Commerce Launches a new Aluminum Import Monitor (AIM), available at https://trade.gov/aluminum

Background on the AIM System

The AIM system, which consists of an online aluminum import license application platform and an interactive public aluminum import monitor, is designed to track trends and display U.S. imports of aluminum, allowing for analysis of changing trade patterns. The AIM system provides accurate license data on imports of certain aluminum products entering the United States earlier than would otherwise be available from the official public source of trade data (i.e., the U.S. Census Bureau). The early release of data ensures the domestic aluminum industry is prepared for import surges and rapid price changes. This monitoring will better assist in addressing unfair trade practices, including dumping, subsidies, and circumvention/evasion. The licenses include a field to indicate the country where the original aluminum used in the imports was smelt and the country where it was cast.

To establish the system, Commerce followed a lengthy regulatory process starting in April 2020, when Commerce published a proposed rule for the establishment of the AIM system under 19 CFR 361 with a request for public comments. In December 2020, Commerce published the Final Rule establishing the AIM system. The license requirement went into effect on June 28, 2021 and the AIM monitor was released in September 2021 to incorporate early information collected from the aluminum licenses. To ensure a smooth adoption of the licensing requirement and familiarize the public with the AIM monitor, Commerce engaged in extensive outreach. An additional dashboard is in the works to incorporate the country of smelt and cast data from the licenses to help industry understand supply chain information about the aluminum imports.

Modeled after the Steel Import Monitoring and Analysis (SIMA) system, which has been operating under its current authority since 2005 and modernized in 2020, the AIM system is comprised of the aluminum import licensing program and a public AIM monitor. While the aluminum and steel license applications share the same platform, they each have distinct application requirements and license forms, such as collection of the country of melt and pour data in SIMA and country of smelt/country of cast in AIM.

The AIM Monitor and License Application

The interactive AIM monitor is a public data tool that merges historic import data with the data collected from license applications. It is updated and made available to the public weekly on Thursdays. The public AIM monitor allows users to create custom graphics (i.e., line graphs, bar graphs, and maps) and tables showing a wide range of data by country or product category. For example, the chart below highlights total U.S. imports of aluminum by volume (MT) and includes 2 months of early imports based on license data. The data associated with the graphics are available for download.

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1. The aluminum products covered in the monitor are shown at https://www.trade.gov/aluminum-products-hts-codes
The AIM monitor is available at: https://www.trade.gov/data-visualization/us-aluminum-import-monitor

AIM’s aluminum licensing system is an automated online mechanism for importers to efficiently obtain licenses required for U.S. Customs and Border Protection clearance for entry into the United States. For public utilization, the license data is then compiled and aggregated into product and country groupings. All imports of a wide range of aluminum products are required to have a license, which is issued instantaneously and free of charge. New data identifying the country of largest smelt⁵ and most recent cast⁶ for aluminum products being imported into the United States are also being collected for the first time through the licensing system and will provide insights into aluminum supply chains. These data are currently being collected and Commerce is working to make this available for public consumption through the AIM system in FY22. As of December 7th, the AIM system had issued almost 85,260 licenses (or a daily average of 523 licenses per day) since its June 28th launch.

For further information, please contact the AIM team by email at: aluminum.license@trade.gov.

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5. The country where the largest volume of primary aluminum used in the manufacture of the product was smelted applies to the country where the largest volume of new aluminum metal is produced from alumina (or aluminum oxide) by the electrolytic Hall–Héroult process. Filers may state “not applicable” for this field if the product contains only secondary aluminum and no primary aluminum. Secondary aluminum is defined as aluminum metal that is produced from recycled aluminum scrap through a re-melting process. For license applications up to June 28, 2022, filers may state “unknown” for this field. Effective June 28, 2022, filers may not state “unknown” for this field.

6. Country where the product was most recently cast applies to the country where Most Recent Cast: the aluminum (with or without alloying elements) was last liquified by heat and cast into a solid state. The final solid state can take the form of either a semi-finished product (slab, billets, or ingots) or a finished aluminum product. Filers may not state “not applicable” for this field. Filers may not state “unknown” for this field.