

Mineral Industry Surveys

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BAUXITE AND ALUMINA IN THE FOURTH QUARTER 2018

Imports of crude and dried bauxite in the fourth quarter of 2018 were 840,000 metric tons (t), 9% less than those in the third quarter of 2018, 8% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2017, and 12% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2016 (fig. 1). Jamaica (80%) and Brazil (19%) were the leading sources of crude and dried bauxite imports in the fourth quarter of 2018 (table 1).

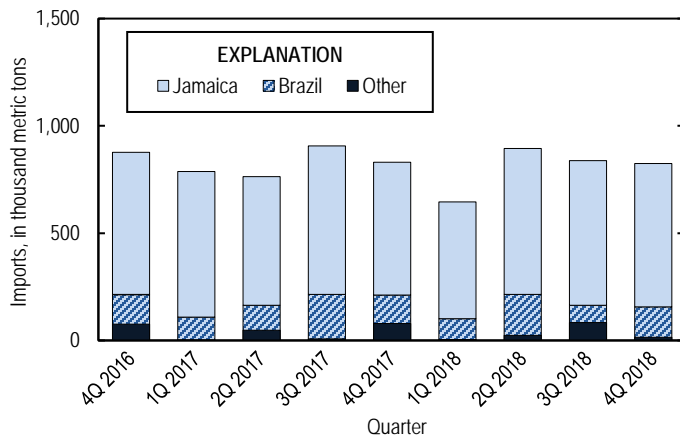


Figure 1. Quarterly imports of crude and dried bauxite from the fourth quarter of 2016 through the fourth quarter of 2018. Sources: Jamaica Bauxite Institute and U.S. Census Bureau.

Imports of alumina during the fourth quarter of 2018 were 273,000 t, 38% less than those in the third quarter of 2018, 23% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2017, but 3% more than those in the fourth quarter of 2016 (fig. 2). The leading sources of imported alumina in the fourth quarter of 2018 were Brazil (60%) and Australia (18%) (table 3).

Exports of alumina during the fourth quarter of 2018 were 50,300 t, 10% less than those in the third quarter of 2018, 59% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2017, and 72% less than those in the fourth quarter of 2016 (fig. 2). The leading destinations for alumina exported in the fourth quarter of 2018 were Mexico (22%), Norway, (20%) Canada (15%), and Venezuela (14%) (table 3).

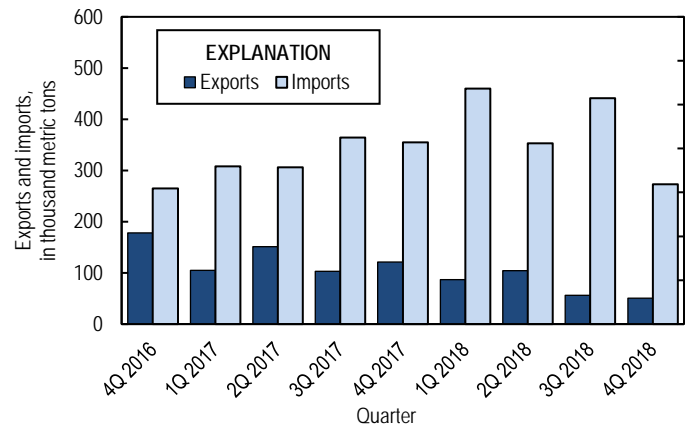


Figure 2. Alumina exports and imports from the fourth quarter of 2016 through the fourth quarter of 2018. Sources: Jamaica Bauxite Institute and U.S. Census Bureau.

Update

The U.S. Department of the Treasury lifted sanctions on United Company RUSAL Plc on January 27, 2019. In April 2018, RUSAL and its principal owner, who also was formerly its chief executive officer, were sanctioned by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. (See Bauxite and Alumina in the First Quarter 2018.) The principal owner decreased his ownership to a level acceptable to the U. S. Department of the Treasury and the company agreed to audits of its operations and reporting requirements. Companies with supply contracts with RUSAL were permitted to continue receiving shipments (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2019).

The Government of Malaysia announced that it would end a ban on bauxite mining effective March 31, 2019. Bauxite mining was banned in January 2016 by the Government, citing pollution from unpermitted mines and uncovered storage facilities at ports. After the Government of Indonesia banned the export of bauxite and other unprocessed mineral ores at the start of 2014, bauxite mines in Malaysia increased production to gain market share. Bauxite exports were nearly 3.5 million metric

tons per month before the ban on mining was imposed by Malaysia. After bauxite mining was banned, exports of bauxite stocked at uncovered storage areas were still permitted (Decena, 2019).

In March, Rio Tinto plc completed commissioning of the Amrun Mine in Queensland, Australia. In December 2018, the first shipment of bauxite was made from the 22.8-million-metric-ton-per-year mine (Mt/yr). The project also included port facilities on the Cape York Peninsula (Lim, 2019).

Norsk Hydro ASA continued to produce from the 6.3-Mt/yr Alunorte alumina refinery in Barcarena, Brazil, and the nearby Paragominas Mine in Brazil at one-half of their capacities. The mine and refinery had been producing at one-half capacity since the end of February 2018 after environmental regulators claimed that waste water was released from the waste impounds of the mine and the refinery after heavy rainfall. (See Bauxite and Alumina in the Fourth Quarter 2017.) Norsk Hydro was awaiting court decisions that would allow production at full capacity to resume. However, the failure of a tailings dam on January 25, 2019, at Vale plc's Córrego do Feijão iron ore mine near Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, prompted the Government to

inspect waste impounds at all mines and associated processing plants. Alumina traders and other market participants were not expecting the mine and alumina refinery to ramp up to full capacity anytime soon (Mason, 2019).

References Cited

- Decena, Karl, 2019, Malaysia to lift bauxite mining ban: Platts Metals Daily, v. 8, no. 35, February 19, p. 3–4.
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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– 4th quarter
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	
Imports for consumption:						
Brazil	699,000	102,000	215,000	164,000	156,000	637,000
Jamaica ²	2,590,000	543,000 ^r	679,000 ^r	674,000	669,000	2,570,000
Other	137,000	5,220	23,400	84,000	14,700	127,000
Total	3,430,000	651,000^r	917,000^r	922,000	840,000	3,330,000
Exports:						
Canada	2,560	553	1,090	665	568	2,870
Other	1,550	285	475	285	483	1,530
Total	4,110	838	1,560	950	1,050	4,400

^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		4th quarter		1st quarter– 4th quarter	
	Refrac- tory	Other	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	--	28,100	--	115,000
China	71,700	18,200	10,700	1,000	12,000	1,390	11,200	3,230	9,380	4,390	43,400	10,000
Greece	--	--	--	--	--	21,100	--	--	--	--	--	21,100
Guyana	55,300	145,000	--	36,200	28,200	38,300	11,600	27,800	18,400	43,900	58,100	146,000
India	--	547	420	281	242	472	50	--	--	--	712	753
Turkey	--	101,000	--	47,100	--	--	-- ^f	57,000	--	32,600	--	137,000
Other	--	28,100	--	228	--	380	143 ^f	23	230	5	373	636
Total	127,000	453,000	11,100	111,000	40,400	86,500	23,000^f	124,000	28,000	109,000	103,000	430,000
Exports:												
Canada	4,430	--	1,540	--	834	--	1,870	--	961	--	5,210	--
China	9,070	--	60	--	120	--	200	--	203	--	583	--
Mexico	464	--	460	--	58	--	120	--	95	--	733	--
Other	673	102	165	144	244	72	176	--	84	73	669	289
Total	14,600	102	2,230	144	1,260	72	2,370	--	1,340	73	7,190	289

^fRevised. -- 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	4th quarter	1st quarter– 4th quarter
Imports for consumption:²						
Australia	393,000	49,900	97,200	96,400	49,300	293,000
Brazil	543,000	319,000	146,000	229,000	164,000	858,000
Jamaica ³	169,000	32,200	44,100	58,800	5,990	141,000
Other	229,000	58,900	66,100	57,600	53,600	236,000
Total	1,330,000	460,000	353,000	441,000	273,000	1,530,000
Exports:⁴						
Canada	35,500	9,290	8,670	8,290	7,580	33,800
China	16,700	21,900	2,070	1,620	728	26,300
Iceland	62,600	--	--	5	9	14
India	33,400	1,360	4,010	2,140	1,760	9,270
Mexico	48,100	15,600	18,600	14,000	11,200	59,400
Netherlands	95,100	15,400	20,700	1,600	983	38,700
Norway	213	18	15,800	21	10,300	26,100
Russia	90,000	95	221	11	28	355
United Arab Emirates	32,800	372	741	21	59	1,190
Venezuela	21,200	10,000	21,600	16,900	7,140	55,700
Other	45,200	12,700	11,400	11,500	10,500	46,200
Total	481,000	86,900	104,000	56,100	50,300	297,000

-- 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; 123,357 t in the first quarter of 2018; 118,576 t in the second quarter of 2018; 124,996 t in the third quarter of 2018; 106,212 t in the fourth quarter of 2018.

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 of 2018; 16,415 t in the fourth quarter of 2018.

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