

PUMICE AND PUMICITE

(Data in thousand metric tons unless otherwise noted)

Domestic Production and Use: The estimated value of pumice and pumicite sold or used in 2008 was about \$29 million. Domestic output came from 21 producers in 7 States. Pumice and pumicite were mined in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, and Kansas, in descending order of production. Approximately 50% of all production came from Arizona and California. About 58% of mined pumice was used toward the production of construction building block. Horticulture consumed nearly 14%; concrete admixture and aggregate, 7%; abrasives, 7%; and the remaining 14% was used for absorbent, filtration, landscaping, laundry stone washing, and other applications.

Salient Statistics—United States:	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008^e</u>
Production, mine ¹	1,490	1,270	1,540	1,270	1,140
Imports for consumption ²	402	240	109	37	86
Exports ^{e, 2}	20	15	18	9	17
Consumption, apparent	1,870	1,500	1,630	1,300	1,210
Price, average value, dollars per ton, f.o.b. mine or mill	16.80	31.00	28.85	22.85	25.00
Employment, mine and mill, number	100	110	110	110	110
Net import reliance ³ as a percentage of apparent consumption	20	15	6	2	6

Recycling: Not available.

Import Sources (2004-07): Greece, 74%; Italy, 20%; Turkey, 3%; Mexico, 2%; and other, 1%.

Tariff: Item	Number	Normal Trade Relations <u>12-31-08</u>
Pumice, crude or in irregular pieces, including crushed	2513.10.0010	Free.
Pumice, except crude or crushed	2513.10.0080	Free.

Depletion Allowance: 5% (Domestic and foreign).

Government Stockpile: None.

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Events, Trends, and Issues: The amount of domestically produced pumice and pumicite sold or used in 2008 decreased by 10% to 1.14 million tons, compared with 1.27 million tons in 2007. Imports were approximately double those of 2007. Approximately 98% of pumice imports originated from Greece and Mexico to supply markets in the Eastern United States and Gulf Coast regions. Imports of pumice from Italy, which decreased from 47,000 tons in 2006 to less than 500 tons in 2007, remained low in 2008. The dramatic decrease resulted from the closure of a large pumice mining operation in Lipari. Apparent consumption fell by approximately 7% in 2008 compared with that of 2007.

In 2008, a continued slowdown in the construction industry led to decreases in pumice and pumicite domestic mine production, as well as apparent consumption. Although pumice and pumicite are plentiful in the Western United States, legal challenges and public land designations could limit access to known deposits. Pumice and pumicite production is sensitive to mining and transportation costs. As higher fuel prices lead to increases in production expenditures, imports and competing materials could become more attractive than domestic products.

All domestic pumice and pumicite mining in 2008 was accomplished through open pit methods, generally in remote areas where land-use conflicts were not severe. Although the generation and disposal of reject fines in mining and milling resulted in local dust issues at some operations, the environmental impact was restricted to a relatively small geographic area.

World Mine Production, Reserves, and Reserve Base:

	Mine production		Reserves ⁴	Reserve base ⁴
	2007	2008 ^e		
United States ¹	1,270	1,140	Large	Large
Algeria	450	400		
Cameroon	600	600		
Chile	1,400	1,100		
Ecuador	710	740	Quantitative estimates of reserves and reserve base for most countries are not available.	
France	250	230		
Greece	2,250	2,000		
Iran	1,500	1,400		
Italy	4,020	1,000		
Spain	600	540		
Syria	650	650		
Turkey	700	630		
Other countries	<u>2,400</u>	<u>2,280</u>		
World total (rounded)	16,800	12,700		NA

World Resources: The identified United States resources of pumice and pumicite are concentrated in the West, and estimated to be more than 25 million tons. The estimated total resources (identified and undiscovered) in the Western and Great Plains States are at least 250 million tons and may total more than 1 billion tons. Greece and Iran are the leading producers of pumice and pumicite, followed by Chile, the United States, Ecuador, and Turkey. There are large resources of pumice and pumicite on all continents.

Substitutes: The costs of transportation determine the maximum economic distance for which pumice and pumicite can be shipped, while still remaining competitive with alternative materials. Competitive resources that may be substituted for pumice and pumicite include crushed aggregates, diatomite, expanded shale and clay, and vermiculite.

^eEstimated. NA Not available.

¹Quantity sold and used by producers.

²The data for the 2006 imports for consumption and the 2004-07 exports are based on revised U.S. Census Bureau information.

³Defined as imports – exports + adjustments for Government and industry stock changes.

⁴[See Appendix C for definitions.](#)