

Freight Expectations



Supply Chain & Logistics Update

Spot container rates are rising sharply across major east-west trade lanes

Strong peak season demand is outpacing available vessel capacity

Port congestion across China is worsening



At A Glance Monthly Market Update

- Spot rates from Asia to Europe and the US have risen significantly in recent weeks, with carriers reporting stronger-than-expected booking volumes and improving vessel utilisation.
- Port congestion across China is worsening as strong export demand, combined with vessel bunching and equipment imbalances, places increasing pressure on major gateway ports.
- Carriers and forwarders are reporting longer waiting times for vessels, reduced schedule reliability, and growing operational challenges as terminals struggle to manage rising cargo volumes.
- Supply chains across Northern Europe are facing increasing pressure as inland transport networks struggle with a combination of low water levels and growing port congestion.
- While capacity has largely returned across major European air-cargo trade lanes, demand growth has failed to keep pace, creating a difficult operating environment for airlines and logistics providers.



From the Managing Director



This month, we are delighted to share that Unsworth has been shortlisted for two prestigious Multimodal Awards. We have been nominated for Shipper/Partner of the Year, while Imports Coordinator, Daniel Collins, has been shortlisted for Young Freight Professional of the Year.

These nominations are a fantastic reflection of the dedication, expertise and customer focus demonstrated by our team every day, and we are incredibly proud to see their hard work recognised by the industry.

Turning to the market, we are seeing ocean freight conditions tighten once again. Demand across key east-west trade lanes has strengthened significantly, driving spot rates higher and reducing available capacity as carriers move into the traditional peak season period.

At the same time, congestion at major Chinese ports and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty in the Middle East continue to create operational challenges for global supply chains.

While market conditions remain dynamic, our focus remains unchanged: helping our customers navigate complexity with clear communication, proactive planning and reliable logistics solutions.

As always, if you have any questions about your supply chain or upcoming shipments, please do not hesitate to contact the team.



MANAGING DIRECTOR

Ocean Freight Global Market Overview

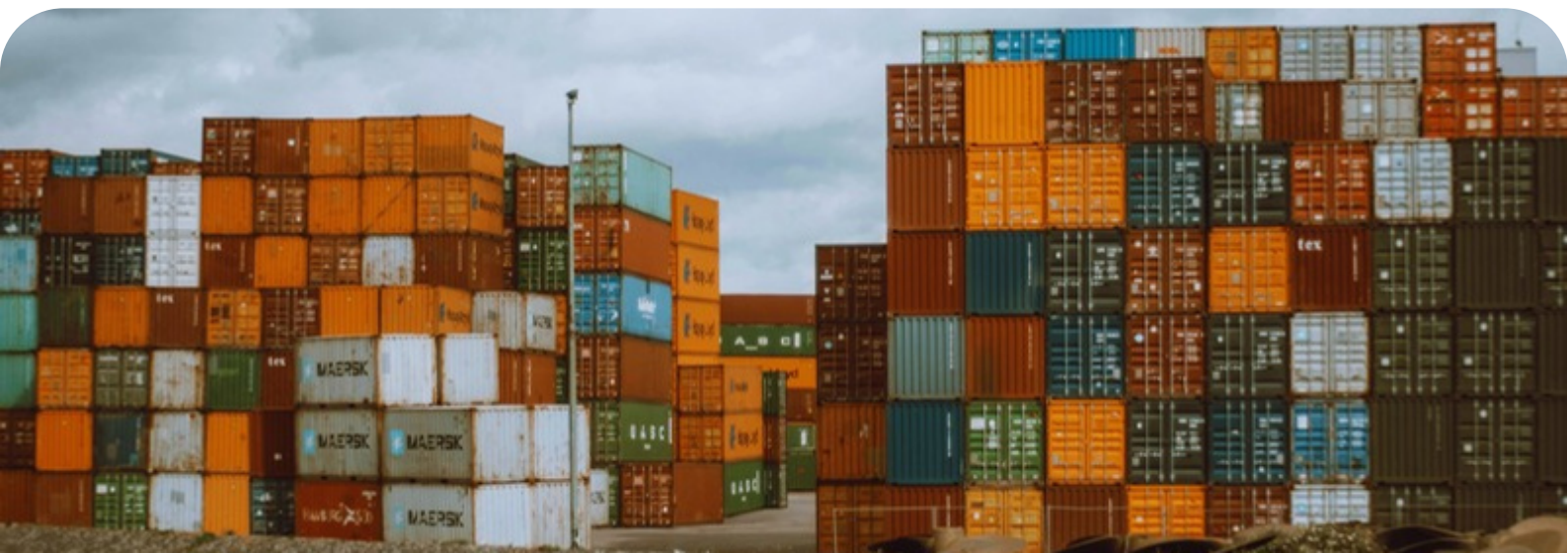
- ***Freight rates continue to rise as peak season demand strengthens***
- ***Capacity is tightening on key services, with port congestion impacting schedule reliability***
- ***Equipment remains broadly available, although pressure is increasing in high-demand export markets***

Container shipping markets have entered a stronger phase as peak season demand accelerates across key global trade lanes. Spot freight rates from Asia into Europe and North America have increased sharply in recent weeks, supported by stronger cargo volumes and improving vessel utilisation.

Unlike previous rate increases that were driven primarily by fuel surcharges and network disruption, the current market recovery is being supported by genuine demand growth. Retailers and importers are continuing to bring forward shipments, while carriers have successfully implemented a series of rate increases across major east-west services.

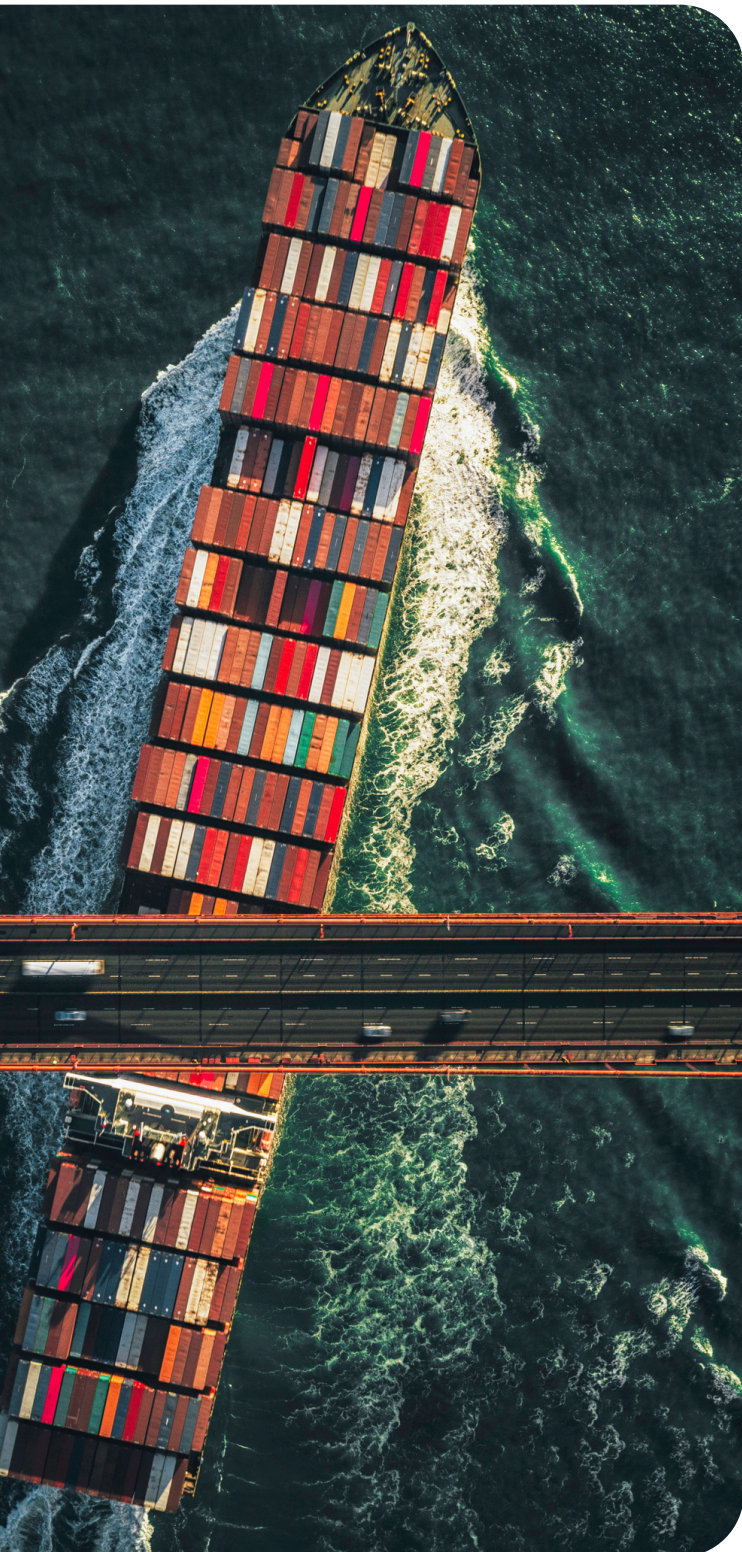
Capacity remains tight on several trade lanes, with vessel space becoming increasingly competitive for short-notice shipments. Congestion at major Chinese ports is also affecting schedule reliability and creating additional pressure on available capacity throughout carrier networks.

Equipment availability remains generally stable across most export locations; however, forwarders are reporting growing pressure on container positioning in areas experiencing the highest export demand. As a result, shippers should continue to plan bookings well in advance as rates, transit times and capacity conditions remain subject to change throughout the summer period.



Freight Rates Climb as Demand Returns

- ***Spot container rates are rising sharply across major east-west trade lanes***
- ***Strong peak season demand is outpacing available vessel capacity***
- ***Carriers are successfully implementing rate increases***



Container shipping markets are experiencing a fresh wave of rate increases as strong peak season demand collides with tightening vessel capacity across key global trade lanes. Spot rates from Asia to Europe and the US have risen significantly in recent weeks, with carriers reporting stronger-than-expected booking volumes and improving vessel utilisation.

The current market strength is being supported by genuine cargo demand. Retailers and importers are continuing to bring forward shipments to secure inventory ahead of the traditional peak season, while ongoing geopolitical uncertainty and supply chain disruption are encouraging many businesses to build additional resilience into their logistics networks.

Capacity remains constrained across several major services, with carriers maintaining disciplined network management and limited space availability on key sailings.

As a result, shippers are facing a more competitive booking environment, particularly for short-notice cargo and time-sensitive shipments.

Chinese Port Congestion Worsens as Export Volumes Surge

- ***Congestion is increasing across major Chinese ports as demand rises***
- ***Vessel delays and equipment shortages are creating pressure on supply chains***
- ***Shippers should expect continued disruption and book capacity early to avoid delays***



Port congestion across China is worsening as strong export demand, combined with vessel bunching and equipment imbalances, places increasing pressure on major gateway ports. Carriers and forwarders are reporting longer waiting times for vessels, reduced schedule reliability, and growing operational challenges as terminals struggle to manage rising cargo volumes.

The disruption is being driven by a combination of factors, including a surge in exports, ongoing schedule recovery efforts, and the knock-on effects of recent network disruptions across global shipping routes. As vessels arrive outside their planned windows, terminals are experiencing increased yard utilisation and congestion, further impacting turnaround times.

The effects are beginning to ripple through international supply chains, with delayed departures and missed connections reducing overall network efficiency. Some shippers are also facing challenges securing equipment and vessel space as carriers prioritise capacity across high-demand trade lanes.

While ports continue to work through the backlog, market conditions remain unpredictable. Shippers moving cargo from China should allow additional lead time where possible and plan bookings further in advance, as congestion-related delays are expected to continue in the near term.

Inland Congestion Adds Pressure to European Supply Chains

- ***Low water levels are restricting barge capacity across key inland waterways***
- ***Port congestion is having a greater impact on cargo flows than water level restrictions***
- ***Shippers should prepare for longer transit times and reduced schedule reliability***

Supply chains across Northern Europe are facing increasing pressure as inland transport networks struggle with a combination of low water levels and growing port congestion. While reduced water levels on major rivers are limiting the amount of cargo barges can carry, industry experts suggest that congestion at key ports is currently having a greater impact on freight flows.

Terminals across several European gateways are experiencing delays as high container volumes, vessel schedule disruption, and inland transport bottlenecks continue to affect operations. As a result, containers are spending longer in port, placing additional strain on storage capacity and onward distribution networks.

The combination of constrained barge capacity and port congestion is reducing the efficiency of inland transport services, creating delays for cargo moving between ports and inland destinations. Forwarders are reporting longer lead times and reduced flexibility as operators work to manage the disruption.



European air cargo market faces mounting pressure



European air cargo carriers are facing growing financial challenges as soft demand, rising costs, and intense competition continue to weigh on market performance. While capacity has largely returned across major European trade lanes, demand growth has failed to keep pace, creating a difficult operating environment for airlines and logistics providers.

The combination of high operating costs, pricing pressure, and subdued market conditions is forcing many operators to focus on efficiency and cost control. Despite signs of stabilisation in some sectors, profitability remains under pressure across much of the European air cargo market. This means capacity remains relatively accessible, but ongoing financial pressures within the industry could lead to further network adjustments and service rationalisation.

Rising air freight rates put pressure on Bangladesh exports

Bangladesh's export sector is facing growing pressure as rising air freight rates increase the cost of moving perishable goods to international markets. Ongoing capacity constraints and strong demand for air cargo services across key trade lanes are driving the increase in rates.

As airlines prioritise higher-yield cargo and available space becomes more limited, exporters are facing greater challenges securing capacity at commercially viable rates. Unless additional capacity enters the market, elevated pricing and restricted availability are likely to remain a challenge for exporters reliant on fast and reliable air transport.

Take control of your supply chain today

No two logistics challenges are the same. I understand this and I'm here to tailor solutions to meet your specific needs. I can work closely with you to develop strategies that address your unique challenges effectively and efficiently, offering guidance that allows you to plan and adjust logistics strategies accordingly.



Want to get in touch.

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