

Mineral Industry Surveys

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SODA ASH IN MARCH 2020

U.S. natural soda ash production in March was an estimated 1.02 million metric tons (Mt), an 8% increase compared with that of the previous month and that of March 2019. Soda ash production for the first 3 months of 2020 was 2.91 Mt, a slight increase compared with that of the same period of 2019. Ending stocks in March increased to 326,000 metric tons (t), 7% more than those of the preceding month (tables 1, 4).

Wyoming trona production in March 2020 was 1.41 Mt, 5% more than that of February 2020, but 16% less than that of March 2019. Trona production for the first 3 months of 2020 was 4.33 Mt, a 10% decrease compared with that of the same period of 2019.

Exports of soda ash in March 2020 were 584,000 t, 8% less than those of February 2020 but 15% more than those of March 2019. Exports for the first 3 months of 2020 were 1.80 Mt, a 5% increase compared with that of the same period of 2019 (tables 2, 4).

March 2020 imports of soda ash were 610 t, 72% more than those of February 2020 but 98% less than those of March 2019. A large shipment of soda ash from Turkey was imported in the first quarter of 2019 but no similar shipments were known to have taken place in the first quarter of 2020. Imports for the first 3 months of 2020 were 1,380 t, a 96% decrease compared with that of the same period of 2019. Soda ash import tonnages can differ significantly from month to month, but generally are much smaller than soda ash export tonnages (tables 3, 4).

Apparent consumption for March 2020 was an estimated 412,000 t, a 49% increase from that of February 2020, but 9%

less than that of March 2019. Apparent consumption of soda ash for the first 3 months of 2020 was 1.07 Mt, an 11% decrease compared with that of the same period of 2019. Apparent consumption can change significantly from month to month mostly owing to variation in the quantity of exports but usually stabilizes over the course of the year (table 4).

Table 5 provides reported soda ash consumption statistics for the fourth quarter of 2019. Reported consumption for the fourth quarter was 1.18 Mt, a slight decrease compared with consumption for the fourth quarter of 2018. Reported consumption for 2019 was 4.72 Mt, 3% less than that of 2018. During the fourth quarter of 2019, 566,000 t (48%) went to glassmaking and 343,000 t (29%) was consumed in the production of chemicals.

All percentages in this report were calculated using unrounded data.

Note: The annual average value of U.S. soda ash production for 2019 was \$138.99 per short ton (\$153.22 per metric ton), a 3% increase compared with the 2018 average value of \$134.89 per short ton (\$148.69 per metric ton).

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TABLE 1
SALIENT SODA ASH STATISTICS¹

(Thousand metric tons)

Period	Soda ash		Wyoming trona production
	Production ²	Stocks, end of period	
2019:			
January–March	2,860	276 ^r	4,800 ^r
March	941	276	1,680
April	999	335	1,500
May	994	273	1,310
June	946	281	1,610
July	972	246	1,640
August	929 ^r	229	1,490
September	977	304	1,550
October	1,010	329	1,520
November	1,010	336	1,430
December	1,030	289	1,540
January–December	11,700	289	18,400
2020:			
January	954	275	1,570
February	944 ^e	306	1,350 ^e
March	1,020 ^e	326	1,410 ^e
January–March	2,910 ^e	326	4,330 ^e

^eEstimated. ^rRevised.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Production data include soda ash equivalent from soda liquors only. Soda ash equivalent from mine water is not included. Soda liquors are withheld to avoid disclosing company proprietary data.

TABLE 2
U.S. EXPORTS OF SODA ASH BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY, IN 2020¹

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Country or locality	January	February	March			January–March		
			Quantity	Value ² (thousand dollars)	Unit value	Quantity	Percent of total quantity	Value ² (thousand dollars)
Argentina	7,000	25,400	60	\$27	\$454	32,400	2	\$14,000
Australia	35,000	--	34,200	7,880	231	69,200	4	15,400
Belgium	263	12,100	581	64	110	12,900	1	1,840
Brazil	116,000	83,000	66,800	12,600	188	266,000	15	49,300
Canada	17,300	13,800	19,600	4,500	229	50,700	3	11,700
Chile	43,300	75,400	45,200	10,500	232	164,000	9	37,700
China	35,500	50,000	40,000	4,220	105	126,000	7	14,000
Colombia	4,000	20,000	10,000	1,990	200	34,000	2	7,160
Ecuador	--	11,000	--	--	--	11,000	1	2,360
Guatemala	--	12,000	6,600	1,490	225	18,600	1	3,990
India	--	32,600	--	--	--	32,600	2	5,320
Indonesia	63,300	63,200	40,000	7,790	195	166,000	9	33,900
Japan	20,500	--	29,500	5,370	182	50,000	3	9,110
Korea, Republic of	22,100	19,600	14,200	2,870	203	55,800	3	10,600
Malaysia	19,200	47,500	17,300	3,290	191	83,900	5	16,600
Mexico	111,000	104,000	110,000	26,800	243	325,000	18	76,700
Netherlands	10,900	16,000	--	--	--	26,900	1	4,520
Peru	--	10,600	75	8	110	10,700	1	2,290
Philippines	7,000	--	18,000	3,620	201	25,000	1	5,070
Saudi Arabia	20,300	--	45,000	7,440	165	65,300	4	11,100
South Africa	--	11,200	--	--	--	11,200	1	1,880
Taiwan	8,500	11,500	--	--	--	20,000	1	3,940
Thailand	35,700	--	57,300	11,200	195	93,000	5	19,000
United Arab Emirates	7,500	--	8,500	1,560	183	16,000	1	2,980
Vietnam	181	9,640	20,000	3,890	195	29,800	2	6,010
Others	572 ^r	7,520 ^r	650	86	132	8,740	--	1,670
Total	585,000	636,000	584,000	117,000	201	1,800,000	100	368,000

^rRevised. -- Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Free alongside ship values at U.S. ports.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS OF SODA ASH BY COUNTRY OR LOCALITY, IN 2020¹

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Country or locality	January	February	March			January–March		
			Quantity	Value ² (thousand dollars)	Unit value	Quantity	Percent of total quantity	Value ² (thousand dollars)
China	62	29	20	\$12	\$605	111	8	\$76
Dominican Republic	19	--	--	--	--	19	1	10
France	21	64	71	131	1,840	156	11	249
Germany	32	(3)	8	34	4,320	40	3	88
Mexico	175	209	192	75	393	575	42	224
Spain	--	--	76	53	697	76	5	53
United Kingdom	108	36	201	139	689	345	25	224
Others	3	16	42	43	1,030	61	4	82
Total	419	354	610	487	799	1,380	100	1,010

¹Revised. -- Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Cost, insurance, and freight values at U.S. ports.

³Less than ½ unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 4
U.S. APPARENT CONSUMPTION OF SODA ASH¹

(Metric tons)

Period	Production	Exports	Imports	Net stock		Apparent consumption ²
				Increase	Decrease	
2019:						
January–December	11,700,000	7,020,000	115,000	--	8,100	4,820,000
January–March	2,860,000	1,720,000	35,300 ^r	--	21,000 ^r	1,200,000 ^r
March	941,000	509,000	33,000	13,900	--	452,000
April	999,000	562,000	1,280	58,500	--	380,000
May	994,000	641,000	1,150	--	61,700	416,000
June	946,000	614,000	36,200	7,410	--	361,000
July	972,000	558,000	1,190	--	34,200	450,000
August	929,000 ^r	618,000	1,180	--	17,600	330,000 ^r
September	977,000	452,000	36,300	75,200	--	486,000
October	1,010,000	549,000	890	24,700	--	433,000
November	1,010,000	609,000	778	7,800	--	392,000
December	1,030,000	701,000	1,260	--	47,100	376,000
2020:						
January–March	2,910,000	1,800,000	1,380	36,700	--	1,070,000
January	954,000	585,000	419	--	14,100	383,000
February	944,000 ^e	636,000	354	30,900	--	278,000 ^e
March	1,020,000 ^e	584,000	610	19,900	--	412,000 ^e

^eEstimated. ^rRevised. -- Zero.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²Production plus imports minus exports plus or minus stock changes.

TABLE 5
REPORTED CONSUMPTION OF SODA ASH IN THE UNITED STATES, BY END USE, BY QUARTER¹

(Thousand metric tons)

NAICS ² code	End use	2018					2019					
		1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter– 4th quarter	1st quarter	2d quarter	3d quarter	4th quarter	1st quarter– 4th quarter	
3272	Glass:											
327213	Container	279	284	257	233	1,053	250	250	255	250	1,000	
327211	Flat	222	243	240	256	960	228	234	239	253	954	
327993	Fiber	39	40	43	42	164 ^r	39	41	44	42	167	
327212	Other	26	25	25	26	102	27	23	23	22	95	
	Total	566	591	565	557	2,279	545	548	562	566	2,220	
32518	Chemicals	338	369	356	372	1,435	335	358	333	343	1,370	
325611	Soaps and detergents	79	66	72	70	288 ^r	69	67	71	65	272	
322	Pulp and paper	12	13	11	11	47	10	10	9	10	39	
221310	Water treatment ³	11	12	12	9	45	10	11	10	10	42	
56221	Flue gas desulfurization	47	43	52	49	191	47	38	39	38	161	
4246	Distributors	79	74	75	74	302	71	61	68	61	260	
	Other	71	69	65	59	265	84	74	108	88	353	
	Total domestic consumption ⁴	1,203	1,239	1,209	1,200	4,851	1,170	1,170	1,200	1,180	4,720	
	Exports ⁵	1,746	1,588	1,718	1,763	6,815 ^r	1,710	1,760	1,780	1,790	7,040	
	Canada	47	49	47	48	190	44	49	43	42	178	
	Total industry sales ⁶	2,950	2,827	2,926	2,962	11,666	2,880	2,920	2,980	2,970	11,800	
	Total sales from plants	3,012	2,864	3,024	3,025	11,925	2,890	2,970	2,990	3,030	11,900	
	Total production	2,958	2,878	2,987	3,069	11,892 ^r	2,860	2,940	2,870	3,040	11,700	

^rRevised.

¹Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

²North American Industry Classification System.

³Includes soda ash equivalent from soda liquors and purge liquors sold to power plants for water treatment. Sales of mine water are excluded.

⁴Imports reported by the producer/importer have been distributed into appropriate end-use categories listed above.

⁵As reported by producers; includes Canada. Data may not necessarily agree with those reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the same periods.

⁶Represents soda ash from domestic origin (production and inventory changes) and imports and exports. Includes soda ash sold by coproducers and distributed by purchasers into appropriate end-use categories.