

A large container ship is sailing on the ocean, leaving a white wake behind it. The ship is filled with colorful shipping containers. The ocean is a deep blue, and the sky is a light blue with a hint of orange near the horizon.

# **NAVIGATING SUSTAINABLE TRADE AMID GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY**

**HOW BUSINESSES CAN EMBED RESILIENCE IN SUPPLY CHAINS  
DURING GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS**



**DP WORLD**





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As geopolitical dynamics shift from multilateral trade agreements to increasingly bilateral approaches, global companies find themselves navigating uncertain waters. This white paper explores how businesses committed to sustainable supply chains can maintain momentum amid fluctuating policies, rising costs, and growing market demands.

Drawing insights from industry leaders across logistics, consumer goods, and sustainability, this paper identifies key strategies for embedding resilience and sustainability into corporate supply chains despite political and economic turbulence.

## INTRODUCTION

The landscape of international trade is undergoing significant transformation. Global businesses used to operating within the stability of multilateral trade agreements now increasingly face volatile and often protectionist bilateral policies.

According to the World Trade Organization's [2024 Trade Report](#), bilateral trade agreements increased by nearly 20% from 2020 to 2024. Amidst these shifts, sustainability approaches to supply chain logistics emerge not merely as a compliance measure but as a core strategic element essential for long-term resilience and competitive advantage.

## THE SUSTAINABILITY IMPERATIVE

Companies are increasingly driven to sustainability efforts by a combination of community integration, market demands, and internal business strategies. A 2024 survey by [Supply Chain Dive](#) and [DP World](#) indicated that 82% of supply chain executives believe investing in sustainability represents a sound business decision, highlighting sustainability as integral to business continuity and local economic health.

This sustainability imperative isn't driven solely by a sense of responsibility or moral value – it's a clear financial decision. When asked what is driving their sustainability investments, the top response (36%) was efficiency and financial gain. According to supply chain practitioners, customers want options ... it's not enough to just move goods from point A to point B. To remain competitive, vendors must provide add-on services that improve efficiency and sustainability.





# CONSUMER PREFERENCES AND MARKET DEMAND

The demand for sustainable logistics solutions from consumer goods companies is being driven largely by changes in consumer behavior. According to [NielsenIQ \(2024\)](#), today's consumers are more conscious of environmental and social impacts of products and seek out brands that align with their values.

A joint study by [McKinsey and NielsenIQ \(2023\)](#) found that products making sustainability claims experienced 28% sales growth while products without those claims experienced 20% growth over the same period. And [BlueYonder \(2025\)](#) found that 78% of consumers see sustainability considerations as important when buying products, with nearly half willing to pay more for those products.

This growing consumer awareness and preference reinforces the urgency for businesses to integrate sustainability comprehensively into their supply chains. PwC's 2024 [Voice of the Consumer Survey](#) found that consumers are willing to spend an average of 9.7% more on sustainably produced or sourced goods, even amid cost-of-living and inflationary concerns.



## TRANSPARENCY & TRACEABILITY REQUIREMENTS

While the pull of consumer demand is an important driver for increasing supply chain sustainability, the push of increasing regulatory pressure is also playing an important role. Emerging regulations, particularly in the European Union, require companies to significantly enhance transparency and traceability in their supply chains for sustainability performance.

The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive requires companies of a certain size to annually track and report their greenhouse gas emissions throughout their full supply chains. Additionally, the EU Corporate Due Diligence Directive – which goes into force from 2027 to 2029 – will require companies to ensure that human rights and environmental impacts have been addressed throughout the development, transport, and distribution of their products.

Supply chain traceability and transparency are critical for compliance with these sustainability rules. Digital solutions such as blockchain technology facilitate comprehensive tracking and verification, helping businesses improve regulatory compliance and build stronger consumer trust.

A report by [PwC](#) found that 84% of companies are implementing some form of blockchain technology to improve transparency and data integrity within their supply chains – features that are increasingly demanded by customers and consumers. Logistics companies that offer these and other solutions for supply chain sustainability gain a competitive advantage as regulations continue to grow.







## CLIMATE RISK AND RESILIENCE

Climate and weather-related volatility along supply chains is also driving increased investment in solutions that build resilience. While overall investor focus on using sustainability data for decision making is decreasing, a [2024 EY Survey](#) highlights that nearly two-thirds (64%) of investors surveyed closely monitor losses or stranded assets tied to extreme weather events, reflecting the direct financial impact these threats can have on portfolios.

With investor attention zeroing in, companies that employ resilience solutions, such as enhanced weather monitoring and reduced fuel demand, build greater trust in their ability to perform in an increasingly volatile climate.

## DIRECT SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS

Responding to these push-and-pull market forces, supply chain companies are developing innovative sustainability solutions beyond electrification and renewable electricity use. For example, circular logistics practices – such as turning used cooking oil into biofuel for trucking routes that supply fast food restaurants and using the same trucks/containers to pick up spent equipment at datacenters after delivering new processors – can simultaneously reduce waste and fuel costs, offering significant reductions in carbon footprints.

Companies integrating sophisticated predictive analytics and AI into logistics operations can greatly enhance efficiency and sustainability outcomes. For example, predictive analytics and micro-fulfillment strategies provide solutions that optimize client distribution footprints and reduce time, energy use and emissions. [Code Brew \(2025\)](#) cited a DHL AI logistics solution that resulted in a 15% reduction in vehicle miles reduction and 10% reduction in GHG emissions.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION

Not all sustainability challenges can be addressed directly. Collective procurement models like book-and-claim systems enable companies to invest in sustainable solutions even when direct solutions are inaccessible. Collaborative initiatives, particularly in challenging sectors like aviation and maritime shipping, significantly reduce risks and accelerate market adoption of innovative sustainability solutions.

International organizations like the Smart Freight Centre (SFC) - which is dedicated to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from freight transportation – play a pivotal role in fostering collaboration to decarbonize complex supply chains.



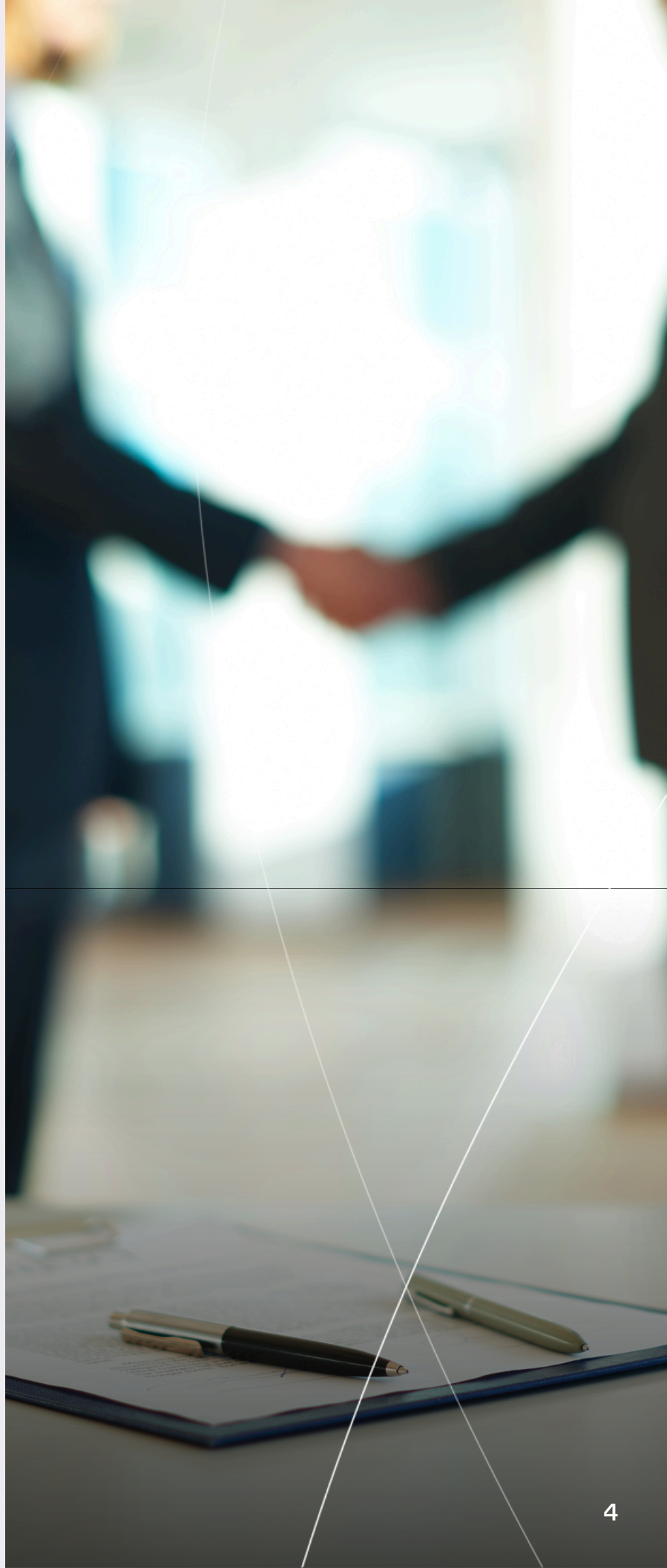
SFC mobilizes the global logistics ecosystem by providing standardized tools, facilitating resource sharing, and promoting best practices to achieve a zero-emission logistics sector by 2050 or earlier. Through initiatives like the Sustainable Freight Buyers Alliance (SFBA) - of which DP World is a member - SFC brings together freight buyers committed to collaborative procurement models, sustainable practices, and the goal of zero-emissions freight transport.

## NAVIGATING POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Companies today confront complex regulatory landscapes where policies fluctuate rapidly and unpredictably. To maintain long-term competitiveness, companies must anchor themselves firmly in viable sustainability strategies and use tangible policy changes to drive transformation. For example, initiatives to build local sourcing models in the U.S. illustrate how businesses adapt to protectionist pressures while promoting sustainability through innovative local infrastructure projects.

Recent insights from leading industry discussions underscore the necessity of businesses proactively setting their own sustainability agendas rather than relying on fluctuating political environments. DP World and Trellis explore these themes in their webinar: [Navigating Turbulent Waters: Sustainable Supply Chains in a New Political Era](#).

Establishing long-term partnerships, embedding sustainability in procurement contracts, and fostering resilient community relationships are identified as vital strategies for maintaining momentum toward sustainability goals in uncertain political landscapes.





# CONCLUSION

Amid geopolitical upheaval, sustainability serves as an anchor and guide for forward-looking companies to mitigate risks and unlock competitive advantages.

## MOVING FORWARD, IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR BUSINESSES TO:

- Firmly embed sustainability into their core strategic frameworks.
- Engage proactively and collaboratively across the value chain to share risks and enhance solutions.
- Leverage advanced technologies, especially AI and data analytics, to drive sustainability forward.
- Maintain a dynamic but strategic response to regulatory changes, ensuring that their sustainability ambitions remain resilient against political fluctuations.

As global trade continues to evolve, businesses committed to sustainability will be better positioned to navigate uncertain waters, sustaining both profitability and responsibility.

Explore how [DP World is shaping a more sustainable global economy.](#)



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- **WEBINAR –**  
[Navigating Turbulent Waters: Sustainable Supply Chains in a New Political Era](#) (April 17, 2025)
- **REPORT –**  
[Sustainability Drives Financial Benefit Across Supply Chains](#) (2024)