	58.57
Total	6,540	1,110	86,500	4,430	391,000	88.26

--Zero.

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

²All countries with less than 5,000 metric tons of exports per month included in "Other."

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
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	2014			2015		
	January–July Thousand metric tons	July		January–July Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
		Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)			
Brazil	899	195	\$17,000	945	\$81,700	\$86.51
Canada	1,800	175	17,500	1,000	130,000	129.45
Sweden	(4)	31	1,950	42	3,120	74.38
Other	142	--	--	132	12,800	97.04
Total	2,840	401	36,500	2,120	227,000	107.25
Concentrates	193	83	2,970	303	15,200	50.19
Fine ores	241	60	3,650	120	8,400	70.03
Pellets	2,380	259	29,800	1,660	201,000	121.27
Other	28	(4)	6	41	2,960	72.10
Total	2,840	401	36,500	2,120	227,000	107.25

--Zero.

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

²All countries with less than 5,000 metric tons of imports per month included in "Other."

³Customs value. Excludes international freight and insurance charges.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5
 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.)	Pellets			Total, all products		
	January–July		July	January–July		July
	2014	2015	2015	2014	2015	2015
Chicago, IL (39)	49	--	--	229	300	111
Cleveland, OH (41)	533	458	91	533	458	91
New Orleans, LA (20)	1,440	882	168	1,720	1,020	199
Other	354	316	--	361	340	(3)
Total	2,380	1,660	259	2,840	2,120	401

--Zero.

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

²Customs Districts with less than 5,000 metric tons included in "Other."

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.