

Mineral Industry Surveys

For information, contact:

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

Linda M. White (Data)
Telephone: (703) 648-7986
Fax: (703) 648-7975
E-mail: lwhite@usgs.gov

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

BAUXITE AND ALUMINA IN THE FIRST QUARTER 2012

Imports of crude and dried bauxite in the first quarter of 2012 were 2.57 million metric tons (Mt), slightly lower than those in the fourth quarter of 2011 but 12% higher than those in the first quarter of 2011. Jamaica (45%), Guinea (33%), and Brazil (23%) were the leading sources of crude dry bauxite imports in the first quarter of 2012. Imports of crude and dried bauxite during the first quarter of 2012 from Guinea increased by 40% from those in the fourth quarter of 2011. This increase was partially offset by 11% and 10% declines in imports of crude and dried bauxite from Brazil and Jamaica, respectively. Imports of crude and dried bauxite in 2011 were 18% higher than those in 2010.

Imports of alumina during the first quarter of 2012 were 463,000 metric tons (t), 3% lower than those in the fourth quarter of 2011 and 14% lower than those in the first quarter of 2011. The leading sources of imported alumina during the fourth quarter of 2011 were Suriname (46%), Australia (30%), and Brazil (13%). Decreased alumina imports from Jamaica of 41,900 t, and Brazil of 14,000 t accounted for most of the decrease in alumina imports during the first quarter of 2011. These decreases were partially offset by an increase in alumina imports from Suriname of 44,400 t.

Exports of alumina during the first quarter of 2012 were 457,000 t, 18% more than those in the fourth quarter of 2011 and 6% higher than those in the first quarter of 2011. The leading destinations of alumina exported during the first quarter of 2012 were Canada (46%), Georgia (25%), and Iceland (13%). Compared with exports in the fourth quarter of 2011, increased alumina exports to Georgia of 114,000 t; and to Canada of 21,800 t accounted for most of the increased alumina exports during the first quarter of 2012. These increases were partially offset by decreases in alumina exports to Iceland of 53,700 t, France of 26,300 t, and the Netherlands of 17,600 t.

Update

Alcoa Inc. temporarily shut down 390,000 metric tons per year (t/yr) of alumina refining capacity in April. The refineries affected were located in the Atlantic region, although details of specific refinery closures were not announced. Decreased demand for alumina as a result of the recently announced shutdowns of smelters in Portovesme, Italy, and Aviles and La Coruna, Spain, was cited for the refinery shutdowns. (See Aluminum in November 2011.) (Alcoa Inc., 2012).

A worker strike resulted in a shutdown of production at United Company Rusal's 618,000-t/yr Friguia, Guinea, alumina refinery and adjacent bauxite mine. Workers seized the refinery on April 4 and held it until June 4 when they announced that the strike had ended. Rusal was reportedly awaiting guarantees from the Government concerning security at the mine and refinery before restarting production (Platts Metals Week, 2012a).

Expansion of the Worsley alumina refinery near Boddington, Western Australia, was completed in March. The capacity of the refinery increased to 4.6 million metric tons per year (Mt/yr) of alumina from 3.5 Mt/yr. Ramp up of the refinery was expected to be completed in March 2013. The refinery was a joint venture between BHP Billiton Ltd. (86%), Sojitz Alumina Ltd. (9%), and Itochu Ltd. (5%) (Platts Metals Week, 2012b).

References Cited

- Alcoa Inc., 2012, Alcoa to curtail refining capacity: New York, NY, Alcoa Inc. news release, April 5, 2 p. (Accessed June 11, 2012, at http://www.alcoa.com/global/en/news/news_detail.asp?pageID=20120405005675en&newsYear=2012.)
- Platts Metals Week, 2012a, Rusal's Guinea strike ends: Platts Metals Week, v. 83, no. 24, June 11, p. 9.
- Platts Metals Week, 2012b, Worsley Alumina at capacity by March 2013: Platts Metals Week, v. 83, no. 21, May 21, p. 10.

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

(Metric tons)

Country	2011				1st quarter– 4th quarter	2012 1st quarter
	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter		
Imports (for consumption):						
Brazil	354,000	324,000	430,000	651,000	1,760,000	580,000
Guinea	667,000	537,000	533,000	601,000	2,340,000	842,000
India	--	161,000	--	--	161,000	--
Jamaica	1,280,000	1,230,000	1,370,000	1,270,000	5,140,000	1,140,000
Venezuela	--	--	37,000	72,600	110,000	--
Other	2,520	10,800	16,000	114	29,500	6,570
Total	2,300,000	2,260,000	2,390,000	2,600,000	9,540,000	2,570,000
Exports:						
Canada	4,050	5,170	2,310	1,240	12,800	573
Colombia	4	15	175	42	236	--
Korea, Republic of	2,200	--	--	--	2,200	--
Mexico	7	765	2,130	3,130	6,020	797
Venezuela	37	41	--	82	160	--
Other	208	361	254	155	978	139
Total	6,500	6,350	4,870	4,640	22,400	1,510

-- 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	2011										2012	
	1st quarter		2d quarter		3d quarter		4th quarter		1st quarter–4th quarter		1st quarter	
	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other
Imports (for consumption):												
Australia	--	--	--	44,800	--	--	--	42,700	--	87,500	--	49,400
Brazil	1,320	2,940	--	784	--	378	--	1,470	1,320	5,570	--	1,180
China	10,600	321	4,450	217	11,200	7,730	14,700	8,870	41,000	17,100	12,600	3,820
Greece	--	--	26,000	--	--	--	--	--	26,000	--	--	--
Guyana	12,700	42,800	10,300	15,500	14,200	45,000	11,600	17,900	48,800	121,000	17,700	28,400
Jamaica	--	--	--	401,000	--	833,000	--	693,000	--	1,930,000	--	887,000
Other	30	215	2	795	--	1,660	140	1,810	172	4,480	45	2,270
Total	24,700	46,300	40,800	463,000	25,400	887,000	26,400	766,000	117,000	2,160,000	30,400	972,000
Exports:												
Argentina	--	--	--	--	--	1,880	--	--	--	1,880	--	--
Canada	1,410	--	1,010	--	3,280	--	3,370	826	9,070	826	1,140	--
China	--	--	--	--	--	--	9,920	--	9,920	--	--	--
India	--	--	--	--	--	80	--	1,200	--	1,280	--	20
Malaysia	--	59	--	100	--	--	--	--	--	159	--	--
Mexico	88	2,780	149	656	164	160	121	114	522	3,710	121	12,200
United Arab Emirates	--	--	--	2,740	--	--	--	--	--	2,740	250	--
Other	108	317	207	12	127	--	474	--	916	329	296	--
Total	1,610	3,150	1,360	3,510	3,570	2,120	13,900	2,140	20,400	10,900	1,810	12,200

-- 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	2011					2012 1st quarter
	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter– 4th quarter	
Imports (for consumption):²						
Australia	144,000	192,000	185,000	141,000	662,000	138,000
Brazil	86,200	54,900	52,500	74,300	268,000	60,300
Jamaica	95,800	80,700	109,000	47,800	333,000	5,870
Suriname	167,000	191,000	211,000	167,000	736,000	212,000
Other	46,800	53,900	47,900	47,800	196,000	47,700
Total	539,000	572,000	606,000	478,000	2,200,000	463,000
Exports:³						
Canada	204,000	221,000	236,000	187,000	848,000	209,000
China	3,040	2,990	3,010	2,380	11,400	29,400
France	31,800	528	242	26,700	59,200	373
Georgia	30,900	(4)	25,900	(4)	56,800	114,000
Iceland	121,000	173,000	91,500	115,000	500,000	61,500
Mexico	19,900	19,400	19,600	21,700	80,700	26,200
Netherlands	974	28,800	27,200	18,900	75,800	1,240
Norway	75	29,400	41	93	29,600	50
Other	21,600 ^r	18,500 ^r	16,700 ^r	14,400 ^r	71,200 ^r	16,400
Total	433,000	493,000	420,000	386,000	1,730,000	457,000

^rRevised.

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: 195,000 metric tons (t) in 2011; 48,100 t in the first quarter of 2012.

³Includes exports of aluminum hydroxide reported in calcined equivalent. As shipped, aluminum hydroxide: 108,000 t in 2011; 34,700 t in the first quarter of 2012.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

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