

DIATOMITE

By Harold A. Taylor

U.S. sales of processed diatomite increased slightly to 613,000 metric tons, valued at \$152 million, according to the U.S. Bureau of Mines. The major use of diatomite was in filtration to separate suspended solids in liquids.

Production

Five companies processed diatomite at 11 plants in 4 States. California continued to be the leading State followed by Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Major domestic producers were Celite Corp., with operations at Lompoc, CA, and Quincy, WA; Eagle-Picher Minerals Inc. at Lovelock and Sparks, NV, and Vale, OR; and Grefco Inc., Dicalite Div. at Burney and Lompoc, CA and Mina, NV. Other producers were CR Minerals Corp., Fernley, NV; and Oil-Dri Production Co., Christmas Valley, OR.

Diatomite production data were collected from voluntary surveys of all 11 known operations. All responded representing 100% of the production data shown in table 1.

Consumption

Apparent domestic consumption of processed diatomite increased 5% to 456,000 metric tons. In 1994, domestic and export sales of filter-grade diatomite were 447,000 tons, 5% more than in 1993. Sales of diatomite as a filler, the second largest use, were about 86,000 tons, 15% less than in 1993.

Price

The average unit value of sales for processed diatomite was \$248 per ton, 1% less than in 1993.

Foreign Trade

U.S. exports of processed diatomite were 157,000 tons, about 5% less than in 1993. The average unit value of exported diatomite was \$361 per ton compared with \$303 per ton in 1993. Diatomite was exported to 74 countries, of which Canada received 23,950 tons; France, 13,495; Japan, 15,777 tons; Germany, 14,928 tons; and Australia, 10,459 tons; which combined received 50% of the total exported. U.S. exports represented 26% of domestic production. Imports of diatomite were 379 tons,

of which 22% was supplied by Mexico.

World Review

World production was estimated to be 1.4 million tons in 1994. The United States remained the world's leading producer followed by France, the former U.S.S.R, and the Republic of Korea. These four countries accounted for 73% of world production.

Outlook

Diatomite consumption is expected to increase slightly over the next few years. Filtration will continue to be the major end use.

TABLE 1
DIATOMITE SOLD OR USED BY PRODUCERS IN THE UNITED STATES 1/

(Thousand metric tons and thousand dollars)

	1993	1994
Domestic production (sales)	599	613
Total value of sales	150,000	152,000

1/ Previously published and 1994 data are rounded by U.S. Bureau of Mines to three significant digits.

TABLE 2
DIATOMITE SOLD OR USED, 1/ BY MAJOR USE

(Percent of U.S. production)

Major use	1993	1994
Fillers	17	14
Filtration	71	73
Insulation	4	3
Other 2/	9	10

1/ Includes exports.

2/ Includes absorbants, additives, and silicates admixtures.

TABLE 3
 AVERAGE ANNUAL VALUE PER METRIC TON 1/ OF DIATOMITE, BY MAJOR USE

Major use	1993	1994
Fillers	\$287.39	\$319.49
Filtration	262.01	237.79
Insulation	153.34	137.38
Other 2/	128.84	259.14
Weighted average	250.67	247.81

1/ Based on unrounded data.

2/ Includes absorbents, additives, and silicate admixtures.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF DIATOMITE 1/

(Thousand metric tons and thousand dollars)

Year	Quantity	Value 2/
1993	165	49,900
1994	157	56,600

1/ Previously published and 1994 data are rounded by U.S. Bureau of Mines to three significant digits.

2/ U.S. Customs.

TABLE 5
DIATOMITE: WORLD PRODUCTION, BY COUNTRY 1/ 2/

(Thousand metric tons)

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994 e/
Algeria	4	4	4	4 e/	4
Argentina	4 r/	6 r/	5	3 r/	3
Australia e/	10	11	11	11	11
Brazil (marketable) e/	13 3/	13	13	13	13
Canada e/ 4/	4	8	10	10 e/	10
Chile	4	6	6	6 r/	6
Colombia	3	4	4	-- r/	--
Costa Rica e/	4	12	12	12 r/	12
Denmark: e/ 5/					
Diatomite	1	1	1	1 e/	1
Moler	97	95	95	95 e/	95
France e/	250	250	250	250	250
Germany:					
Eastern states	14	XX	XX	XX	XX
Western states	50	XX	XX	XX	XX
Total	64	47	52	52 r/	52
Iceland	26	23	20	19 e/	20
Iran 6/	2	(7/)	(7/) e/	(7/)	(7/)
Italy e/	25	23	26	25	25
Kenya	1	1	1	1 e/	1
Korea, Republic of	55	91	77	67 r/	70
Macedonia 8/	XX	XX	5 r/ e/	5 r/ e/	5
Mexico	51	46	46	46 r/	46
Peru e/	20	26 3/	25	25	25
Portugal e/	2	2	2	2	2
Romania e/	40	30	15	14	14
South Africa, Republic of	3	2	1	-- r/	--
Spain	108	60 e/	36	38 e/	36
Thailand	5	7	10	8 r/	9
U.S.S.R. e/ 9/	250	220	190	150	120
United Kingdom e/	(7/)	(7/)	(7/)	(7/)	(7/)
United States 10/	631	610	595	599	613 3/
Yugoslavia 8/ 11/	6	4 e/	XX	XX	XX
Total	1,680	1,600 r/	1,510	1,460	1,440

e/ Estimated. r/ Revised. XX Not applicable.

1/ Previously published and 1994 data are rounded by the U.S. Bureau of Mines to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ Table includes data available through Apr. 11, 1995.

3/ Reported figure.

4/ Includes an unknown quantity of fuller's earth.

5/ Data represent sales.

6/ Data are for Iranian years beginning Mar. 21 of that stated.

7/ Less than 1/2 unit.

8/ All production in Yugoslavia in 1990-91 came from Macedonia.

9/ Dissolved in Dec. 1991; however, information is inadequate to formulate reliable estimates for individual countries.

10/ Sold or used by producers.

11/ Dissolved in Apr. 1992.