Cumene

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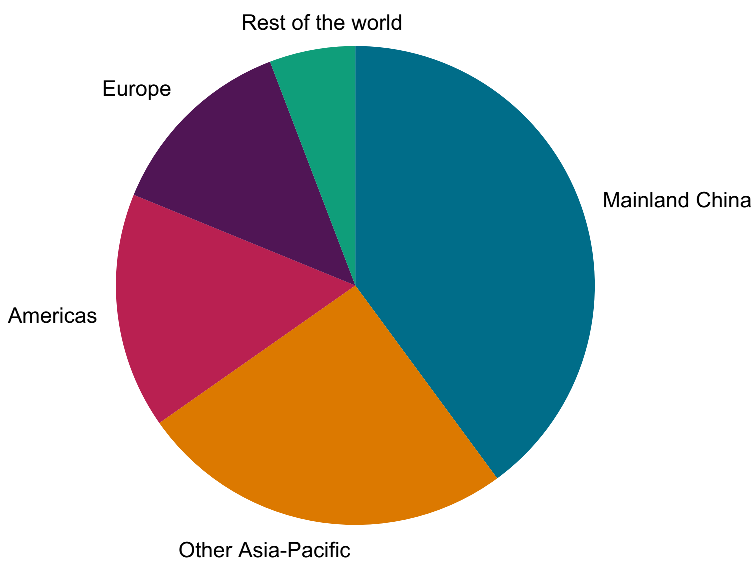
Abstract

Cumene is an oily, colorless, flammable liquid with a sharp, gasoline-like odor, classified as an aromatic hydrocarbon. It is used primarily as a raw material in the synthesis of other organic compounds, such as phenol, acetone, bisphenol A (BPA), phenolic resins and methyl methacrylate. However, the manufacture of phenol and acetone production is where cumene is utilized the most. Phenol and acetone production consumes approximately 99% of all cumene globally; therefore, cumene demand is closely tied to the phenol and acetone markets.

World consumption of cumene — 2024



Data compiled March 4, 2025.
Source: S&P Global Energy.

S&P Global
Energy

Eastern Asia (including mainland China) is the largest consumer of cumene, followed by North America and Europe. Mainland China and Southern Asia are projected to be the fastest-growing regions during the forecast period. Cumene demand in Latin America and the Caribbean, Japan and the Middle East is expected to decline during 2024–29.

In addition to the production of phenol/acetone, cumene can be used as a paint thinner or in high-octane aviation fuel. When cumene and its feedstocks become undervalued relative to energy, gasoline blenders can use cumene as a blending component, because cumene has a very high octane rating, which is desired sometimes. Although this use is not as common, it will occur periodically, when the chemical price for cumene falls below cumene's alternate octane value. This blending practice is mostly limited to North America, where it is easy to absorb relatively small volumes of cumene in the large regional gasoline pool.

The cumene peroxidation process is the largest source of phenol and acetone production. However, the ratio of phenol and acetone produced does not match up with the ratio of phenol and acetone consumed. As demand for BPA grows, phenol becomes the limiting factor. As the market continues to grow, it is demand for phenol that determines capacity utilization, not acetone. With the exception of BPA, phenol and acetone have no common markets. Historically, phenol has been the more desirable product. Various alternative phenol processes have been developed that bypass acetone; these typically involve benzene-to-phenol conversions using different catalysts.

For more detailed information, see the table of contents, shown below.

S&P Global's Chemical Economics Handbook – *Cumene* is the comprehensive and trusted guide for anyone seeking information on this industry. This latest report details global and regional information, including

Global summary; regional coverage

Producers with annual capacities and plant sites

Production figures and trends

Consumption and forecasts by end use application

Manufacturing processes and environmental issues

Trade – imports and exports

Key benefits

S&P Global's Chemical Economics Handbook – *Cumene* has been compiled using primary interviews with key suppliers and organizations, and leading representatives from the industry in combination with S&P Global's unparalleled access to upstream and downstream market intelligence and expert insights into industry dynamics, trade and economics.

This report can help you

– Identify trends and driving forces influencing chemical markets

– Forecast and plan for future demand

– Understand the impact of competing materials

– Identify and evaluate potential customers and competitors

– Evaluate producers

– Track changing prices and trade movements

– Analyze the impact of feedstocks, regulations and other factors on chemical profitability

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