

Market Update Europe – July 2026

Citric Acid & Trisodium Citrate

Understanding the Current Price Environment

Prepared by Jebesen & Jessen Life Science

The European market for citric acid and trisodium citrate has changed significantly since annual contracts for 2026 were negotiated by the end of 2025. At that time, buyers benefited from exceptionally favorable conditions, supported by low FOB price levels from manufacturers, competitive freight rates and a more advantageous overall cost environment.

Since then, the market has shifted considerably. FOB prices from manufacturers in China increased significantly, while higher ocean freight costs and currency effects added further pressure to landed costs for European importers. Although FOB prices in origin are now stabilizing with a tendency to slowly decrease, overall landed cost levels in Europe remain supported by elevated external cost factors such as freight rates and EUR/USD exchange rate movements.



Key Facts at a Glance

- FOB prices from manufacturers in China: up to 40% above previous lows
- Ocean freight China - Northern Europe: currently approx. USD 3,300-4,000 / 20' FCL
- Ocean freight China - Southern Europe: currently approx. USD 4,000-5,000 / 20' FCL
- Freight cost increase: more than 230-300% versus previous contract
- Landed cost impact: freight alone can add more than USD 100 / mt
- Market outlook: stabilizing, but still supported by elevated cost factors

What is driving the market?

1. Higher FOB prices from manufacturers in China

The main driver behind the current price environment is the increase in FOB prices from manufacturers in China. Suppliers are facing higher production costs, mainly due to increased raw material and energy expenses.

Sulphuric acid, an important input in the citric acid production process, has become a key cost factor. Approximately 0.5 kg of sulphuric acid is required to produce 1 kg of citric acid. As China imports significant volumes of sulphur from the Middle East, supply chains have been heavily affected by the recent geopolitical tensions in the region. Together with higher energy and manufacturing expenses, this has led major manufacturers to implement several price increases.

In addition, disciplined manufacturers closely monitored each others output and regulated the supply.



2. Tighter availability

The citric acid and trisodium citrate market has traditionally been characterized by a strong overcapacity. However, during the recent market upturn, manufacturers achieved a disbalance between supply and demand in their favour.

This has tightened availability and supported higher FOB price levels from manufacturers. At the same time, many European importers reacted cautiously to rising prices and reduced purchasing volumes. As inventories declined, competition for available quantities increased, and market developments from China were reflected more quickly in Europe.

3. Significantly higher ocean freight costs

Ocean freight has become one of the most important cost drivers. Freight rates from China to Europe have increased sharply and are currently reaching approximately USD 3,300 to 4,000 per 20' FCL. The reason for this increase is that shipping lines have recently removed a significant number of vessels from service and implemented numerous blank sailings, effectively reducing available freight capacity. At the same time, many importers postponed purchases from China for as long as possible due to the elevated freight rates experienced during the recent disruptions. As inventories are now reaching critical levels, importers are increasingly being forced to accept current market rates.

For citric acid and trisodium citrate, this has a direct impact on landed costs in Europe. Depending on shipment structure and market conditions, freight alone can add more than USD 100 per metric tonne to the final product cost.

4. Currency pressure for European buyers

Most purchases from China are settled in USD. As a result, EUR/USD exchange rate movements directly influence import costs for European buyers. A weaker Euro reduces purchasing power and increases the effective cost in EUR, even if supplier prices in USD remain stable. Currency movements therefore remain an additional factor affecting European market prices.



What this means for buyers

Buyers with demand until the end of the year should consider planning purchases in a timely manner. Given current transit times of up to 12 weeks from China to Europe, early ordering helps ensure product availability when needed and provides greater flexibility in supply chain planning.

At the same time, the market should continue to be monitored closely. Current indications suggest that buyers may benefit from gradually declining raw material prices in China as well as easing ocean freight rates over the coming months. This could create attractive purchasing opportunities, particularly for volumes required in the longer term. In summary, securing near- to mid-term requirements in line with logistics lead times, while remaining attentive to market developments, appears to be the most balanced purchasing approach under current conditions.

Contact us!



Joshua Freude

Senior Sales Manager

MOB +49 151 177 347 38

joshua.freude@jebesen-jessen.de