

navicon Switzerland

REEFER MARKET UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2026

Global demand, capacity, port conditions and operational outlook

Reefer trade is growing — operating reliability remains uneven

Four indicators frame the market at the time of this November update.

+1.7%

Containerised reefer cargo

Forecast year-on-year growth for 2026; more than 132 million tonnes.

48.3%

Global schedule reliability

Kuehne+Nagel October 2026 report; lower than September.

34

Panama Canal daily slots

Transit capacity announced by the Canal Authority on 9 November.

4 days

Average delay for late vessels

October 2026, as reported by Kuehne+Nagel.

THE MARKET IN ONE SENTENCE

Demand and reefer infrastructure are expanding, but effective capacity still depends on port conditions, routing, equipment positioning and schedule execution.

Containerised reefer demand continues to expand

Drewry's May 2026 forecast points to steady medium-term growth in seaborne reefer volumes.



KEY FORECASTS

132m tonnes

Containerised reefer cargo forecast for 2026

6.3 → 6.9m FEU

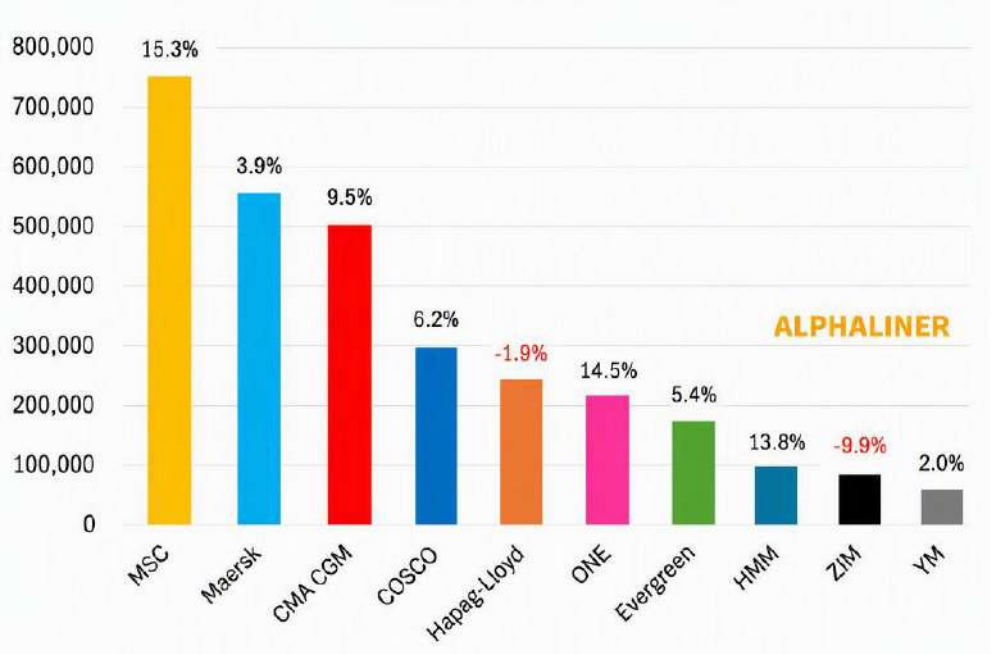
Seaborne reefer exports forecast between 2026 and 2030

>90%

Forecast share of perishable cargo carried in reefer containers by 2027

Reefer equipment investment is continuing

Global fleet growth supports demand, but capacity is not evenly available across ports and trade lanes.



Approximate reefer capacity by carrier; year-on-year change labels shown in the source chart.

GLOBAL FLEET OUTLOOK

4.16m TEU

Estimated reefer container fleet in 2026

4.57m TEU

Forecast fleet size in 2030

231,000

New reefer units manufactured in 2025

Reliability remains a material planning risk

The October monitoring data show a deterioration in global schedule performance.

OCTOBER 2026

48.3%

Global schedule reliability



4 days

Average delay for late-arriving vessels

14 of 20

Monitored corridors weakened during October

PORT CONDITIONS TO WATCH

- **Northern Europe —**
  Hamburg, Rotterdam and Antwerp reported terminal, yard or inland-flow constraints.
- **Asia —**
  Busan and Singapore faced vessel bunching, transshipment pressure and delayed connections.
- **India —**
  Nhava Sheva and Chennai experienced reported vessel waiting times of around 3–4 days in October.
- **China —**
  Congestion at Shanghai and Shekou eased after Golden Week, although residual schedule disruption remained.

Strait of Hormuz: security risk continues to affect regional planning

Recent maritime incidents reinforce the need to confirm routing, insurance and port acceptance before booking.



The situation around the Strait of Hormuz continues to create uncertainty for food shipments moving to and from the Gulf region.

For temperature-sensitive cargo, the impact extends beyond vessel delays. Restricted port access, changes in vessel routing and congestion at alternative gateways can affect delivery schedules, cargo handling and the continuity of refrigerated transportation.

NAVICON'S APPROACH

For food shipments, routing decisions must consider not only transit time and freight cost, but also the availability of reefer infrastructure, reliable cargo handling and continuity of the cold chain throughout the journey.

We continue to monitor developments and assess available routing and operational alternatives to support the safe and timely movement of our clients' cargo.

Operational implications

Potential vessel diversions, insurance exposure, service changes and inland delivery constraints.

Gulf alternatives are also experiencing capacity pressure

Port waiting figures from 1 November illustrate why gateway selection must be assessed shipment by shipment.

VESSEL QUEUE SNAPSHOT

PORT	WAITING	IN OPERATION
Fujairah	20	2
Sohar	19	4
Khor Fakkan	13	4

Limited terminal throughput can extend berthing and inland delivery times.

KING ABDULLAH PORT: MSC-REPORTED DATA

3,800+

Reefer plugs

Terminal figure stated in MSC briefing.

5,000+

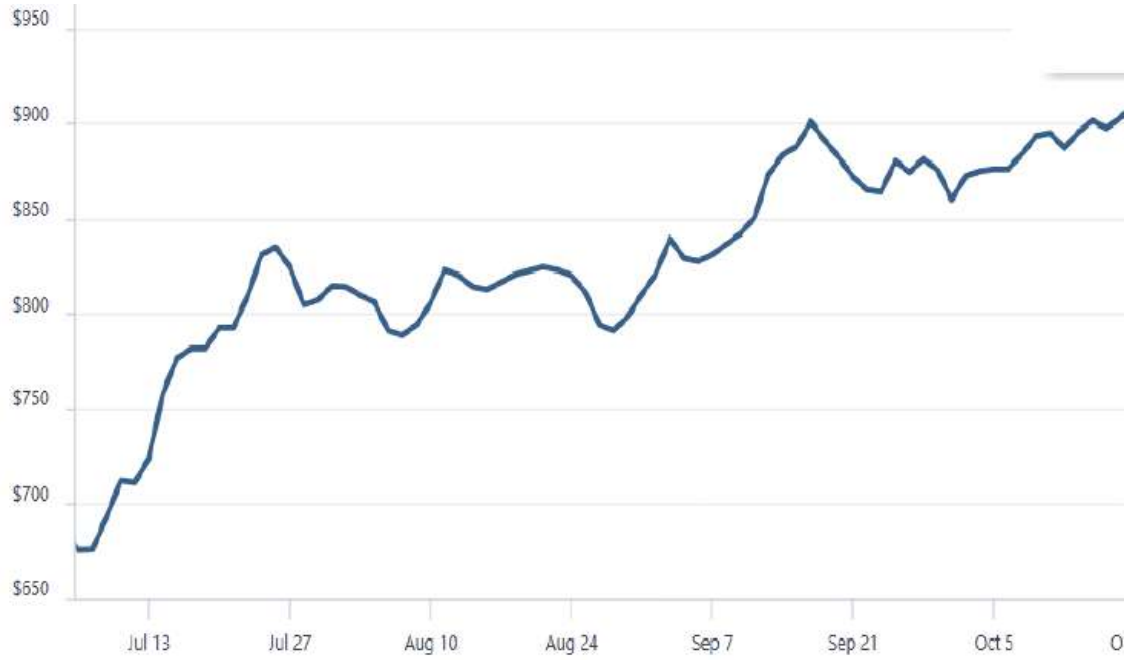
TEU weekly capacity

Service capacity stated in MSC briefing.

MSC confirmed a 12-day total transit from KAP to selected Gulf markets and 2–5 day local reefer deliveries within Saudi Arabia.

Fuel and operational costs remain under pressure

Fuel prices, diversions and port-related expenses influence carrier operating costs and freight pricing.



VLSFO price trend shown in the supplied market briefing; endpoint reported at USD 953/mt in October 2026.

MARKET BRIEFING FIGURE

+40%

Reported increase in average VLSFO prices over four months, reaching USD 953/mt in October.

HAPAG-LLOYD REPORT

USD 635/mt

Average bunker consumption price for Jan–Sep 2026, versus USD 535/mt for the same period in 2025.

COLD-CHAIN INFRASTRUCTURE
BEYOND PORT CAPACITY

The global reefer supply chain relies on more than vessel capacity. **Temperature-controlled infrastructure** across the entire logistics network is critical to maintain cargo quality and ensure efficient distribution.



Ocean Transport



Port Operations
(Reefer Plugs)



Cold-Storage Infrastructure



Inland Transport
(Reefer Fleet)



Distribution
(Cold Chain)



End Customer

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENTS

Temperature-Controlled Warehousing
Additional chilled and frozen storage capacity

Pre-Cooling & Cold Treatment
Maintain product quality

Cross-Docking & Cargo Handling
Efficient transfer

Integrated Cold-Chain Services
Monitoring, quality control, customs and labelling

Inland Connectivity
Reliable refrigerated road and rail links

KEY TAKEAWAY:
The evolution of reefer logistics increasingly depends on an integrated cold-chain network, connecting port infrastructure, specialised storage facilities and inland distribution capabilities.

Major Shipping Lines | Investing in Cold-Chain Infrastructure

From cold-storage facilities to advanced monitoring, carriers are strengthening the reefer supply chain.

MSC Group (MEDLOG)
258,530+ sqm of cold-storage space, with 8 operational facilities worldwide

Maersk
~20 cold stores globally, including 35,000 sqm in Rotterdam

CMA CGM (CEVA Logistics)
Dedicated Chill Hub (10,000 sqm, -25°C to +16°C)

COSCO
MY REEFER platform for end-to-end cold-chain visibility

Hapag-Lloyd
Hapag-Lloyd LIVE: real-time temperature monitoring



ONE
CONTAINER+: real-time reefer monitoring

Evergreen
6,000 new Daikin ZeSTIA reefer units

HMM
Controlled-atmosphere containers & monitoring

ZIM
ZIMOnitor: 24/7 reefer tracking and alerts

YANG MING
IoT-enabled cold-chain monitoring

KEY FOCUS AREAS ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

- Cold-Storage Facilities
- Reefer Equipment & Port Capacity
- Digital Monitoring & Visibility
- Controlled-Atmosphere Solutions
- Integrated Cold-Chain Networks

The 2027 outlook is positive, but risks remain elevated

2026 ESTIMATE

3.0%

Global GDP growth

1.9%

World trade growth

4.7%

Global inflation

2027 FORECAST

3.4%

Global GDP growth

RISKS IDENTIFIED

- Geopolitical tensions and trade fragmentation
- Persistent inflation and volatile energy prices
- Supply-chain diversification costs and reduced efficiency

CONCLUSION |
KEEPING FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS MOVING

The reefer market continues to offer growth opportunities, but increasing operational complexity, geopolitical developments and port congestion require greater attention to shipment planning and execution.

For foodstuff transportation, maintaining the integrity of the cold chain is essential. Delays, alternative routings and changing port conditions must be considered not only in terms of transit time and cost, but also in relation to cargo handling, temperature control and delivery coordination.

At Navicon, we believe that successful logistics management starts with anticipation, informed routing decisions and continuous communication throughout the transportation process.

Our priority remains clear: supporting our clients in keeping cargo moving, protecting product integrity and maintaining supply chain continuity in an increasingly challenging global market.

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