ASBESTOS

By Oliver Bowles and K. G. Warner

SUMMARY OUTLINE

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Sales of domestic asbestos attained an all-time high of 15,459 tons in 1939, an increase of 48 percent over 1938. Their value was more than double that of 1938. Imports also increased greatly. Consumption of asbestos in the United States was 37 percent greater than in 1938 but still was far below the high point of 1937.

The United States leads all countries in the manufacture of asbestos products but in 1939 produced only 6 percent of the quantity and 5½ percent of the value of its domestic requirements. Large tonnages of the better grades of asbestos, used in fabrics and in making magnesia-asbestos insulation and asbestos-cement products, normally are imported from Africa. Although such shipments may be interrupted to some extent owing to the war, it is unlikely that a serious shortage will result because the extensive deposits in Quebec, Canada, situated only about 80 miles north of the Vermont border, have furnished the United States with its major supplies since the industry was organized and doubtless could furnish larger supplies if necessary.

Domestic production of chrysotile asbestos is centered chiefly in the extensive deposits near Hyde Park in northern Vermont. Although production in this region is expanding, the national situation is essentially the same as heretofore; there have been no new developments, and our dependence on foreign supplies is virtually as great as it has been in the past. The Arizona deposits furnish excellent fiber; but mining costs are high, transportation is difficult, and freight rates to eastern markets are excessive. There is no evidence of increasing activity in Arizona.

Small quantities of amphibole asbestos are produced in several States. It is more resistant to chemicals and high temperatures than chrysotile and accordingly is employed chiefly in making special products, such as acid filters.

Unusual attention has been directed toward asbestos during the past year because it has been classed by the Army and Navy Munitions Board as a critical mineral. Asbestos is so classed because it is the chief constituent of brake-band linings and clutch facings and thus is essential to automotive transport and because only a small percentage of the Nation's requirements is obtained from domestic mines.

Synthetic fibers, such as glass wool, mineral wool, and slag wool, are being refined to an increasing degree in manufacture and are competing with asbestos to some extent in the heat-insulation field. Asbestos generally is regarded as an indispensable constituent of automobile brake bands, but a recent patent covering a brake lining of glass fiber bonded with synthetic resin may be prophetic of future developments.

Minerals Yearbook: Asbestos Chapters, 1940
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The following table of salient statistics compares 1939 data with those of 1938. A noteworthy feature is the great increase in unit value of domestic sales in 1939. The average sales value of domestic asbestos in 1938 was $23.68 a ton; in 1939 it was about $33. As price quotations of Vermont fiber were the same in both years, the increase in average price can be explained only by the sale of a larger proportion of the better grades.

Salient statistics of the asbestos industry in the United States, 1938–39

	1938		1939	
	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value
Domestic asbestos—				
Produced:				
Chrysotile	(1)	(2)	14,686	(2)
Amphibole	(1)	(2)	450	(2)
Total produced	12,901	(2)	15,136	(2)
Sold or used by producers:				
Chrysotile	(1)	(1)	15,043	$503,097
Amphibole	(1)	(1)	416	9,691
Total sold or used by producers	10,440	$247,264	15,459	512,788
Imports (unmanufactured)	179,490	6,160,602	242,561	9,094,538
Exports (unmanufactured)	2,780	288,617	2,473	218,830
Apparent consumption [3]	187,150	6,119,249	255,547	9,388,496
Exports of asbestos products	(2)	2,533,916	(2)	3,354,919

[1] Bureau of Mines not at liberty to publish figures separately for chrysotile and amphibole.
[2] Figures not available.
[3] Quantity sold or used by producers, plus imports, minus exports.

The following table shows the production of asbestos in recent years.

Asbestos sold or used by producers in the United States, 1935–39, by varieties

Year	Chrysotile		Amphibole		Total	
	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value
1935	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	8,920	$292,927
1936	10,719	$302,301	345	$11,860	11,064	314,161
1937	11,547	332,747	532	11,897	12,079	344,644
1938	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	10,440	247,264
1939	15,043	503,097	416	9,691	15,459	512,788

[1] Bureau of Mines not at liberty to publish figures separately for chrysotile and amphibole.

Consumption trends.—The following table shows trends in the asbestos-products industries in the United States during recent years.

Raw asbestos consumed in the United States and asbestos products manufactured in and exported from the United States, 1934–39

Year	Raw asbestos—apparent consumption	Asbestos products—		Year	Raw asbestos—apparent consumption	Asbestos products—	
		Manufactured [1]	Exported [2]			Manufactured [1]	Exported [2]
	Short tons				*Short tons*		
1934	123,752	(1)	$2,142,514	1937	316,263	$96,347,570	$3,047,078
1935	174,655	$62,420,944	2,261,929	1938	187,150	(1)	2,533,916
1936	250,922	(1)	2,479,273	1939	255,547	(3)	3,354,919

[1] Figures of Bureau of the Census (collected biennially for odd years) include value of certain gaskets, packing, and similar products in which little asbestos was employed.
[2] Compiled from the records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.
[3] Figures not yet available.

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The consumption of asbestos depends chiefly on the manufacture of automobiles, on the building trades, and on industrial activity. As stated, automobiles require large quantities for brake bands and clutch facings. Building construction employs many products in which asbestos is an important constituent, such as asbestos-cement shingles and siding, wallboard, and various heat-insulation and fireproofing materials. Asbestos consumption bears a definite relationship to industrial activity because asbestos is used extensively for packings and gaskets in steam and other machinery, as well as for

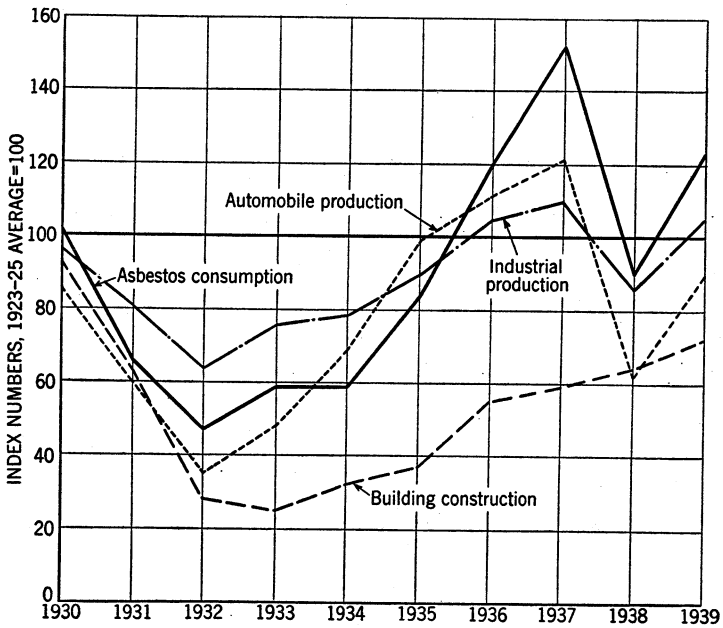


FIGURE 1.—Asbestos consumption compared with automobile production, value of building construction, and industrial production in the United States, 1930–39. Unlike units are reduced to percentages of the 1923–25 average. Statistics on automobiles are from the Bureau of the Census and building contracts and industrial production from the Federal Reserve Board.

boiler lagging and pipe covering. Figure 1 shows the relationship of asbestos consumption to these three major activities for a period of years.

WORLD CONSUMPTION

The following table presents a compilation of data on apparent world consumption of asbestos in 1938, based upon production plus imports minus exports. This table may not give a true picture because stocks held from previous years may be reexported, or material consumed may consist of stocks produced or imported during previous years. The figures are therefore approximate only, but they are the best that can be compiled from the records available. Anomalies are bound to appear in a table compiled upon this basis. For example, the consumption of 3,509 tons by Cyprus, which has virtually no consuming industries, is interpreted as an accumulation of stocks.

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World consumption of asbestos in 1938, in metric tons

Continent and country	Production [1]	Imports [2]	Exports [2]	Apparent consumption
Asia:				
China	[3] 300	414		714
Chosen	[3] 70	10,025		10,095
Cyprus	9,177		5,668	3,509
India, British	90	3,633		3,723
Japan	[3] 1,000	28,226	167	29,059
Manchuria	[3] 70	1,716	155	1,631
Netherland India		192		192
Turkey	668			668
Total Asia	11,375	44,206	5,990	49,591
Africa:				
Algeria		6		6
Egypt		175		175
Southern Rhodesia	53,352		53,170	182
Union of South Africa	21,025		19,940	1,085
Total Africa	74,377	181	73,110	1,448
North America:				
Canada	262,894		150,361	112,533
United States	9,471	162,830	2,522	169,779
Total North America	272,365	162,830	152,883	282,312
South America:				
Bolivia	21		21	
Brazil	120	67		187
Chile		4		4
Colombia		52		52
Uruguay		205		205
Total South America	141	328	21	448
Australia	176	11,358		11,534
Europe:				
Austria		4,652	45	4,607
Belgium-Luxemburg		15,919	675	15,244
Bulgaria		6		6
Czechoslovakia	[3] 2,700	5,596	801	7,495
Denmark		1,955		1,955
Estonia		122		122
Finland	[3] 3,000	296	2,314	982
France	[3] 250	17,299		17,549
Germany		28,796	151	28,645
Greece	[3] 2	90		92
Hungary		1,976		1,976
Italy	6,860	7,783	1,791	12,852
Latvia		1,422		1,422
Netherlands		2,192	39	2,153
Norway		1,016		1,016
Poland		2,402	16	2,386
Portugal		575		575
Rumania		145		145
Sweden		5,014	29	4,985
Switzerland		833	10	823
U. S. S. R.	86,000		14,434	71,566
United Kingdom		51,142	343	50,799
Yugoslavia		946		946
Total Europe	98,812	150,177	20,648	228,341
Total by continents:				
Asia	11,375	44,206	5,990	49,591
Africa	74,377	181	73,110	1,448
North America	272,365	162,830	152,883	282,312
South America	141	328	21	448
Australia	176	11,358		11,534
Europe	98,812	150,177	20,648	228,341
Total world	457,246	369,080	252,652	573,674

[1] Compiled by Foreign Minerals Division, Bureau of Mines.
[2] Figures as given in The Mineral Industry of the British Empire and Foreign Countries, Statistical Summary, published by The Imperial Institute, London.
[3] Estimated.

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Market conditions.—Markets were disturbed during the spring and summer because of unsettled conditions in Europe and hesitancy of American business. After hostilities were begun the fear of curtailed supplies of asbestos from Africa stimulated a stronger demand for Canadian fibers.

Prices.—All prices for asbestos are quoted on a short-ton basis. Canadian prices are f. o. b. Quebec mines, tax and bags included; Rhodesian, South African, and Russian prices, c. i. f. New York; and Vermont prices, f. o. b. mines, Vermont.

According to quotations in Metal and Mineral Markets, published by the McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., Inc., New York City, prices of Canadian asbestos were constant throughout the year, as follows: Crude No. 1, $700–$750; Crude No. 2 and sundry crudes, $150–$350; spinning fibers, magnesia and compressed sheet fibers, $110–$200; shingle stock, $57–$78; paper stock, $40–$45; cement stock, $21–$25; floats, $18–$20; and shorts, $12–$16.50. Canadian quotations are in American dollars rather than Canadian dollars as formerly.

Rhodesian Crude No. 1 was quoted at $300 and Crude No. 2 at $260 throughout the year.

South African prices were quoted as follows: Amosite: Grade B 1 (white), $140; Grade B 3 (dark), $120. Transvaal Blue: Grade B (long fiber), $450 until August when it dropped to $400 for the remainder of the year; Grade S (short fiber), $140.

Russian Crude AA was quoted at $750; Crude No. 1, $275; Crude No. 2, $240; and shingle stock, $67.50 and up.

Vermont prices were constant throughout the year, as follows: Shingle stock, $57; paper stock, $40; cement stock, $25; and shorts and floats, $12–$18.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

There were no outstanding new developments in the domestic asbestos industry during 1939, but increasing production in Vermont, a mild revival of activity in anthophyllite production, and a reported occurrence of chrysotile near Lake George, N. Y., are worthy of note. New factors in the asbestos industry abroad include the beginning of production at the important Havelock mine, Swaziland, Africa, initiation of milling on a small scale at the Rahn Lake chrysotile deposit in Ontario, Canada, and development of a deposit of blue asbestos in Western Australia. The year 1939 marked the Diamond Jubilee of asbestos, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the organized asbestos industry.

REVIEW BY STATES

Arizona.—Sales of asbestos in Arizona were somewhat smaller in 1939 than in 1938 and were reported by the following companies: Arizona Chrysotile Asbestos Co., Arizona Asbestos Corporation, Emsco Asbestos Co., and Arthur Enders, all of Globe, Ariz.; and Johns-Manville Products Corporation, New York, N. Y. Several other producers sold small quantities to the larger operators.

Georgia.—Limited quantities of anthophyllite were obtained some years ago near Helen, White County, and Hollywood, Habersham County, but recently these districts have been inactive. A small

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output was reported in 1939 near Dillard, Rabun County, some distance north of the deposits formerly operated.

Maryland.—The Powhatan Mining Co., Woodlawn, Baltimore, Md., continued operation near Pylesville, Harford County. The tremolite obtained is prepared for use chiefly as a filtering medium for chemicals. The company also handles anthophyllite mined in several Southern States. A new mine was opened in this district during 1939.

Montana.—The Montana Asbestos Co. reported small sales of anthophyllite from its property at Gallatin Gateway, Gallatin County.

North Carolina.—A small tonnage of anthophyllite was mined near Greenmountain, Yancey County, in 1939.

South Carolina.—Small shipments of anthophyllite in 1939 from a deposit near Pickens, Pickens County, brought South Carolina for the first time into the list of asbestos-producing States.

Vermont.—Vermont Asbestos Mines, a division of the Ruberoid Co. (address 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.), operated continuously with three shifts of workers during the summer of 1939. The extensive deposit worked by the company near Eden, Lamoille County, contains slip-fiber chrysotile in serpentine.

Virginia.—Anthophyllite was mined many years ago near Bedford, Bedford County, and Rockymount, Franklin County. Production of a small quantity of slip fiber was reported in the latter county in 1939.

FOREIGN TRADE [1]

The following table shows imports of unmanufactured asbestos into the United States in 1938 and 1939 by countries and classes. Total imports in 1939 increased 35 percent in quantity and 48 percent in value over 1938. Imports from Africa were nearly twice as great as in 1938 and those from Canada 35 percent greater than in 1938. Substantial shipments of short-fiber chrysotile from Cyprus were renewed, but shipments from the U. S. S. R. declined 50 percent.

Asbestos (unmanufactured) imported for consumption in the United States, 1938–39, by countries and classes

Country	Crude (including blue fiber)		Mill fibers		Short fibers [1]		Total	
	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value
1938								
Africa:								
Union of South Africa	3,677	$456,073					3,677	$456,073
Other British	2,745	310,147					2,745	310,147
Australia	21	6,006					21	6,006
Austria [2]					3	$142	3	142
Canada	1,360	321,424	51,141	$2,701,494	113,570	2,043,844	166,071	5,066,762
Finland					89	3,564	89	3,564
Italy	18	12,477			1,551	38,488	1,569	50,965
Malta, Gozo, Cyprus					6	294	6	294
U. S. S. R.	1	479	5,201	258,593	63	1,525	5,265	260,597
United Kingdom	22	5,205			22	847	44	6,052
	7,844	1,111,811	56,342	2,960,087	115,304	2,088,704	179,490	6,160,602

[1] Asbestos, n. e. s., containing not over 15 percent of foreign matter.
[2] Figures cover period Jan. 1–May 5.

[1] Figures on imports and exports compiled by M. B. Price, of the Bureau of Mines, from records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

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Asbestos (unmanufactured) imported for consumption in the United States, 1938–39, by countries and classes—Continued

Country	Crude (including blue fiber)		Mill fibers		Short fibers		Total	
	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value
1939								
Africa:								
Union of South Africa	6,359	$656,543					6,359	$656,543
Other British	4,836	593,596					4,836	593,596
Australia	53	11,000					53	11,000
Canada	3,068	547,425	73,511	$4,378,887	147,261	$2,650,886	223,840	7,577,198
Finland					46	1,324	46	1,324
Italy	31	23,167			536	12,133	567	35,300
Malta, Gozo, Cyprus					3,940	69,426	3,940	69,426
U. S. S. R.			2,611	109,516	(3)	5	2,611	109,521
United Kingdom	298	40,580					298	40,580
Venezuela					11	50	11	50
	14,645	1,872,311	76,122	4,488,403	151,794	2,733,824	242,561	9,094,538

[3] Less than 1 ton.

The following table shows imports and exports of unmanufactured asbestos for the 5-year period 1935–39.

Asbestos (unmanufactured) imported for consumption in and exported from the United States, 1935–39

Year	Imports		Exports	
	Short tons	Value	Short tons	Value
1935	166,585	$5,125,413	850	$87,896
1936	243,602	7,524,937	3,744	310,197
1937	307,188	10,470,208	3,004	253,734
1938	179,490	6,160,602	2,780	288,617
1939	242,561	9,094,538	2,473	218,830

The following table shows exports of asbestos products in 1938 and 1939.

Manufactured asbestos products exported from the United States, 1938–39, by kinds

Product	1938		1939	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
Brake lining:				
Molded and semimolded	(1)	$608,970	(1)	$714,679
Not molded—linear feet	923,672	176,765	886,069	178,393
Clutch facing—number	448,121	134,209	326,493	129,143
Paper, millboard, and roll board—short tons	725	100,034	819	122,543
Pipe covering and cement—do	1,143	128,666	2,213	251,912
Textiles, yarn, and packing—do	565	611,549	891	965,923
Asbestos roofing—squares	83,080	225,987	54,634	284,643
Other asbestos manufactures, except roofing—short tons	1,593	293,272	2,315	398,960
Magnesia and manufactures—do	1,601	254,464	1,483	308,723

[1] Quantity not recorded.

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WORLD PRODUCTION

The following table shows world production of asbestos, by countries, from 1935 to 1939, insofar as figures are available.

World production of asbestos, 1935–39, by countries, in metric tons [1]

[Compiled by M. T. Latus]

Country	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Argentina	[2] 13				[3]
Australia:					
South Australia	36	81	123	49	[3]
Tasmania			2	4	[3]
Western Australia	143	162	43	123	[3]
Bolivia		[4]	21	21	[3]
Brazil				120	[3]
Bulgaria	3				[3]
Canada [5]	190,931	273,322	371,967	262,894	330,642
China (Manchuria)	70	69	[3]	[3]	[3]
Chosen	6	69	70	[3]	[3]
Cyprus (exports)	7,634	9,659	11,842	5,668	[3]
Czechoslovakia	2,600	2,700	[3]	[3]	[3]
Finland	1,742	3,963	3,330	[3]	[3]
France	450	405	250	[3]	[3]
Greece	2	1	2	[3]	[3]
India, British	64	57	102	90	[3]
Indochina		5	5		[3]
Italy	4,320	6,113	6,393	6,860	[3]
Japan (approximate)	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Kenya Colony				5	[3]
Southern Rhodesia	38,644	51,116	51,722	53,352	52,900
Swaziland					7,233
Turkey	104	119	157	668	[3]
Uganda				53	[3]
Union of South Africa	20,600	22,894	25,975	21,025	19,988
U. S. S. R.	95,500	125,117	125,000	86,000	[3]
United States (sold or used by producers)	8,092	10,037	10,958	9,471	14,024
Venezuela	76	71	[3]	[3]	[3]

[1] In addition to countries listed, a small quantity of asbestos is produced in Madagascar.
[2] Rail and river shipments. [3] Data not available. [4] Less than 1 ton.
[5] Exclusive of sand, gravel, and stone (waste rock only), production of which is reported as follows: 1935, 2,744 tons; 1936, 2,815 tons; 1937, 3,611 tons; 1938, 2,975 tons; 1939, 3,535 tons.

CANADA

The value of sales of asbestos in Canada reached an all-time high in 1939, and the quantity sold was the second highest of any year, being exceeded only in 1937. The mines and mills of the well-known Thetford Mines district of Quebec, where almost the entire production of Canada is mined, were working virtually at capacity throughout the year. Johnson's Co. and Bell Asbestos Mines, Ltd., are changing from open-pit to shaft mining and are planning to introduce the block-caving system.

Activity has been renewed at the Rahn Lake deposit, Bannockburn Township, Ontario. A test shipment of chrysotile comprising 18 tons valued at $720 was made in 1939. This material evidently is not included in the following table of Canadian sales taken from the Preliminary Report on the Mineral Production of Canada in 1939, issued by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

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Sales of asbestos in Canada, 1938–39

	1938			1939		
	Short tons	Value		Short tons	Value	
		Total	Average per ton		Total	Average per ton
Grade:						
Crudes	2,911	$955,423	$328.21	3,121	$938,718	$300.68
Fibers	163,097	9,710,899	59.54	193,992	12,049,539	62.12
Shorts	123,785	2,223,873	17.97	167,359	2,870,955	17.15
	289,793	12,890,195	44.48	364,472	15,859,212	43.51
Sand, gravel, and stone (waste rock only)	3,279	2,464	.75	3,897	2,930	.75
Total asbestos and waste rock	293,072	12,892,659		368,369	15,862,142	
Rock mined	5,816,368			6,650,416		
Rock milled	4,874,548			5,548,765		

AFRICA

Southern Rhodesia.—The output of asbestos in Southern Rhodesia in 1939 was a little lower in quantity but a little higher in value than in 1938. The following table shows production during recent years:

Asbestos produced in Southern Rhodesia, 1935–39

Year	Short tons	Value	Year	Short tons	Value
1935	42,598	£646,658	1938	58,811	£1,020,921
1936	56,346	836,469	1939	58,313	1,088,782
1937	57,014	840,025			

Union of South Africa.—The output of the Union of South Africa was 5 percent lower in 1939 than in 1938. The following table lists the output from 1935 to 1939:

Asbestos produced in the Union of South Africa, 1935–39, by sources

Year	Short tons				Total value
	Transvaal	Cape Province	Natal	Total	
1935	[1] 20,167	[1] 2,541		22,708	[2]£226,167
1936	21,188	4,048	[3]	[2] 25,236	[2] 337,229
1937	23,921	4,712	[3]	[2] 28,633	[2] 431,212
1938	16,505	6,484	[3] 187	[2] 23,176	[2] 416,401
1939	15,811	6,143	79	22,033	[2] 509,278

[1] Small quantity of blue fiber from Transvaal included under Cape Province.
[2] Value of local sales plus value of exports.
[3] Small production in Natal in December 1936 and in 1937 included in 1938 figures.

The following table states the tonnage of each variety produced from 1935 to 1939. The decline in chrysotile production in the Transvaal to a mere fraction of its former volume reflects the imminent depletion of the Amianthus mine.

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Asbestos produced in the Union of South Africa, 1935–39, by varieties and sources, in short tons

Variety and source	1935 [1]	1936 [1]	1937 [2]	1938 [2]	1939 [2]
Amosite (Transvaal)	4,684	4,823	6,531	8,793	11,378
Chrysotile (Transvaal)	15,483	16,149	16,855	[3] 5,573	[3] 582
Blue (Transvaal)	2,541	216	535	2,326	3,930
Blue (Cape)		4,048	4,712	6,484	6,143
	22,708	25,236	28,633	23,176	22,033

[1] Data from Government Mining Engineer, Union of South Africa, Department of Mines, Annual Report.
[2] Data from Union of South Africa, Department of Mines, Monthly Reports.
[3] Includes 187 short tons in 1938 and 79 tons in 1939 produced in Natal.

Swaziland.—The Havelock mine about 12 miles south-southeast of Barberton, which has been under development since April 1937, began producing in June 1939. The shaft, inclined at an angle of 40°, had attained a depth of 850 feet in May 1939. The mine is connected with the railway station at Barberton by means of an overhead cableway 12.6 miles long with a capacity of 7½ tons of bagged asbestos per hour. Production was started in June, and an output of 7,973 short tons was reported for 1939.

CYPRUS

Short-fiber chrysotile is produced in Cyprus. The following table, compiled from the Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines and Labor, shows exports during recent years.

Asbestos exported from Cyprus, 1935–39

Year	Long tons	Value	Year	Long tons	Value
1935	7,513	£50,174	1938	5,578	£88,290
1936	9,506	80,343	1939	[1]	[1]
1937	11,704	126,371			

[1] Data not available.

U. S. S. R.

The following table presents the most recent available statistics on Russian asbestos.

Asbestos produced in and exported from U. S. S. R., 1935–39, in metric tons

Year	Production	Exports	Year	Production	Exports
1935	95,500	[1] 25,109	1938	86,000	[3]
1936	125,117	[1] 26,147	1939	[3]	[3]
1937	125,000	[2] 27,299			

[1] U. S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Foreign Trade Notes.
[2] Statistics of the Foreign Trade of the U. S. S. R.
[3] Data not available.

AUSTRALIA

A deposit of blue asbestos has been worked in Western Australia recently, and small shipments have been made to the United States. The material is similar to South African blue asbestos. Samples submitted to the Bureau of Mines comprise strong, flexible, dark-blue fibers having a maximum length of 1¾ inches.

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