

Mineral Industry Surveys

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U.S. PRODUCTION OF SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES IN THE FOURTH QUARTER 2015

U.S. mine and plant production data for selected mineral commodities are provided monthly (or quarterly) by the U.S. Geological Survey to the Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System (FRS), for use in preparing its index of industrial production and the related capacity indexes and capacity utilization rates. These measures cover manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities, and they are among the key economic indicators monitored by the FRS for guidance in determining national monetary policy. This report includes current and prior months' production data, some of which have been revised.

Consistent with seasonal trends, domestic production of construction materials (cement, construction sand and gravel, crushed stone, and gypsum combined) in the fourth quarter of 2015 decreased by approximately 19% compared with that in the third quarter of 2015 (fig. 1, table 1). Production of these mineral commodities increased for the third consecutive year and, in 2015, was about 5% greater than during 2014.

During the fourth quarter of 2015, copper production increased slightly, but gold and silver production decreased by 5% and 2%, respectively, compared with production in the third quarter of 2015 (fig. 2, table 1). Copper production has generally increased since 2011. Gold production began increasing in the second quarter of 2015. Silver production began a downward trend in the first quarter of 2015.

Production in the fourth quarter of 2015 decreased significantly for lead, molybdenum, and zinc compared with that in the third quarter of 2015. Year-over-year production decreased for aluminum, iron ore, lead, molybdenum, silver, soda ash, and zinc (table 1).

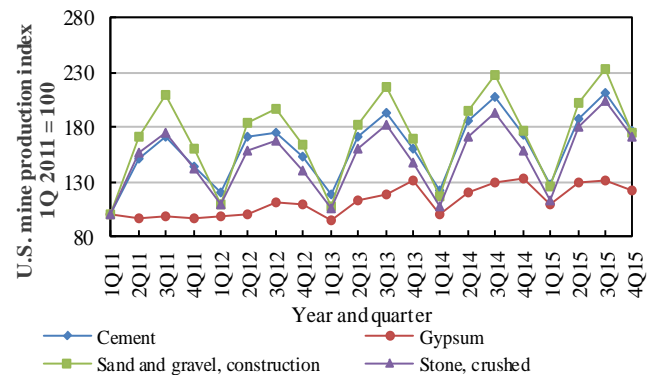


Figure 1. U.S. production of selected construction-related mineral commodities from the first quarter of 2011 through the fourth quarter of 2015, indexed to the first quarter of 2011. Source: U.S. Geological Survey.

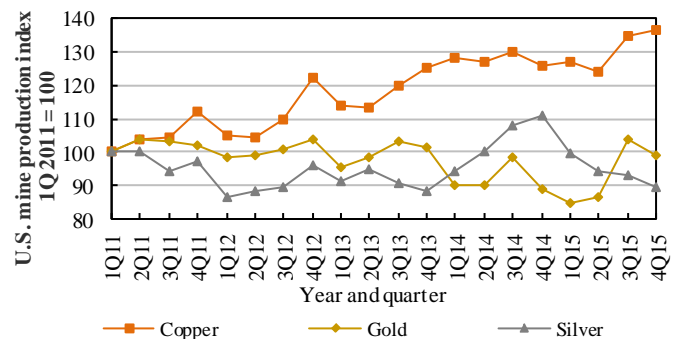


Figure 2. U.S. mine production of selected metals from the first quarter of 2011 through the fourth quarter of 2015, indexed to the first quarter of 2011. Source: U.S. Geological Survey.

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TABLE 1
PRODUCTION TRENDS FOR SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES

Mineral commodity	Percent change, 4th quarter 2015 vs. 3d quarter 2015 ¹	Percent change, 2015 total vs. 2014 total ¹
Aluminum (secondary)	-1	-6
Cement	-15	1
Copper	1	2
Gold	-5	2
Gypsum	-8	2
Iron ore	10	-21
Lead	-9	-3
Molybdenum	-18	-26
Phosphate rock	(2)	4
Sand and gravel, construction	-23	3
Silver	-2	-9
Soda ash	-1	-1
Stone, crushed	-16	6
Zinc	-9	-4

¹Based on data available as of February 24, 2016.

²Less than ½ unit.

TABLE 2
U.S. PRODUCTION OF SELECTED MINERAL COMMODITIES, BY QUARTER^{1,2}

Mineral commodity		2014				2015				1st quarter– 4th quarter	
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	2014	2015
Aluminum ³	thousand metric tons	207	205	206	204	205	196	196	195	843 ⁴	792
Cement ⁵	million metric tons	14.4	21.9	24.4	20.3	14.9	21.8	24.5	20.7	81.0	81.9
Copper ⁶	thousand metric tons	339	337	344	332	336	329 ^r	357 ^r	362	1,350	1,380
Gold ⁶	metric tons	51.5	51.5	56.4	50.7	48.4	49.4 ^r	59.5 ^r	56.7	210	214
Gypsum ⁷	million metric tons	3.1	3.6	3.9	4.0	3.4	3.9	4.0	3.7	14.7	15.0
Iron ore ⁸	do.	11.7	13.4	14.6	14.6	13.0	10.4	9.4 ^r	10.3	54.3	43.1
Lead ⁶	thousand metric tons	85.9	94.0 ^r	92.1	95.4	93.9	94.2	88.8	80.9	367	358
Molybdenum ⁶	do.	14.7	17.6	20.1	15.5	13.8	13.5	12.6	10.4	67.9	50.3
Phosphate rock ⁹	million metric tons	6.6	7.0	6.8	6.3	6.2	7.6 ^r	7.0 ^r	7.0	26.7	27.8
Sand and gravel, construction ¹⁰	do.	122 ^r	230 ^r	283 ^r	206 ^r	132 ^r	237 ^r	282 ^r	219	842	870
Silver ⁶	metric tons	270 ^r	287	309	318	285	269 ^r	263 ^r	256	1,180	1,070
Soda ash ⁸	million metric tons	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	11.7	11.6
Stone, crushed ¹⁰	do.	202 ^r	336 ^r	387 ^r	311 ^r	216 ^r	355 ^r	409 ^r	343	1,250 ⁴	1,320
Zinc ⁶	thousand metric tons	206	191	196	210	203	214	187	169	803	773

^rRevised. do. Ditto.

¹Based on data available as of February 24, 2016.

²Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

³Aluminum alloys produced at secondary smelters in the United States, less primary aluminum consumed, primary silicon consumed, and other alloying ingredients consumed.

⁴Total may not equal sum of year's quarterly data owing to adjustments to annual data that are not broken out by quarter.

⁵Data are shipments of domestically produced portland and blended cement, including cement made from imported clinker, as a proxy for actual domestic cement production.

⁶Recoverable mine production.

⁷Calcined production.

⁸Mine production.

⁹Marketable mine production.

¹⁰Sold or used; quarterly survey based on sample survey. Quarterly data may not add to totals shown because of independent rounding and differences between projected totals by States and by division.