

**PERLITE**

(Data in thousand metric tons unless otherwise noted)

**Domestic Production and Use:** The estimated value (f.o.b. mine) of processed crude perlite produced in 2008 was \$21.4 million. Crude ore production came from eight mines operated by seven companies in six Western States. New Mexico continued to be the major producing State. Processed crude perlite was expanded at 58 plants in 29 States. The principal end uses were building construction products, 60%; fillers, 13%; horticultural aggregate, 13%; filter aid, 7%; and other, 7%.

<b><u>Salient Statistics—United States:</u></b>	<b><u>2004</u></b>	<b><u>2005</u></b>	<b><u>2006</u></b>	<b><u>2007</u></b>	<b><u>2008<sup>e</sup></u></b>
Production <sup>1</sup>	508	508	454	409	449
Imports for consumption <sup>e</sup>	238	196	245	229	135
Exports <sup>e</sup>	37	32	30	28	28
Consumption, apparent	709	672	669	610	556
Price, average value, dollars per ton, f.o.b. mine	41.81	40.68	42.90	45.25	49.93
Employment, mine and mill	133	128	113	110	103
Net import reliance <sup>2</sup> as a percentage of apparent consumption	28	24	32	33	19

**Recycling:** Not available.

**Import Sources (2004-07):** Greece, 100%.

<b><u>Tariff: Item</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Normal Trade Relations</u></b> <b><u>12-31-08</u></b>
Vermiculite, perlite and chlorites, unexpanded	2530.10.0000	Free.

**Depletion Allowance:** 10% (Domestic and foreign).

**Government Stockpile:** None.

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**Events, Trends, and Issues:** The amount of processed crude perlite sold or used from U.S. mines increased about 10% compared with the historically low levels reported for 2007. Domestic miners increased market share, as imports dropped dramatically. Imports were estimated to have decreased to about 135,000 tons, as consumption dropped to its lowest levels since 1991.

Rising fuel prices and strong competition for ocean freight have increased the cost of shipping perlite. In response, some consumers have returned to purchasing domestic perlite instead of imported product. Between 1999 and 2007, perlite imports were increasingly replacing domestic perlite, but this trend was halted in 2008.

Perlite mining generally takes place in remote areas, and its environmental impact is not severe. The mineral fines, overburden, and reject ore produced during ore mining and processing are used to reclaim the mined-out areas, and, therefore, little waste remains. Airborne dust is captured by baghouses, and there is practically no runoff that contributes to water pollution.

**World Processed Perlite Production, Reserves, and Reserve Base:** Greece surpassed the United States in processed perlite production starting in 2003. Information for China and several other countries is unavailable, making it unclear whether or not Greece and the United States are the world's leading producers.

	Production		Reserves <sup>3</sup>	Reserve base <sup>3</sup>
	2007	2008 <sup>e</sup>		
United States	409	449	50,000	200,000
Greece	525	500	50,000	300,000
Hungary	71	70	3,000	( <sup>4</sup> )
Japan	240	240	( <sup>4</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )
Mexico	41	45	( <sup>4</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )
Turkey	270	270	( <sup>4</sup> )	5,700,000
Other countries	204	200	600,000	1,500,000
World total (rounded)	1,760	1,770	700,000	7,700,000

**World Resources:** Insufficient information is available to make reliable estimates of resources in perlite-producing countries.

**Substitutes:** Alternative materials can be substituted for all uses of perlite, if necessary. Long-established competitive commodities include diatomite, expanded clay and shale, pumice, slag, and vermiculite.

<sup>e</sup>Estimated.

<sup>1</sup>Processed perlite sold and used by producers.

<sup>2</sup>Defined as imports - exports + adjustments for Government and industry stock changes; changes in stocks were not available and assumed to be zero for apparent consumption and net import reliance calculations.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix C for definitions. Reserves and reserve base data are for crude ore.

<sup>4</sup>Included with "Other countries."