

The World of Soda Ash: Building Momentum, Adapting to Change



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Soda ash remains a fundamental ingredient in many everyday products, from the glass we drink from each morning to the windows in our homes, from batteries in appliances to the detergents we use for laundry. In 2025, glass production is projected to account for 57% of global soda ash consumption. Flat glass continues to lead demand, followed by container glass. Until now, solar glass has been the fastest-growing segment, fuelled by rising investment in solar energy, but this trend may shift in 2025.

an additional 5.6 million metric tons (mt). However, this momentum hasn't persisted into 2025. In the first quarter, demand decreased by 1%, year-on-year, and solar glass production decreased by 10%, year-to-date April. Mainland China's solar glass capacity is expected to increase from 52 million mt in 2024, to approximately 56 million mt in 2025.

This rapid expansion in solar glass since 2022 has raised questions about whether there's excess capacity. The situation has been further complicated

supply, keeping the global market relatively balanced through most of 2024, the pressure from excess capacity has begun to weigh on the market since the start of this year.

GLOBAL DEMAND

In 2025, global demand for soda ash is expected to increase by 1.2%, adding over 800,000 mt. This suggests that the world demand growth will slow in 2025 to levels not seen since after the pandemic. This follows an 8% increase in 2024, which was driven primarily by strong demand from mainland China. In contrast, demand in the rest of the world, excluding mainland China, remained flat last year.

Across the rest of the world, soda ash demand trends are mixed:

Other Asia (excluding mainland China and **Indian Subcontinent**): Other Asia is the largest seaborne market, relying almost entirely on imports. The region recorded nearly a 10% increase in imports in 2024, reflecting strong demand, particularly from the

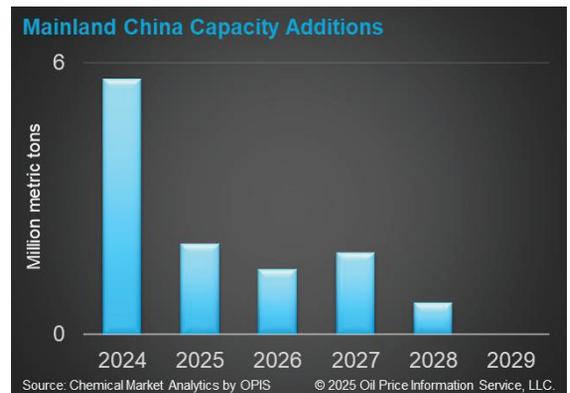
The global soda ash market faced a paradox last year; while demand rose—driven largely by the clean energy sectors—soda ash capacity, particularly in mainland China, also expanded significantly. This dual growth has led to an oversupply in 2025.

THE CHINA EFFECT

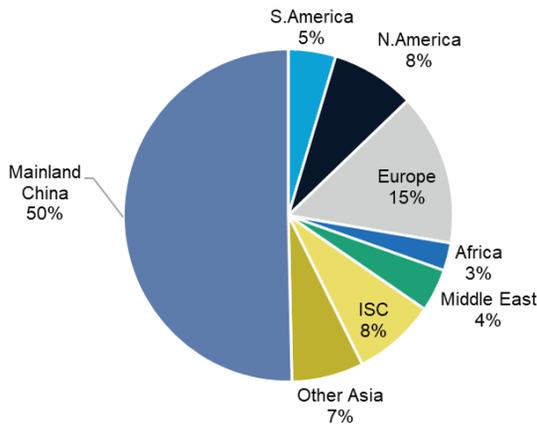
Mainland China continues to dominate the global soda ash narrative. In 2024, the country recorded a record-breaking 17% demand growth, primarily driven by solar glass production, translating to

by new US tariffs and anti-dumping duties targeting mainland China and Southeast Asian solar PV module producers—many of which are Chinese-owned—casting uncertainty over the solar glass outlook in both mainland China and the broader region.

Since 2023, China has added more than 7 million mt of soda ash capacity, including 5 million mt of low-cost natural soda ash in Inner Mongolia. While robust domestic demand initially absorbed this new



World Demand, 2025



Total Demand 72.9 million mt

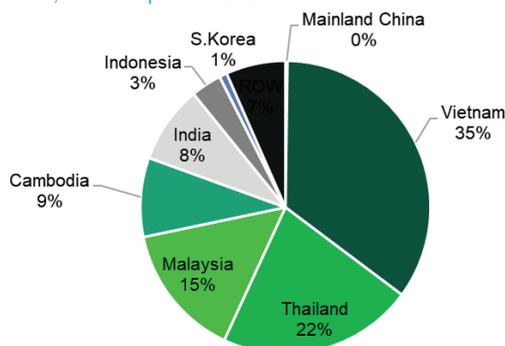
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solar and flat glass sectors. However, US tariffs targeting certain Southeast Asian solar PV module exporters have created uncertainty for 2025. In terms of the importance of the US market as a destination, Southeast Asia is a significant supplier of both solar glass and panels to the US while mainland China is more important as a solar glass supplier.

Irrespective of the uncertainty in the outlook for glass in this region, there are several Chinese and South Korean flat and solar glass investments being developed in Indonesia and Malaysia, some of which already started production during the first quarter of this year. This new glass production supported a 30%, year-on-year, increase in soda ash imports to Other Asia in the first quarter of this year.

The Americas (excluding the US): Outside the US, the Americas region is heavily reliant on soda ash imports.

US PV Module, Panel Imports in 2024



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In 2024, imports to North America declined by 11%, led by Mexico, where soda ash imports—mainly for container glass—decreased by 10%, or 138,000 mt. In contrast, in South America, imports, and thus apparent demand, in 2024 was fairly flat.

In South America, growth is expected to come mainly from lithium, particularly in Argentina and Chile. While lithium carbonate currently accounts for 3% of global soda ash demand, it represents 20% of demand in South America and is projected to become the region’s largest end use in 2025. In the first 3-4 months of this year, soda ash imports to South America have increased by 26%, year-on-year.

India: India’s soda ash demand continues to grow steadily. In 2024, consumption increased by around 4%. While powder detergents remain the largest end-use segment, a faster-than-expected consumer shift towards liquid detergents—which do not use soda ash—is beginning to reshape raw material demand in this sector. Despite having domestic soda ash capacity, India remains a net importer and has ranked as the

world’s third-largest soda ash importer for the past two years. Imports currently account for around 20% of India’s total soda ash supply. In 2025,

demand is projected to increase by 5.8%, or approximately 300,000 mt, driven mainly by solar glass as well as sodium bicarbonate which is primarily supported by flue gas treatment and food applications in India. Over the next five years, India is expected to be the third fastest-growing soda ash market globally, after Southeast Asia and South America.

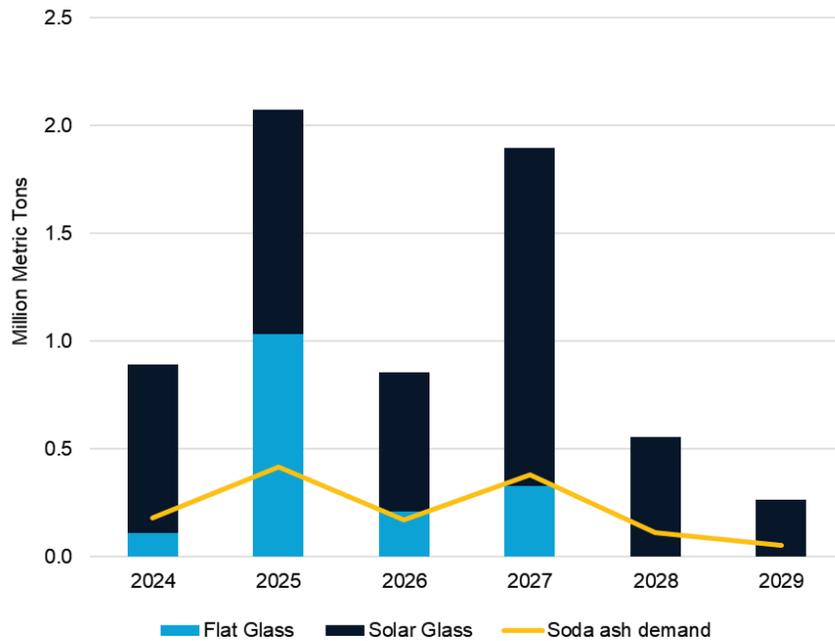
CAPACITY, ACQUISITIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

After a fairly stable capacity base until 2022, the supply-side started to change quite dramatically since 2023. By 2024, mainland China saw the largest annual capacity increase in its history. The Inner Mongolia Berun natural soda ash project had finalised its ramp up and reached 5 million mt of capacity. In the same year, China also expanded its Hou-based synthetic capacity and added a total of more than 5.5 million mt. The US has also seen expansions. In 2023 -2024, Genesis Alkali (now WE Soda) added 1.2 million mt of natural soda ash production. Solvay is expected to add a total of 600,000 mt by the end of this year. US producers are export oriented with more than 40% of the world’s soda ash exports shipped from this source. Meanwhile, Europe has historically seen cost pressures, and a total 1.0 million mt of synthetic capacity is scheduled to close by the end of this year.

The soda ash industry has also seen consolidation. In March 2025, WE Soda acquired the largest US soda ash producer, Genesis Alkali, becoming the largest soda ash producer in the world, with a total capacity of more than 9 million mt.

The soda ash industry is also seeing a change in its technology profile as natural soda ash, with its cost advantage, is increasing its share in supply.

New Glass in Other Asia



Source: Chemical Market Analytics by OPIS

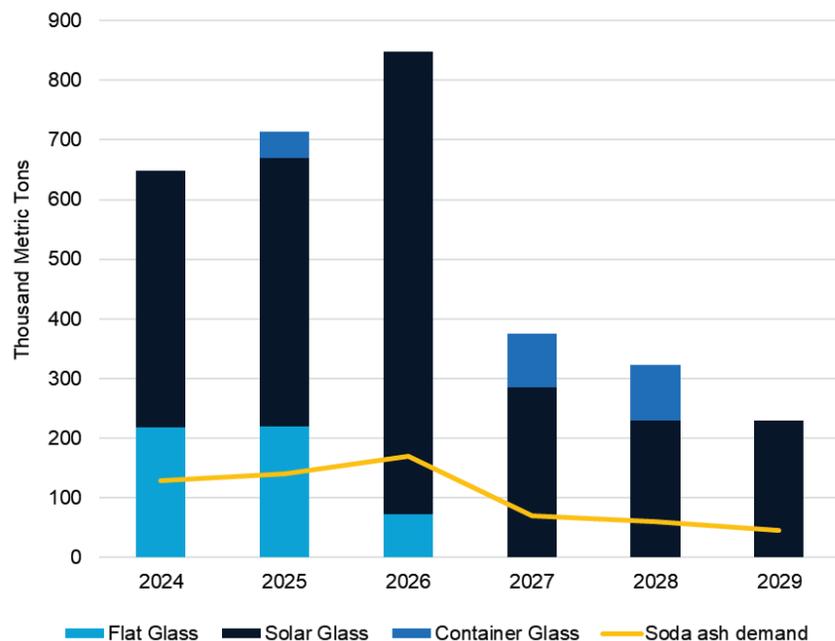
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TRADE AND PRICING TRENDS

Trade remains essential, as around 25% of soda ash is shipped globally. The USA is the world's largest exporter, followed by Türkiye. Mainland China is also important in terms of trade, but its position is highly volatile. This volatility has a significant influence on the global trade balance. Mainland China typically has a fairly

big trade surplus. However, in 2024 it ended the year almost balanced on trade, although for much of the year it was running a deficit. Due to the current over-capacity in mainland China the traditional surplus position has returned this year. And during the first four months of 2025, exports from mainland China has more than doubled while imports have fallen by 98%.

New Glass in India



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In 2024, US soda ash exports rose 11% year-on-year, led by an 72% increase in shipments to mainland China. However, the trend reversed in early 2025: through March, USA exports declined by 7%, with no shipments recorded to mainland China.

Both contract and spot prices have been declining since 2024 as demand growth globally is lagging supply. Chinese export prices are the most volatile since the country exports more on a spot basis than the other key suppliers. As such, an assessment of export prices from China provides some insight into the underlying global trends. This assessment shows that China's export price which started last year at \$301 per mt FOB has fallen sharply to \$189 per mt FOB by April 2025.

OUTLOOK AND CONCLUSION

One of the key factors shaping the soda ash market outlook today is slower GDP growth than anticipated at the start of the year. This weaker macroeconomic environment is impacting overall demand across several sectors. Additionally, US trade policies are creating significant uncertainty in global markets. Also, demand in new energy sectors, which have been a major growth driver, is now being undermined by more conservative environmental agendas, which may slow the anticipated growth in sectors like solar and lithium. As a result, the potential for overcapacity in the soda ash industry is likely to persist in the short to medium term. Nonetheless, some supply-side adjustments are underway, and how quickly the market rebalances will be critical for the health of the industry going forward.

The upcoming World Soda Ash Conference in Palma de Mallorca, SPAIN will be an important time to share views from key stakeholders regarding the industry's strategic direction moving forward