

YTTRIUM¹

[Data in metric tons of yttrium-oxide (Y₂O₃) equivalent content unless otherwise noted]

Domestic Production and Use: Yttrium is one of the rare-earth elements. Bastnaesite (or bastnäsite), a rare-earth fluorocarbonate mineral, was mined in 2019 as a primary product at the Mountain Pass Mine in California, which was restarted in the first quarter of 2018 after being put on care-and-maintenance status in the fourth quarter of 2015. Monazite, a rare-earth phosphate mineral, also may have been produced as a separated concentrate or included as an accessory mineral in heavy-mineral concentrates. Yttrium was estimated to represent about 0.12% of the rare-earth elements in the Mountain Pass bastnaesite ore.

The leading end uses of yttrium were in ceramics, metallurgy, and phosphors. In ceramic applications, yttrium compounds were used in abrasives, bearings and seals, high-temperature refractories for continuous-casting nozzles, jet-engine coatings, oxygen sensors in automobile engines, and wear-resistant and corrosion-resistant cutting tools. In metallurgical applications, yttrium was used as a grain-refining additive and as a deoxidizer. Yttrium was used in heating-element alloys, high-temperature superconductors, and superalloys. In electronics, yttrium-iron garnets were components in microwave radar to control high-frequency signals. Yttrium was an important component in yttrium-aluminum-garnet laser crystals used in dental and medical surgical procedures, digital communications, distance and temperature sensing, industrial cutting and welding, nonlinear optics, photochemistry, and photoluminescence. Yttrium was used in phosphor compounds for flat-panel displays and various lighting applications.

Salient Statistics—United States:	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019^e
Production, mine	NA	—	—	NA	NA
Imports for consumption:					
Yttrium, alloys, compounds, and metal ^{e, 2}	360	340	380	450	570
Exports, compounds ^{e, 3}	39	2	2	14	7
Consumption, apparent ^{e, 4}	300	300	400	500	600
Price, dollars per kilogram, average:					
Yttrium oxide, minimum 99.999 purity ⁵	8	4	3	3	3
Yttrium metal, minimum 99.9% purity ⁵	48	35	35	36	34
Net import reliance ^{6, 7} as a percentage of apparent consumption	100	100	100	100	100

Recycling: Insignificant.

Import Sources (2015–18):⁸ Yttrium compounds: China, 87%; Estonia, 5%; Republic of Korea, 2%; Japan, 2%; and other, 4%. Nearly all imports of yttrium metal and compounds are derived from mineral concentrates processed in China. Import sources do not include yttrium contained in value-added intermediates and finished products.

Tariff: Item	Number	Normal Trade Relations 12–31–19
Rare-earth metals, unspecified, whether or not intermixed or interalloyed	2805.30.0090	5.0% ad val.
Mixtures of rare-earth oxides containing yttrium or scandium as the predominant metal	2846.90.2015	Free.
Mixtures of rare-earth chlorides containing yttrium or scandium as the predominant metal	2846.90.2082	Free.
Yttrium-bearing materials and compounds containing by weight >19% to <85% Y ₂ O ₃	2846.90.4000	Free.
Other rare-earth compounds, including yttrium and other compounds	2846.90.8000	3.7% ad val.

YTTRIUM

Depletion Allowance: Monazite, thorium content, 22% (Domestic), 14% (Foreign); yttrium, rare-earth content, 14% (Domestic and foreign); and xenotime, 14% (Domestic and foreign).

Government Stockpile:⁹

Material	Inventory As of 9–30–19	FY 2019		FY 2020	
		Potential Acquisitions	Potential Disposals	Potential Acquisitions	Potential Disposals
Yttrium oxide	25	10	—	—	—

Events, Trends, and Issues: China produced most of the world's supply of yttrium from its weathered clay ion-adsorption ore deposits in the southern Provinces—primarily Fujian, Guangdong, and Jiangxi—and from a lesser number of deposits in Guangxi and Hunan Provinces. Processing was primarily at facilities in Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Jiangxi Provinces. In 2019, yttrium was produced from similar clay deposits in Burma (Myanmar).

Globally, yttrium was mainly consumed in the form of oxide compounds for ceramics and phosphors. Lesser amounts were consumed in electronic devices, lasers, optical glass, and metallurgical applications. The average price for yttrium metal decreased by 5% compared with that of 2018. Yttrium oxide prices remained nearly unchanged since 2016. China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology raised the rare-earth mining and separation quotas to record highs of 132,000 tons and 127,000 tons of rare-earth-oxide equivalent, respectively. The yttrium content of the production quota was not specified. In 2019, China's exports of yttrium compounds and metal were estimated to be 3,000 tons of yttrium-oxide equivalent, and the leading export destinations were, in descending order, Japan, the United States, Italy, and the Republic of Korea.

World Mine Production and Reserves:¹⁰ World mine production of yttrium contained in rare-earth mineral concentrates was estimated to be 10,000 to 14,000 tons. Most of this production took place in China and Burma. Global reserves of yttrium oxide were estimated to be more than 500,000 tons. The leading countries for these reserves included Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, and India. Although mine production in Burma was significant, information on reserves in Burma was not available. Global reserves may be adequate to satisfy near-term demand at current rates of production; however, changes in economic conditions, environmental issues, or permitting and trade restrictions could affect the availability of many of the rare-earth elements, including yttrium.

World Resources: Large resources of yttrium in monazite and xenotime are available worldwide in placer deposits, carbonatites, uranium ores, and weathered clay deposits (ion-adsorption ore). Additional resources of yttrium occur in apatite-magnetite-bearing rocks, deposits of niobium-tantalum minerals, nonplacer monazite-bearing deposits, sedimentary phosphate deposits, and uranium ores.

Substitutes: Substitutes for yttrium are available for some applications but generally are much less effective. In most uses, especially in electronics, lasers, and phosphors, yttrium is generally not subject to direct substitution by other elements. As a stabilizer in zirconia ceramics, yttrium oxide may be substituted with calcium oxide or magnesium oxide, but the substitutes generally impart lower toughness.

⁹Estimated. NA Not available. — Zero.

¹See also Rare Earths; trade data for yttrium are included in the data shown for rare earths.

²Estimated from Trade Mining LLC and IHS Markit Ltd. shipping records.

³Estimated from Harmonized Tariff System-based Schedule B code: 2846.90.2015.

⁴Defined as imports – exports. Rounded to one significant digit. Yttrium consumed domestically was imported or refined from imported materials.

⁵Free on board China. Source: Argus Media group-Argus Metals International, London, United Kingdom.

⁶Defined as imports – exports.

⁷In 2015, 2018, and 2019, domestic production of mineral concentrates was stockpiled or exported. Consumers of compounds and metals were reliant on imports and stockpiled inventory.

⁸Includes estimated yttrium-oxide equivalent content from the following Harmonized Tariff Schedule codes: 2846.90.2015, 2846.90.2082, 2846.90.4000, 2846.90.8050, and 2846.90.8060.

⁹See Appendix B for definitions.

¹⁰See Appendix C for resource and reserve definitions and information concerning data sources.