

Freight Expectations



Supply Chain & Logistics Update

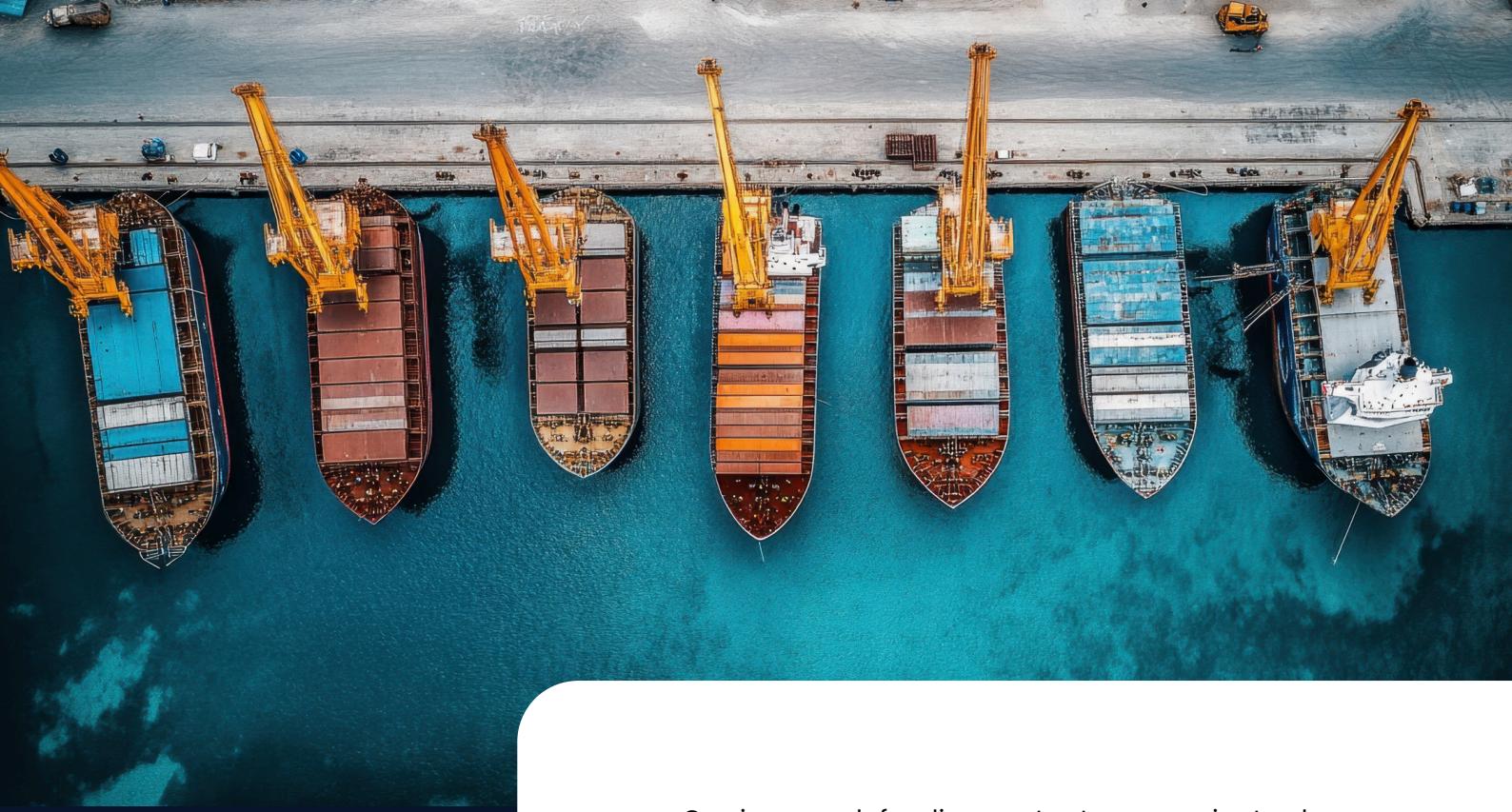
Webinar: Global Shipping in 2026. Routes, Rates and Reality.

Capacity and Containers in Focus

Chinese New Year: Holiday Impact Starts Now

At A Glance Monthly Market Update

- Carriers are defending spot rates on major trade lanes into early 2026, keeping prices steady on routes like Asia-Europe and Asia-Med (\$2,000–\$3,600 FAK).
- Join our webinar **“Global Shipping in 2026: Routes, Rates and Reality for Cargo Owners”** where ex-Maersk Managing Director, Gary Jeffreys joins us to discuss the outlook for the year ahead.
- Global capacity looks healthy, but access to space and containers remains inconsistent across trade lanes.
- Even though the “ship-before-CNY” deadlines have passed, disruption is still building and will last well beyond the holiday.
- Air Freight in 2026. This year will continue the trend of fragmented demand, shifting trade lanes, and short-term capacity spikes, requiring flexibility and foresight from shippers.
- Webinar: **Customs in 2026. New Rules, New Risks.** We cover key changes in trade agreements, SPS controls, security/data rules like ISC2, and post-Brexit frameworks (Windsor, Regime 42, RGR) are set to reshape customs this year.





From the Managing Director



As we welcome 2026, I hope you and your teams had a restful and enjoyable festive season. Christmas and New Year are always a special time to reflect on the year past and look ahead, and I'm pleased to say we're entering this new year with real optimism.

The start of 2026 is already shaping up positively. We're seeing early market signals that reinforce the importance of planning, flexibility, and proactive engagement across ocean and air freight, and we're committed to helping you navigate the year ahead with confidence.

On a celebratory note, we're proud to share that we've been shortlisted for two BIFA awards this year, and two of our talented apprentices have been named in the Apprentice of the Year category.

Recognition like this is a testament to the dedication, innovation, and energy of our whole team — and it's a fantastic way to kick off the year.

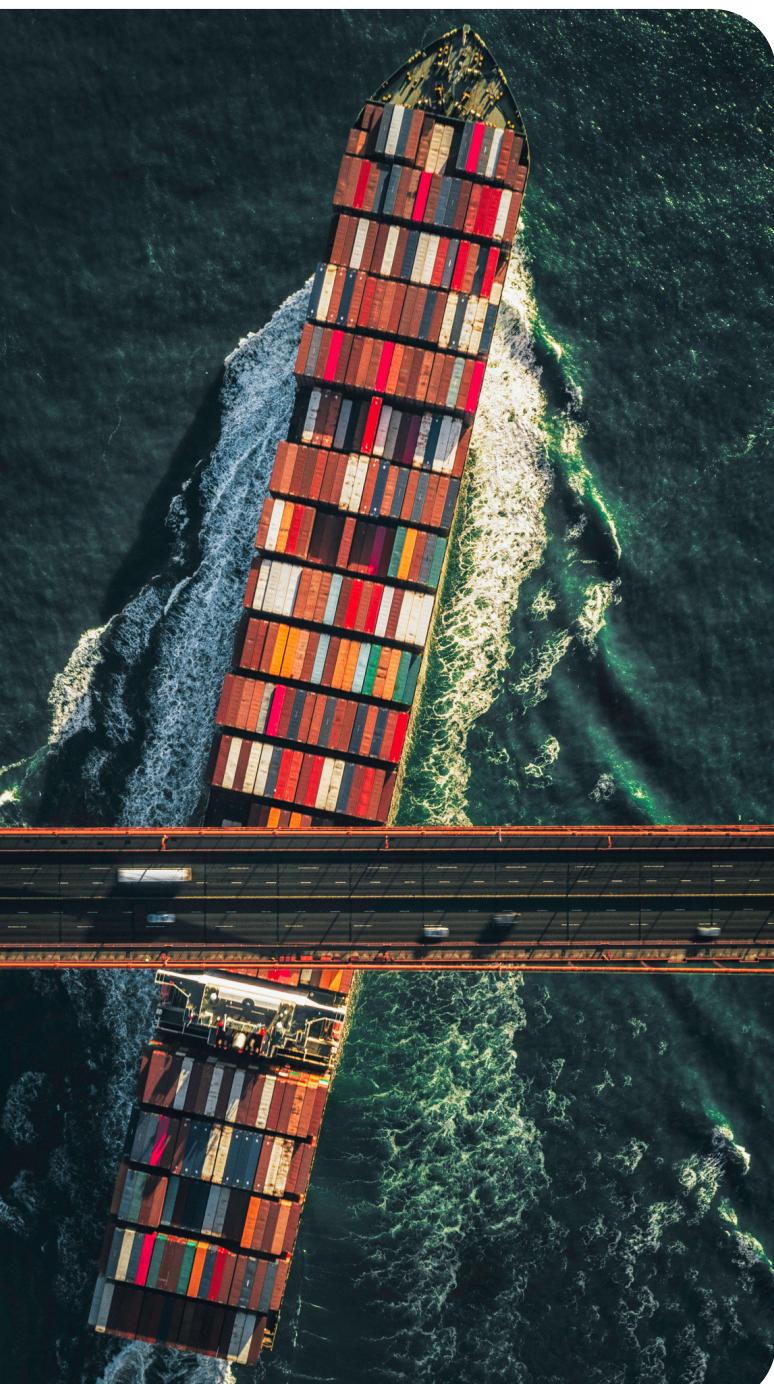
It's shaping up to be a busy and exciting start to 2026, and we're looking forward to continuing to support you, helping you plan effectively, overcome challenges, and seize new opportunities as the market evolves.

Here's to a successful year ahead — and to building on the strong foundations we've shared with you so far.

Thomas Kuehn
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Supply Chain Outlook 2026: What Shippers Should Be Preparing For

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Spot rates holding near elevated levels

Carriers are defending pricing into early 2026, keeping spot rates relatively firm on major trade lanes despite lower booking activity. This reflects a deliberate strategy to set a higher baseline ahead of annual contract negotiations.

In the short term, this has resulted in stronger pricing on routes such as Asia–Europe and Asia–Med, where capacity management is supporting rates in the region of \$2,000–\$3,600 for FAK levels.

Looking further into 2026, however, broader market forecasts continue to point to downward pressure on rates. Ongoing overcapacity and the potential return of Red Sea routings could increase available supply, shifting leverage back towards shippers and favouring longer-term contracts for improved value.

For shippers, this reinforces the need for close market monitoring and flexible pricing strategies as contract negotiations progress through 2026.

We'll be exploring this in more depth in our upcoming market outlook webinar, where we'll share practical insights on how shippers can navigate what's next. Keep reading to find out more.

GLOBAL SHIPPING

Webinar: Global Shipping in 2026: Routes, Rates and Reality for Cargo Owners

From Red Sea disruptions and forced detours to sharp freight rate swings, overcapacity and fragile schedules, global shipping has entered a far more complex phase. For cargo owners, the assumptions that once underpinned routing, reliability and contracting no longer apply.

In this webinar, **Gary Jeffreys, former Managing Director at Maersk**, joins Unsworth to share a rare carrier-side view of how these decisions are actually made. Drawing on his experience running global networks, Gary will offer practical insight for importers and exporters who need to make confident decisions in an increasingly uncertain environment – across routing, contracts, inventory and visibility.

[**Click here to register**](#)

Don't miss it—register early to secure your spot.

What you will take away from this free webinar?

- A realistic view of how global shipping networks are being redesigned in response to geopolitical risk and ongoing detours
- Clear insight into how overcapacity and alliances will influence freight rates and service stability in 2026
- Practical guidance on how to structure freight contracts and partnerships that can withstand volatility

**Tuesday 13th
January 2026**



Capacity and Containers in Focus

Global capacity looks healthy, but access to space and containers remains inconsistent across trade lanes.



While overall vessel capacity appears sufficient, available space varies widely by trade lane. Carriers are frequently adjusting schedules and blanking sailings to match short-term demand, which can tighten space on some routes while leaving others with excess capacity.

Get in touch

Our team is ready to review your specific supply-chain needs and implement fast, seamless routing solutions.

Equipment availability also remains a risk. Pre-holiday shipping surges and the rapid movement of empty containers can create short-term shortages, particularly on Asia-origin lanes.

This is where our network comes into play. Through our LCL services and flexible carrier partnerships, we're able to keep cargo moving even when full-container space is limited. By consolidating freight and leveraging alternative routings and sailings, we help customers maintain flow, reduce delays, and stay responsive in tight market conditions.

Early planning remains important, but with the right options in place, capacity constraints don't have to mean disruption. Our team is on hand to help you identify the most effective solution for your shipments.



Chinese New Year: Holiday Impact Starts Now

The 2026 Chinese New Year (CNY) falls on Tuesday, 17 February, with the official public holiday likely running through 23 February. The full impact typically occurs from late January through early March.

Even though the “ship-before-CNY” deadlines have passed, disruption is still building and will last well beyond the holiday:

- Factories wind down early: Production slows from mid-January as workforces travel and suppliers close.
- Ports and carriers reduce activity: Major Chinese ports operate on reduced schedules, with more blank sailings limiting capacity and extending transit times.
- Recovery takes time: Full production and logistics flows typically don't normalise until mid-March, creating a disruption window of up to 6–8 weeks.

Chinese New Year impacts peak after the holiday and unwind gradually:

- Fewer sailings: Blank sailings reduce frequency and space availability on Asia trade lanes.
- Post-holiday congestion: Backlogs form as factories reopen unevenly, slowing customs and inland transport into March.
- Rate volatility: Ocean and air freight rates may spike as capacity and demand fall out of balance.
- Equipment tightness: Container and chassis availability can remain constrained into Q1 due to imbalanced flows.

Mid January: Production Slows

- Factories begin winding down production
- Equipment repositioning starts to tighten availability

17-23 Feb 2026 - CNY Week: Operations Paused

- Operations largely paused
- Most factories closed
- Ports remain open but operate with skeleton staffing

Early March: Delayed Recovery

- Vessel schedules stabilise
- Inland transport congestion eases
- Transit times normalise



Late January: Disruption Builds

- Reduced factory output across China
- Fewer vessel departures and reduced port productivity

Late February: Gradual Restart

- Factories reopen unevenly
- Backlogs form at ports and inland hubs
- Space and equipment remain constrained

Air Freight in 2026: Plan Early, Move Fast

Air freight is no longer just a backup for delayed ocean shipments — it has become a strategic, high-value tool for moving goods quickly in an unpredictable environment.



The air cargo market of 2025 was less about traditional peak seasons and more about rapid response. Shippers increasingly front-loaded cargo to avoid uncertainty, while demand became more fragmented across regions, commodities, and timeframes.

Air cargo remains a strategic tool, not just a backup for delayed ocean shipments. 2026 will continue the trend of fragmented demand, shifting trade lanes, and short-term capacity spikes, requiring flexibility and foresight from shippers.

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Our team is ready to review your specific supply-chain needs and implement fast, seamless routing solutions.

Key points for the year ahead:

- **Changing trade lanes:** Growth in intra-Asia, intra-Europe, and emerging markets is creating new capacity pressures.
- **Volatile rates:** Air freight prices remain elevated and can spike quickly; early bookings and blended contract/spot strategies are essential.
- **Flexible capacity:** Carriers adjust schedules frequently; multi-leg and multi-carrier options help ensure reliability.
- **Time-sensitive cargo:** High-value, perishable, and urgent shipments dominate demand — plan early and consider premium services.

Air freight in 2026 rewards planning, flexibility, and proactive management. And those who act early will secure reliable capacity and control costs.

Customs in 2026: New Rules, New Risks, and the Need to Stay Ahead

Across global trade lanes, authorities are demanding greater transparency, earlier data submission, and tighter controls, while businesses are being asked to move goods faster than ever.



Looking ahead to 2026, several developments are set to reshape the customs landscape:

- **Shifting trade agreements**, including developments around the India trade deal, will influence duty exposure, routing decisions, and sourcing strategies.
- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) controls** continue to expand in scope, increasing documentary and inspection requirements for affected commodities.
- **Enhanced security and data regimes**, such as ISC2, are raising the bar for pre-lodged information and increasing the consequences of inaccurate or late filings.
- **Post-Brexit frameworks**, including the Windsor Framework, Regime 42, and Returned Goods Relief (RGR), remain complex and, if misapplied, can quickly erode margins or cause border delays.

To help clients navigate these changes with confidence, we're hosting a **Customs in 2026 Webinar on Thursday 29 January at 2pm**, where we'll explore:

- What customs freight expectations look like for 2026, and where risks are increasing
- Key regulatory and trade policy developments, including the India trade deal and SPS changes
- Practical, real-world guidance on Regime 42, the Windsor Framework, RGR, and ISC2, and how to apply them correctly

Register Now

New Year, New Opportunities

As we step into 2026, our team is ready to help you navigate the evolving market, plan with confidence, and seize opportunities across your supply chain. Whether you want to review your strategy, discuss upcoming shipments, or gain clarity on market trends for the year ahead, we're just a call or message away.

Thank you for your partnership over the past year. We wish you a strong start to 2026 and look forward to supporting your business every step of the way.



Want to get in touch.

[Click here if you want to get in touch with me about any queries or concerns you have.](#)

Book a Demo of Pathway now

TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

