

Mineral Industry Surveys

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BAUXITE AND ALUMINA IN THE THIRD QUARTER 2018

Imports of crude and dried bauxite in the third quarter of 2018 were 922,000 metric tons (t), slightly more than the revised total in the second quarter of 2018 and the third quarter of 2017, but 19% less than those in the third quarter of 2016 (fig. 1). Jamaica (73%) and Brazil (18%) were the leading sources of crude and dried bauxite imports in the third quarter of 2018 (table 1).

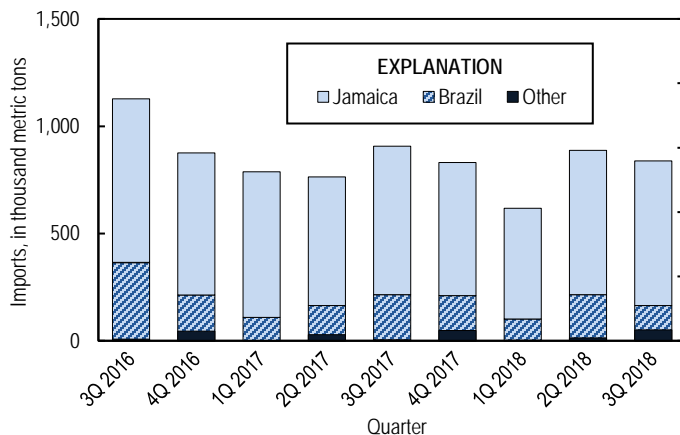


Figure 1. Quarterly imports of crude and dried bauxite from the third quarter of 2016 through the third quarter of 2018. Sources: Jamaica Bauxite Institute and U.S. Census Bureau.

Imports of alumina during the third quarter of 2018 were 441,000 t, 25% more than those in the second quarter of 2018, 21% more than those in the third quarter of 2017, and 42% more than those in the third quarter of 2016 (fig. 2). The leading sources of imported alumina in the third quarter of 2018 were Brazil (52%), Australia (22%), and Jamaica (13%) (table 3).

Exports of alumina during the third quarter of 2018 were 56,100 t, 46% less than those in the second quarter of 2018 and the third quarter of 2017, and 85% less than those in the third quarter of 2016 (fig. 2). The leading destinations for alumina exported in the third quarter of 2018 were Venezuela (30%), Mexico (25%), and Canada (15%) (table 3).

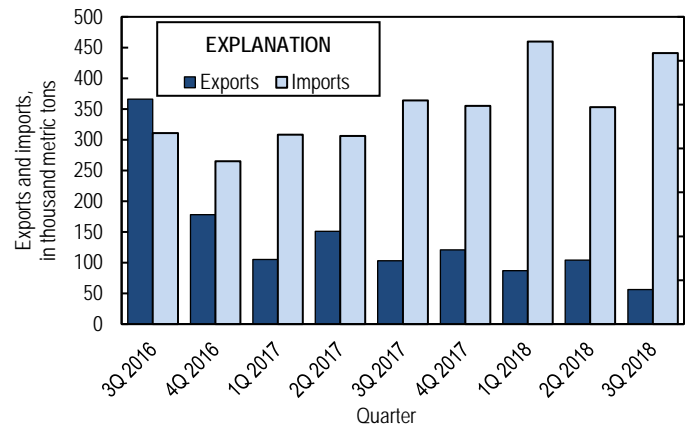


Figure 2. Alumina exports and imports from the third quarter of 2016 through the third quarter of 2018. Sources: Jamaica Bauxite Institute and U.S. Census Bureau.

Update

On September 28, approximately 1,600 employees represented by the Australian Workers' Union ended a strike at three alumina refineries and two bauxite mines in Western Australia, Australia. The strike started on August 8, but production continued at reduced levels because about 1,900 employees did not participate in the strike. (See Bauxite and Alumina in the Second Quarter 2018.) The refineries affected by the strike were the Kwinana, Pinjarra, and Wagerup refineries with capacities of 2.2 million metric tons per year (Mt/yr), 4.2 Mt/yr, and 2.6 Mt/yr, respectively. The mines affected were the Huntly Mine and the Willowdale Mine with capacities of 23 Mt/yr and 10 Mt/yr, respectively. The mines and refineries were operated by Alcoa Corp. (60%) as part of its joint venture with Alumina Ltd. (40%) (Alumina Ltd., 2018; Faye, 2018; Mok, 2018).

On October 3, Norsk Hydro ASA announced that it would shut down all production from the 6.3-Mt/yr Alunorte alumina refinery in Barcarena, Brazil, and the nearby Paragominas Mine

in Brazil. The mine and refinery had been producing at one-half capacity since the end of February. (See Bauxite and Alumina in the Fourth Quarter 2017.) Environmental regulators claimed that waste water was released from the waste impounds of the mine and refinery after heavy rainfall in February, resulting in the initial shutdowns. Norsk Hydro had not received a permit to use a new filter press and red mud impoundment at the refinery, and the older red mud impoundment was near its maximum capacity, necessitating the shutdown of all production at the mine and refinery. On October 8, the environmental regulator permitted the restart of one-half of the refinery's capacity. The mine and refinery were scheduled to be producing at one-half of their capacities by the end of October. Norsk Hydro continued to seek permitting for the use of its new red mud impoundment area in order to return the mine and refinery to full production capacity (Lim, 2018a, b; Norsk Hydro ASA, 2018).

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TABLE 1
U.S. IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF CRUDE AND DRIED BAUXITE, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY¹

(Metric tons)

Country or locality	2017	2018			
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	1st quarter– 3d quarter
Imports for consumption:					
Brazil	699,000	102,000	215,000	164,000	481,000
Jamaica ²	2,590,000	515,000 ^r	673,000 ^r	674,000	1,860,000
Other	137,000	5,220	23,400	84,000	113,000
Total	3,430,000	623,000^r	911,000^r	922,000	2,460,000
Exports:					
Canada	2,560	553	1,090	665	2,300
Other	1,550	285	475	285	1,050
Total	4,110	838	1,560	950	3,350

^rRevised.

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 COUNTRY OR LOCALITY¹

(Metric tons)

Country or locality	2018									
	2017		1st quarter		2d quarter		3d quarter		1st quarter– 3d quarter	
	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other	Refrac- tory	Other
Imports for consumption:										
Australia	--	159,000	--	26,000	--	24,900	--	36,200	--	87,100
China	71,700	18,200	10,700	1,000	12,000	1,390	11,200	3,230	34,000	5,620
Guyana	55,300	145,000	-- ^r	36,200	28,200	38,300	11,600	27,800	39,700	102,000
India	--	547	420	281	242	472	50	--	712	753
Turkey	--	101,000	--	47,100	--	--	20,000	57,000	20,000	104,000
Other	--	28,100	--	228	--	21,400	--	23	--	21,700
Total	127,000	453,000	11,100^r	111,000	40,400	86,500	42,900	124,000	94,400	322,000
Exports:										
Canada	4,430	--	1,540	--	834	--	1,870	--	4,250	--
China	9,070	--	60	--	120	--	200	--	380	--
Mexico	464	--	460	--	58	--	120	--	638	--
Other	673	102	165	144 ^r	244	72 ^r	176	--	585	216
Total	14,600	102	2,230	144^r	1,260	72^r	2,370	--	5,850	216

^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 ALUMINA, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY¹

(Metric tons, calcined equivalent)

Country or locality	2017	2018			
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	1st quarter– 3d quarter
Imports for consumption:²					
Australia	393,000	49,900	97,200	96,400	243,000
Brazil	543,000	319,000	146,000	229,000	693,000
Jamaica ³	169,000	32,200	44,100	58,800	135,000
Other	229,000	58,900 ^r	66,100	57,600	183,000
Total	1,330,000	460,000	353,000	441,000	1,250,000
Exports:⁴					
Canada	35,500	9,290	8,670	8,290	26,300
China	16,700	21,900	2,070	1,620	25,600
Iceland	62,600	--	--	5	5
India	33,400	1,360	4,010	2,140	7,510
Mexico	48,100	15,600	18,600	14,000	48,200
Netherlands	95,100	15,400	20,700	1,600	37,800
Norway	213	18	15,800	21	15,800
Russia	90,000	95	221	11	327
United Arab Emirates	32,800	372	741	21	1,130
Venezuela	21,200	10,000	21,600	16,900	48,600
Other	45,200	12,700	11,400	11,500	35,600
Total	481,000	86,900	104,000	56,100	247,000

^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: 415,886 metric tons (t) in 2017; 120,125 t in the first quarter of 2018; 118,576 t in the second quarter of 2018; 115,065 t in the third quarter.

³Source: Jamaica Bauxite Institute.

⁴Includes exports of aluminum hydroxide reported in calcined equivalent. As shipped, aluminum hydroxide: 74,322 t in 2017; 24,506 t in the first quarter of 2018; 28,210 t in the second quarter of 2018; 20,992 t in the third quarter.

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