

Mineral Industry Surveys

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IRON ORE IN SEPTEMBER 2015

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in September 2015 were 3.36 million metric tons (Mt) and 3.94 Mt, respectively (fig 1., table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 112,000 metric tons (t), 22% greater than that of August 2015 and 31% less than that of September 2014. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 131,000 t, 6% less than those of August and 32% less than those in September 2014. Mine stocks at the end of September 2015 were 12% less than those held in August and 6% less than those held in September 2014. As of September 2015, four iron ore mines and one direct-reduced iron (DRI) facility were either shut down or idled, resulting in reduced production and shipments.

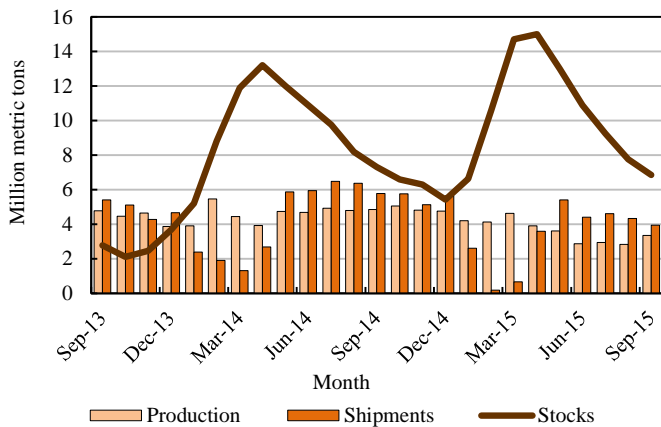


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from September 2013–September 2015. Source: U.S. Geological Survey

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 Ore chapter in the Minerals Yearbook, Volume I, Metals and Minerals.

U.S. exports of iron ore were 569,000 t in September 2015, nearly one-half those in August and slightly more than one-half those in September 2014. U.S. imports of iron ore were 671,000 t in September 2015, 17% greater than those in August 2015 and

the same as those in September 2014 (fig. 2).

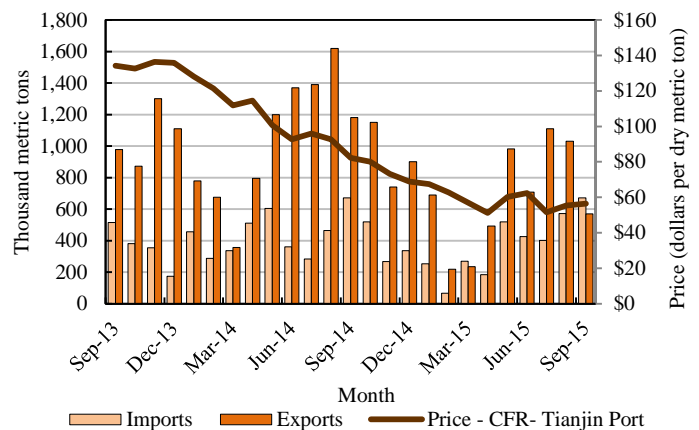


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for iron ore import fines, 62% iron content CFR, at Tianjin Port, from September 2013–September 2015. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Index Mundi, undated.

Industry News

The United Steelworkers Union announced that members would remain on the job at iron ore mines and steel facilities operated by U.S. Steel Corp. and ArcelorMittal SA while the union continued contract negotiations. Contracts for the 30,000 union members employed at iron and steel facilities across the United States expired on August 31. Negotiations are scheduled to begin with Cliffs Natural Resources Inc. on September 9 (Myers, 2015).

U.S. Steel Corp. issued a Work Adjustment and Retraining Notification advising that additional layoffs at the Keetac Mine would start on or after October 11. The Keetac Mine was idled in March and 412 employees remained on site for regular maintenance (Duluth News Tribune, 2015). There was no official guidance on when operations at Keetac Mine, a 6 million-metric-ton-per-year pellet operation, would resume.

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References Cited

- Duluth News Tribune, 2015, More layoffs planned at Keetac: Duluth [MN] News Tribune, September 24. (Accessed November 20, 2015, at <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/business/3846683-more-layoffs-planned-keetac>.)
- Myers, John, 2015, Steelworkers will stay on job as contract talks continue: Duluth [MN] News Tribune, August 31. (Accessed November 20, 2015, at <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/news/iron-range/3828923-steelworkers-will-stay-job-contract-talks-continue>.)

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:					
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	2,870 ^r	23,400 ^r	4,400	16,900	10,900 ^r
July	2,950 ^r	26,300 ^r	4,610	21,500	9,250 ^r
August ^f	2,840	29,200	4,330	25,800	7,770
September	3,360	32,500	3,940	29,800	6,860

^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:						
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
August	2,690	20,500	2,330	17,600	4,240	33,400
September	2,390	22,900	2,090	19,700	4,170	37,600

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–September	September		January–September	Value ³	
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
Belgium	51	37	\$1,950	36	\$1,950	\$54.17
Canada	6,170	302	23,900	5,120	453,000	88.51
China	1,640	221	7,740	343	12,100	35.27
Mexico	1,350	10	1,200	493	34,900	70.74
Other	121	(4)	14	38	3,110	81.79
Total	9,330	569	34,800	6,030	505,000	83.79
Concentrates	1,410	13	1,560	86	10,500	122.07
Fine ores	95	(4)	21	16	1,800	112.38
Pellets	7,100	520	31,200	5,480	467,000	85.22
Other	731	36	1,970	453	26,400	58.23
Total	9,330	569	34,800	6,030	505,000	83.79

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."

³Free alongside ship (FAS) value.

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–September	September		January–September	Value ³	
	Thousand metric tons	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Thousand metric tons	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
Argentina	71	44	\$1,810	97	\$7,740	\$79.82
Brazil	1,370	420	29,700	1,630	133,000	81.21
Canada	2,310	206	28,000	1,420	182,000	128.84
Other	232	1	72	218	18,100	83.16
Total	3,980	671	59,600	3,360	341,000	101.37
Concentrates	394	142	5,150	586	29,800	50.84
Fine ores	346	44	1,810	175	11,100	63.37
Pellets	3,200	485	52,600	2,560	297,000	116.00
Other	36	--	--	41	2,960	72.10
Total	3,980	671	59,600	3,360	341,000	101.37

-- 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.

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–September		September	January–September		September
	2014	2015	2015	2014	2015	2015
Chicago, IL (39)	--	--	--	534	524	140
Cleveland, OH (41)	674	738	177	674	738	177
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	44	44	44	44	44	44
New Orleans, LA (20)	1,970	1,460	264	2,270	1,690	308
Other	511	316	--	458	373	1
Total	3,200	2,560	485	3,980	3,360	671

-- 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 of imports per month included in "Other."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.