

Mineral Industry Surveys

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IRON ORE IN DECEMBER 2018

U.S. mine production and shipments of iron ore in December 2018 were 4.31 million metric tons (Mt) and 5.34 Mt, respectively (fig. 1, table 1). Average daily production of iron ore was 139,000 metric tons (t), 5% less than that of November and slightly less than that of December 2017. Total production in 2018 was 49.3 Mt, a 3% increase from 47.6 Mt in 2017. Average daily shipments of iron ore were 172,000 t, 5% more than those in November and 17% more than those in December 2017. Total shipments in 2018 were 49.5 Mt, a 6% increase from 46.7 Mt in 2017. Mine stocks at the end of December 2018 were 15% less than those held at the end of November and 3% less than those held at the end of December 2017 (fig. 1, table 1).

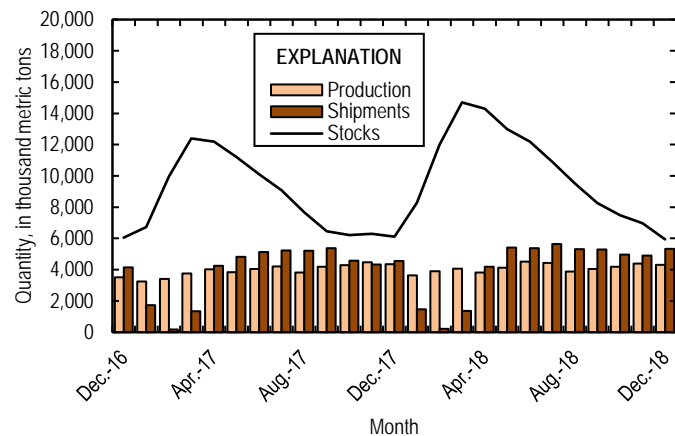


Figure 1. Monthly domestic production, shipments, and stocks of iron ore from December 2016 through December 2018.

Monthly iron ore data are reported as gross weight unless otherwise noted and do not include iron metallics such as pig iron, direct-reduced iron, hot-briquetted iron, or iron nuggets.

U.S. exports of iron ore were 1.02 Mt in December 2018, 7% more than those in November and 52% more than those in December 2017. Total exports in 2018 were 12.9 Mt, a 22% increase from 10.6 Mt in 2017 (fig. 2, table 3). U.S. imports of

iron ore were 482,000 t in December 2018, 20% more than those in November and 9% less than those in December 2017. Total imports in 2018 were 3.8 Mt, a 3% increase from those in 2017 (fig. 2, table 4).

Seasonal variations of exports, imports, shipments, and stocks during the winter months are attributed to freezing of waterways and the closing of the Soo Locks, which are used to transport iron ore in the Great Lakes region through the St. Lawrence Seaway.

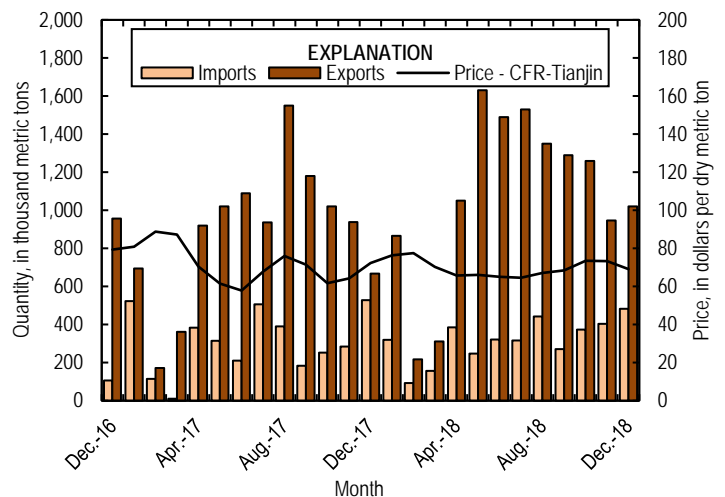


Figure 2. Monthly domestic imports and exports of iron ore and spot prices for imported iron ore fines, 62% iron content, cost and freight (CFR), at Tianjin Port, China, from December 2016 through December 2018. Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Index Mundi, undated.

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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, usable ore)

Period	Production		Shipments ³		Stocks
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	End of Month
2017:					
December	4,360	47,600	4,560	46,700	6,120
2018:					
January	3,640	3,640	1,470	1,470	8,290
February	3,900	7,540	214	1,680	12,000
March	4,070	11,600	1,360	3,050	14,700
April	3,810	15,400	4,180	7,230	14,300
May	4,120	19,500	5,420	12,600	13,000
June	4,510	24,000	5,370	18,000	12,200
July	4,440	28,500	5,640	23,700	10,900
August	3,880	32,400	5,310	29,000	9,520
September	4,050	36,400	5,300	34,300	8,270
October	4,180	40,600	4,970	39,200	7,480
November	4,400	45,000	4,910	44,100	6,970
December	4,310	49,300	5,340	49,500	5,940

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		Raw steel production			
	Basic oxygen furnace		Blast furnace		Electric furnace	
	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date	Monthly	Year to date
2017:						
December	1,840	22,400	2,120	25,800	4,620	55,800
2018:						
January	1,920	1,920	2,240	2,240	4,650	4,650
February	1,790	3,710	1,980	4,210	4,620	9,270
March	1,970	5,680	2,270	6,490	5,060	14,300
April	1,930	7,600	2,200	8,690	4,720	19,000
May	2,070	9,680	2,400	11,100	4,860	23,900
June	2,060	11,700	2,330	13,400	4,730	28,600
July	2,100	13,800	2,370	15,800	5,010	33,700
August	2,030	15,900	2,340	18,100	5,140	38,800
September	2,010	17,900	2,350	20,500	4,910	43,700
October	2,060	19,900	2,360	22,800	5,190	48,900
November	2,030	22,000	2,380	25,200	5,020	53,900
December	2,100	24,100	2,490	27,700	4,990	58,900

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

Source: American Iron and Steel Institute.

TABLE 3
 U.S. EXPORTS OF IRON ORE, BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY AND TYPE ^{1,2}
 (Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country or locality of origin and type of product	2017		2018			
	January–December Quantity (thousand metric tons)	December		January–December		
		Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
Canada	7,680 ^r	897	74,000	10,000	775,000	77.46
Japan	2,330 ^r	86	5,190	2,170	131,000	60.67
Mexico	238	32	3,690	590	57,500	97.52
Other	312 ^r	(4)	21	165	8,140	49.36
Total	10,600	1,020	82,900	12,900	972,000	75.21
Concentrates	83 ^r	6	769	70	9,920	141.69
Fine ores	31 ^r	(4)	46	1	293	293.00
Pellets	10,300	1,010	82,100	12,600	952,000	75.45
Other	116	--	--	226	9,030	39.97
Total	10,600	1,020	82,900	12,900	972,000	75.21

^rRevised. -- 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 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 OR LOCALITY AND TYPE^{1,2}
(Exclusive of ore containing 20% or more manganese)

Country or locality of origin and type of product	2017		2018			
	January–December Quantity (thousand metric tons)	December		January–December		
		Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Quantity (thousand metric tons)	Value ³ (thousand dollars)	Value ³ (dollars per ton)
Brazil	2,040 ^r	320	35,300	2,380	251,000	105.70
Canada	790	133	12,200	853	78,500	92.07
South Africa	80	28	2,880	62	6,350	102.39
Other	794 ^r	(4)	10	516	52,100	101.06
Total	3,700	482	50,400	3,810	388,000	101.94
Concentrates	1,110	140	8,860	1,100	70,000	63.89
Fine Ores	219	(4)	18	229	19,900	87.04
Pellets	2,330	342	41,500	2,470	297,000	120.25
Other	38	--	--	13	1,230	94.23
Total	3,700	482	50,400	3,810	388,000	101.94

^rRevised. -- 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.

⁴Less than ½ unit.

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–December		December	January–December		December
	2017	2018	2018	2017	2018	2018
Chicago, IL (39)	28	28	--	757	924	140
Houston-Galveston, TX (53)	63	22	22	201 ^r	159	22
New Orleans, LA (20)	2,240	2,420	320	2,630	2,620	320
Other	-- ^r	--	--	113 ^r	104	(3)
Total	2,330	2,470	342	3,700	3,810	482

^rRevised. -- 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."

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.