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When Agentic AI Becomes the Supply Chain's Strongest Counterforce

After a turbulent 2025, 2026 is set to be a defining year for global supply chains. Three forces are converging: rapid advances in agentic AI, escalating geopolitical and tariff volatility, and rising costs driven by climate disruption. Together, they are reshaping how companies plan, decide and operate.

Unlike generative AI, agentic AI is goal-driven and can coordinate multiple sub-agents to act across planning, procurement, logistics and execution. This makes it transformative—closing talent gaps, turning junior staff into high performers, and enabling experienced professionals to manage complex, cross-functional and multi-tier supply chain challenges.

With over 90% of disruptions occurring outside a company's four walls, access to real-time, end-to-end data is critical. Agentic AI, combined with multi-enterprise collaboration and live trade, tariff and climate data, allows businesses to respond faster, reduce risk and even gain a competitive edge.

As uncertainty, tariffs and climate events intensify, companies that lean into agentic AI in 2026 won't just manage chaos—they'll redefine what's possible in supply chain management.

Source: Supply Chain Brain

EU Chemicals Trade Surplus Shrinks Sharply in November 2025

The European Union's chemicals trade surplus fell significantly in November 2025, reaching €16.7 billion, down from €21.8 billion in the same month in 2024. This contraction was driven by a 12.8% year-on-year drop in exports, which outpaced the 4.6% decline in imports, according to Eurostat data reported by ICIS. The decline in chemicals export volumes was a key contributor to the narrower trade balance, reflecting softer external demand and broader trade weakness across manufactured goods.

Source: Supply Chain Brain

Jubilant Biosys Doubles Discovery Chemistry Capacity with New Noida R&D and Pilot Plant Hub

Jubilant Biosys Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Jubilant Pharmova, has inaugurated a new multimillion-dollar discovery and preclinical facility in Noida (Delhi NCR), doubling its chemistry capacity for discovery research and early-phase scale-up. The site integrates R&D labs with two pilot plants, catering to rising demand for fee-for-service (FFS) contracts from global biotech and pharma clients.

Source: Chemical Weekly

EU Imposes Anti-Dumping Duties on Barium Carbonate from China and India

Unigel Suspends Styrene Production in Brazil Amid Global-Petrochemical Oversupply

The European Union has announced definitive antidumping duties on imports of barium carbonate originating from China and India to protect EU producers from unfairly priced imports. Under the new regulation, duties on Chinese shipments can be as high as roughly 83.9% of the product's value, while Indian suppliers face a much lower duty of 4.6%. These duties apply to barium carbonate products with defined chemical specifications and cover various forms, including powder and granular forms of the chemical.

Source: Indian Chemical News

Unigel Participações has suspended operations at its styrene and toluene plant in Cubatão, Brazil, citing a heavily oversupplied global market. The facility has an annual capacity of 120,000 metric tons of styrene. Unigel said the decision reflects an unprecedented downturn in the global chemical industry, driven by excess petrochemical capacity, particularly from Asia since 2023. While operations are halted, the company will preserve the site for a potential future restart if market conditions improve.

Source: CEN.ACS

Transpacific Ocean Freight Rates Jump Sharply at Start of 2026

Ocean shipping rates on key Transpacific trade lanes surged at the start of 2026 as demand picked up ahead of the Lunar New Year and ocean carriers implemented price increases. According to Freightos data, average container rates from Asia to the U.S. West Coast climbed about 22% week over week to roughly $2,617 per 40-foot container, while rates to the U.S. East Coast rose around 12% to approximately $3,757 per FEU. These levels are now about 30% higher for West Coast routes and 20% higher for East Coast routes compared with mid-December. The continued rise reflects seasonal demand, tightening capacity, and a broader rebound in ocean freight pricing following softer conditions in late 2025.

Source: Supply Chain Dive

U.S. Factory Sector Slumps to 14-Month Low as 2025 Ends, ISM Survey Shows

U.S. manufacturing activity weakened further at the end of 2025, with the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) index falling to a 14-month low, signaling continued contraction in the factory sector. The ISM PMI remained below the 50 mark for the 10th straight month, reflecting declining new orders, subdued production and persistent cost pressures. Manufacturers, including chemical producers, pointed to import tariffs and policy uncertainty as key factors weighing on demand and investment decisions. While the broader U.S. economy continues to show resilience, the prolonged slowdown highlights ongoing challenges for the industrial sector heading into 2026.

Source: Reuters

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