Insight'15
Information that impacts you

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Global Container Freight Rates Surge on Asia–US Demand While Chemical Tanker Markets Weaken

Container freight rates on major Asia–US routes rose sharply this week, driven by early peak-season demand, blank sailings, and tighter capacity, despite being still below last year's levels. Multiple indices (Drewry, Freightos, Xeneta, SCFI) reported double-digit increases, with geopolitical tensions and carrier GRIs adding further upward pressure.

In contrast, US Gulf chemical tanker rates softened across most routes due to weaker spot activity and higher vessel availability, even as select corridors remained supported by tight space and contract volumes. Overall, chemicals shipping faces a diverging freight environment between strengthening container markets and easing liquid bulk rates.

Source: ICIS

U.S. Supreme Court Ruling Expands Freight Broker Liability

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that freight brokers can be held liable for negligently hiring unsafe trucking companies, significantly increasing their legal and compliance responsibilities. The decision is expected to drive stricter carrier vetting, higher insurance and compliance costs, and greater investment in real-time risk monitoring, while reigniting debate over whether trucking safety oversight should remain a federal regulatory function rather than shift to private brokers.

Source: Supply Chain Brain

Univar Solutions Expands Dow Silicone Additives Partnership Across EMEA

Univar Solutions has expanded its strategic partnership with Dow to distribute Dow's silicone additives for plastics and composites across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). The collaboration will provide manufacturers with advanced silicone technologies that enhance processing efficiency, product performance, durability, and sustainability, while strengthening both companies' position in specialty materials markets.

Source: Univar Solutions

ECHA Launches EU Platform to Accelerate

Waterless Detergents Gain Momentum as Sheets, Tiles,

Phase-Out of Animal Testing in Chemical Safety

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has backed the EU Commission's roadmap to phase out animal testing and will help develop alternative, non-animal methods for chemical safety assessments. It is setting up a Collaborative Platform to bring together regulators, industry, academia, and civil society to advance validation, standardisation, and regulatory adoption of new testing approaches.

Source: ICIS

and Tablets Reshape the Cleaning Market

New solid-format detergents including sheets, tiles, and tablets are rapidly gaining market share as consumers and manufacturers seek more sustainable, waterless cleaning solutions. Advances in materials science are improving product performance while reducing packaging waste, transportation costs, and carbon emissions, prompting major investments from companies such as Procter & Gamble and ingredient suppliers developing next-generation biodegradable alternatives to PVA.

Source: C&EN

BASF to Divest Silicates Business to PQ in Strategic Portfolio Shift

BASF has signed an agreement to sell its silicates business, including the Düsseldorf/Holthausen site, to PQ, with closing expected in H2 2026 pending regulatory approvals. The deal strengthens PQ's global silicate platform and is expected to ensure business continuity, customer stability, and long-term growth.

The silicates unit, used in applications like coatings, detergents, and green tires, will be integrated into PQ's network, enabling expanded global reach and operational continuity for existing customers.

Source: BASF

PM Scales World's Largest Wood-to-Chemicals Biorefinery in Germany

UPM has begun ramping up its $1.6 billion biorefinery in Leuna, Germany, which will convert 500,000 metric tons of sustainably sourced beechwood annually into renewable chemicals such as glycols, industrial sugars, and lignin-based materials. The project demonstrates the potential for large-scale production of bio-based chemical feedstocks, while benefiting from growing demand for sustainable alternatives, supply chain resilience, and a narrowing cost gap with fossil-based chemicals amid geopolitical disruptions.

Source: C&EN

Building Resilient Supply Chains for Demand Surges

As supply chains face increasing demand volatility, many organizations struggle with delayed data, limited visibility, and slow decision-making due to reliance on centralized systems. Technologies such as distributed and active caching enable real-time inventory visibility, faster order processing, and quicker responses to disruptions can help companies improve resilience and maintain operational continuity during demand spikes.

Source: Supply Chain Brain

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