Fluctuations and Strategies in the Bitumen Market During the First Two Weeks of May 2026

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POLITICAL ANALYSIS

The developments observed during the first week of May 2026 reveal that the global bitumen industry is entering a fundamentally different geopolitical era. The market is no longer operating solely under the traditional logic of petroleum economics, where refinery output and crude oil pricing dictate commercial behavior. Instead, bitumen is increasingly influenced by geopolitical alignments, transport security, infrastructure diplomacy, and strategic corridor competition.

- A clear structural transition is taking place:

> the bitumen market is evolving from a refinery-centered system into a logistics-centered geopolitical network. <

Section One: The Strategic Rise of Eurasian Transport Corridors

One of the most important geopolitical trends visible during this period was the strengthening of Eurasian connectivity projects, particularly those linking Asia, the Middle East, and emerging African markets.

The expansion of the Iran–China rail corridor is highly significant because it reflects a broader strategic movement toward continental trade systems. The initiative demonstrates how countries facing maritime uncertainty and geopolitical pressure are increasingly investing in overland logistics resilience.

Historically, global bitumen trade depended heavily on:

- Persian Gulf shipping lanes,
- tanker transportation,
- and intermediary maritime hubs.

However, the geopolitical environment after 2022 permanently changed how governments and traders evaluate transport security.

Today, supply continuity is no longer measured only by production capability. It is measured by:

- route diversification,
- corridor redundancy,

- sanction resilience,
- and political accessibility.

Section Two: The Strait of Hormuz and the Politics of Perceived Risk

The continued movement of bitumen cargoes through the Strait of Hormuz despite regional tensions highlights an important geopolitical paradox:

> the market remains operational, but confidence is increasingly fragile.

Hormuz remains one of the world's most sensitive energy chokepoints. Even without direct disruption, the possibility of escalation creates systemic pressure across the supply chain.

In modern commodity markets, perception itself has become an economic force.

Every signal of instability in Hormuz immediately affects:

- freight insurance premiums,
- tanker availability,
- delivery timelines,
- and buyer procurement strategies.

This means geopolitical uncertainty now influences the bitumen market long before any actual physical disruption occurs.

The result is the emergence of what can be described as:

"Preventive Market Behavior"

Buyers, traders, and logistics operators increasingly adapt in advance of crises rather than reacting afterward. This behavior includes:

- diversifying supply origins,
- increasing storage capacity,
- securing long-term freight contracts,
- and prioritizing politically stable transport routes.

Consequently, geopolitical volatility is no longer an external risk to the market;

it is becoming embedded directly into pricing structures and strategic planning.

Section Three: The UAE–Iran Trade Adjustment and Gulf Power Rebalancing

Another important development during this period was the evolving commercial relationship between the UAE and Iran. For years, the UAE played a central role as:

- a re-export gateway,
- a financial intermediary,
- and a logistics redistribution center for regional energy-related trade.

Any reduction or restructuring in this relationship signals a deeper shift within Gulf commercial dynamics. This matters because the Gulf's logistics ecosystem operates as an interconnected network. A strategic adjustment by one regional hub can reshape:

- cargo routing patterns,
- storage distribution,
- transshipment flows,
- and regional pricing mechanisms.

The long-term implication is that Gulf competition is gradually shifting from:

"Port efficiency competition" toward ***"Geopolitical alignment competition."***

Section Four: Bitumen as a Strategic Infrastructure Instrument

A deeper transformation visible in recent developments is the changing geopolitical identity of bitumen itself. Traditionally, bitumen was viewed merely as a downstream petroleum product with limited strategic significance compared to crude oil or natural gas.

That perception is changing rapidly.

Governments increasingly recognize infrastructure as a core component of national power. Roads, logistics corridors, ports, industrial zones, and regional transport integration are now central to:

- economic resilience,
- military mobility,
- supply chain security,
- and geopolitical influence.

Because bitumen is essential to physical infrastructure development, its strategic value rises alongside global infrastructure competition. This is particularly important in:

- Africa,
- Central Asia,
- South Asia,
- and emerging Eurasian corridors, where infrastructure investment is accelerating simultaneously with geopolitical competition.

> bitumen demand is becoming increasingly tied to geopolitical infrastructure strategy rather than purely cyclical oil-market behavior.

Section Five: Satellite Monitoring and the End of Invisible Trade

One of the most intellectually significant developments during this period was the growing emphasis on satellite-based trade monitoring.

This reflects a major geopolitical transformation in commodity transparency.

Historically, parts of the global bitumen trade operated through:

- opaque statistics,
- intermediary routing,
- indirect cargo ownership structures,
- and politically sensitive shipping practices.

Satellite analytics are changing this environment dramatically. Modern monitoring systems now allow analysts to observe:

- vessel movements,
- port congestion,
- storage activity,
- and cargo behavior in near real time.

This reduces the ability of governments, traders, or intermediaries to fully obscure actual market activity.

The geopolitical implications are enormous.

Control over information is becoming almost as important as control over production.

Countries and companies with superior access to logistics intelligence may gain major competitive advantages in:

- pricing decisions,
- sanction navigation,
- market forecasting,
- and strategic trade positioning.

The bitumen industry is therefore gradually entering the broader era of:

"Data geopolitics."

Economic Analysis

The first week of May 2026 revealed a major economic shift within the global bitumen industry. Market developments increasingly suggest that bitumen is no longer behaving solely as a traditional oil-linked commodity. Instead, the sector is gradually transitioning into a hybrid economic market shaped simultaneously by:

- infrastructure investment,
- logistics strategy,
- regional industrial growth,
- and long-term development planning.

Section One: The Return of Infrastructure as a Global Growth Engine

One of the clearest economic patterns visible during this period was the resurgence of large-scale infrastructure activity across multiple regions, particularly in:

Africa, Asia, The Middle East and developing Eurasian economies.

After several years of post-pandemic instability, supply-chain disruptions, inflationary pressure, and investment hesitation, many governments are once again prioritizing:

- road construction,
- logistics modernization,
- port expansion,
- industrial corridors,
- and urban development programs.

This matters enormously for the bitumen market because infrastructure spending creates one of the most stable forms of long-term demand. Unlike speculative commodity cycles, infrastructure projects are typically tied to:

- government budgets,
- sovereign financing,
- development banks,
- and multi-year planning frameworks.

As a result, bitumen consumption becomes less vulnerable to short-term volatility. The growing focus on infrastructure also reflects a wider geopolitical-economic reality:

> nations increasingly view logistics capacity as a foundation of economic competitiveness.

Modern economies depend heavily on transport efficiency. Countries unable to modernize their infrastructure risk losing regional trade influence, manufacturing attractiveness, and investment inflows.

Section Two: The Gradual Decoupling of Bitumen from Crude Oil

Perhaps the most economically important theme emerging during this period was the growing evidence that bitumen prices and demand behavior are beginning to partially separate from traditional crude oil dependency.

Historically, bitumen moved almost entirely under the shadow of crude oil:

- when oil rose sharply, bitumen followed,
- when oil collapsed, bitumen weakened,
- and refinery economics dictated market direction.

However, recent developments suggest a more complex structure is emerging. Several factors are contributing to this partial decoupling:

Even during periods of energy market volatility, infrastructure projects continue consuming asphalt materials because road construction and maintenance cannot simply stop every time oil prices fluctuate.

Transport costs, sanctions, freight disruption, and regional logistics constraints increasingly affect final bitumen pricing independently of crude oil itself.

The market is becoming more regionally segmented, meaning local demand conditions sometimes outweigh global oil benchmarks.

Higher-performance grades, modified bitumen products, and infrastructure-specific formulations create pricing structures less directly tied to raw refinery economics.

Section Three: Africa's Infrastructure Boom and the Creation of New Demand Centers

One of the most economically significant regional developments is the accelerating infrastructure expansion across Africa.

Large-scale investment in:

- highways,
- ports,
- urban transportation,
- industrial zones,

- and cross-border logistics corridors

is gradually transforming Africa into one of the future growth engines of global bitumen demand. This is particularly important because many mature markets already face slower infrastructure growth due to:

- aging demographics,
- saturated transport systems,
- and fiscal constraints.

Africa, by contrast, remains in a high-growth infrastructure phase.

Section Four: Logistics Costs Are Becoming a Core Pricing Factor

Another major economic trend is the growing importance of logistics costs within final market pricing. Traditionally, the bitumen industry focused heavily on:

- refinery pricing,
- crude oil benchmarks,
- and production economics.

Today, transport economics increasingly shape competitiveness.

Freight volatility, vessel availability, port congestion, insurance costs, and geopolitical routing risks now influence pricing almost continuously. In some regions, logistics costs can fluctuate faster than refinery production costs themselves.

Section Five: The Persistence of Grade 60/70 Dominance

Despite ongoing innovation and product diversification, standard penetration grade 60/70 continues to dominate global trade.

Economically, this is extremely important.

The persistence of 60/70 demonstrates that much of the global market still prioritizes:

- affordability,
- adaptability,
- supply availability,
- and operational familiarity.

Emerging economies particularly favor materials with:

- established engineering standards,
- broad refinery production capability,
- and predictable performance.

Even as advanced products gain attention, conventional grades continue serving as the economic backbone of international trade. However, over the long term, this balance may gradually shift as:

- climate conditions intensify,
- infrastructure quality standards rise,
- and governments seek longer-lasting road systems with lower maintenance costs.

Section Six: Infrastructure Economics Is Reshaping Refinery Strategy

Another deeper economic transformation is occurring at the refinery level itself.

Refineries are increasingly forced to adapt to changing downstream demand structures.

As electric vehicles gradually reduce long-term fuel growth expectations, some refiners may increasingly focus on:

- petrochemicals,
- industrial materials,
- and infrastructure-related products such as bitumen.

This could elevate the strategic importance of bitumen within refinery economics over the next decade. The industry may therefore move from viewing bitumen as merely a low-value byproduct toward recognizing it as a stable infrastructure-linked revenue stream.

Scientific Analysis

Recent scientific developments in the bitumen and asphalt sector suggest that the industry is moving beyond its traditional identity as a material supply market. Bitumen is increasingly becoming a field of advanced materials engineering, performance optimization, and infrastructure intelligence. The central scientific question is no longer simply how to produce more bitumen, but how to make asphalt systems last longer, perform better under stress, reduce maintenance costs, and adapt to harsher environmental conditions. This marks a shift from volume-based infrastructure development toward performance-based infrastructure science.

Section One: From Conventional Bitumen to Performance-Based Materials

For decades, bitumen was evaluated mainly through conventional indicators such as:

- penetration grade,
- softening point,
- viscosity,
- ductility,
- and temperature sensitivity.

These parameters remain important, but they are no longer sufficient on their own. Modern road infrastructure faces more complex stress conditions, including:

- heavier axle loads,
- wider temperature fluctuations,
- extreme heat waves,
- freeze–thaw cycles,
- oxidation,
- moisture damage,
- and long-term fatigue cracking.

As a result, the scientific focus of the industry is shifting toward performance-based evaluation.

Rather than focusing only on initial specifications, the industry is now paying more attention to:

- aging resistance,
- rutting resistance,
- fatigue life,
- thermal cracking behavior,
- moisture susceptibility,
- and long-term durability.

This shift is highly important because infrastructure owners are no longer satisfied with roads that merely meet basic construction standards at the time of delivery. They increasingly demand materials that can maintain performance for longer periods with lower maintenance requirements.

Section Two: Durability as the New Scientific Priority

One of the strongest scientific themes in recent developments is durability management.

Durability has become the central technical challenge of modern asphalt engineering because road failures are extremely costly. Premature cracking, rutting, stripping, and deformation force governments and contractors to spend heavily on maintenance and reconstruction.

This has made durability not only an engineering concern, but an economic and environmental priority.

- Improving bitumen durability can help:
- extend pavement service life,
- reduce repair frequency,
- lower lifecycle costs,
- decrease material consumption,
- and reduce emissions associated with reconstruction.

This is why new durability-enhancing tools and additives are gaining attention. Technologies such as ZDC-type durability modifiers reflect a broader movement toward chemical and structural optimization of bitumen binders. The scientific goal is to improve how bitumen resists degradation under combined stress conditions. These stresses may include:

- heat,
- oxygen exposure,
- ultraviolet radiation,
- mechanical loading,
- water infiltration,
- and chemical aging.

The future of bitumen science will increasingly depend on how effectively researchers can design binders that remain stable under these overlapping stress mechanisms.

Section Three: Additives and Modifiers Are Redefining Binder Engineering

The growing role of additives is one of the most important scientific changes in the industry.

Traditional bitumen is no longer treated as a fixed material. Instead, it is increasingly viewed as a base matrix that can be engineered and modified for specific performance needs.

Each category addresses a different technical problem. For example:

Polymers improve elasticity, rutting resistance, and temperature stability.

Rubber modification can improve flexibility and recycling value while supporting waste tire reuse.

Fibers help reinforce asphalt mixtures and reduce drain-down in stone mastic asphalt.

Rejuvenators restore aged binder properties, especially in recycled asphalt pavement.

Nanomaterials may improve stiffness, aging resistance, and moisture resistance at very small dosage levels.

Section Four: Climate Stress Is Accelerating Asphalt Innovation

Climate change is one of the strongest drivers of scientific innovation in asphalt technology.

Rising temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events are putting traditional pavement systems under increasing pressure.

In hot regions, asphalt faces:

- softening,
- rutting,
- bleeding,
- and deformation under traffic loads.

In colder regions, it faces:

- thermal cracking,
- brittleness,
- freeze–thaw damage,
- and water-related deterioration.

In humid or coastal environments, moisture damage becomes a major concern. This means future asphalt design must be climate-adaptive. Scientific research is therefore moving toward:

- high-temperature resistant binders,
- low-temperature flexible binders,
- moisture-resistant mixtures,
- UV-resistant additives,
- and multi-climate performance grading.

Section Five: Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Modeling Are Entering Asphalt Science

Another major scientific transformation is the growing use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and predictive modeling in asphalt research. Traditionally, asphalt mix design depended heavily on laboratory testing, field experience, and empirical formulas. While these methods remain important, AI can now help researchers analyze large datasets and predict material behavior more efficiently. AI models can be used to estimate:

- bitumen density,

- viscosity,
- aging behavior,
- rutting potential,
- fatigue life,
- crack propagation,
- optimal additive dosage,
- and pavement service life.

This is especially valuable because asphalt behavior is highly complex. It depends on many interacting variables, such as:

- binder chemistry,
- aggregate properties,
- temperature,
- traffic loading,
- air void content,
- moisture,
- compaction level,
- and aging duration.

Section Six: Recycling and Sustainability Are Becoming Scientific Necessities

Sustainability is no longer a secondary topic in bitumen science. It is becoming a core research direction. The industry faces increasing pressure to reduce:

- carbon emissions,
- virgin material consumption,
- waste generation,
- and construction energy use.

This has intensified interest in:

- reclaimed asphalt pavement,
- warm mix asphalt,
- bio-binders,
- waste plastic modification,
- rubberized asphalt,
- and low-emission production technologies.

Reclaimed asphalt pavement is especially important because it allows old road materials to be reused in new mixtures.

However, recycling creates technical challenges.

Aged binder becomes harder and more brittle over time. If not properly treated, high recycled content can increase cracking risk.

This is why rejuvenators and binder compatibility studies are becoming scientifically important.

The goal is not simply to recycle more material, but to recycle without compromising long-term pavement performance.

The next generation of sustainable asphalt technology must balance:

- environmental benefit,
- mechanical performance,
- durability,
- and cost efficiency.

Port-Wise Price Analysis

Iran

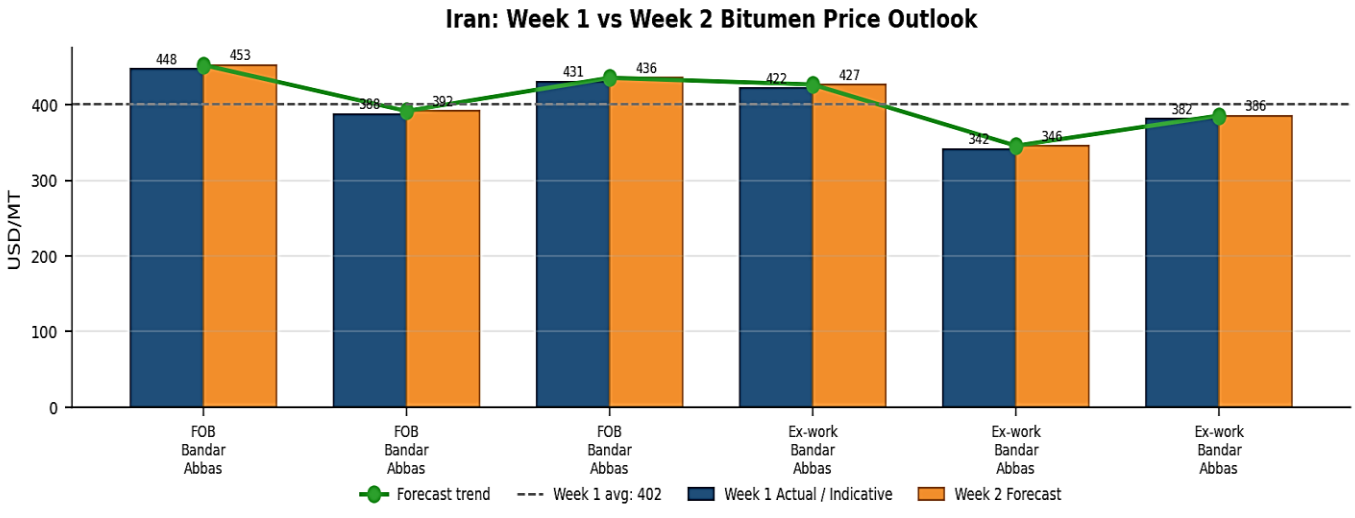
Region: Middle East | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
402 USD/MT	407 USD/MT	342-448	+4.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	FOB Bandar Abbas	448 ± 10	453 ± 10	+5	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	FOB Bandar Abbas	388 ± 10	392 ± 10	+4	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Jumbo Bag	FOB Bandar Abbas	431 ± 10	436 ± 10	+5	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	Ex-work Bandar Abbas	422 ± 10	427 ± 10	+5	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	Ex-work Bandar Abbas	342 ± 10	346 ± 10	+4	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Jumbo Bag	Ex-work Bandar Abbas	382 ± 10	386 ± 10	+4	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The market remains principally supply-led. Week 1 values already reflected limited transparency, logistics pressure and selective procurement; the Week 2 projection therefore assumes a restrained upward movement rather than a demand-driven rally. Export-linked entries show a narrower increase, while import or delivered terms carry a larger risk premium because freight availability, insurance and scheduling uncertainty are likely to remain embedded in final quotations. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is FOB Bandar Abbas at 448 USD/MT, while the lowest is Ex-work Bandar Abbas at 342 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.



Singapore

Region: Southeast Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
450 USD/MT	458 USD/MT	410-490	+7.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CIF Singapore	490 ± 10	499 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	FOB Singapore	410 ± 10	416 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The regional picture points to a transport-sensitive market. Delivered CFR/CIF quotes are expected to edge higher in Week 2 as importers remain exposed to freight delays, vessel scheduling constraints and replacement-cost uncertainty. The increase is deliberately modest because demand is cautious; nevertheless, short-term procurement needs and regional supply irregularities keep prices from softening. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CIF Singapore at 490 USD/MT, while the lowest is FOB Singapore at 410 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

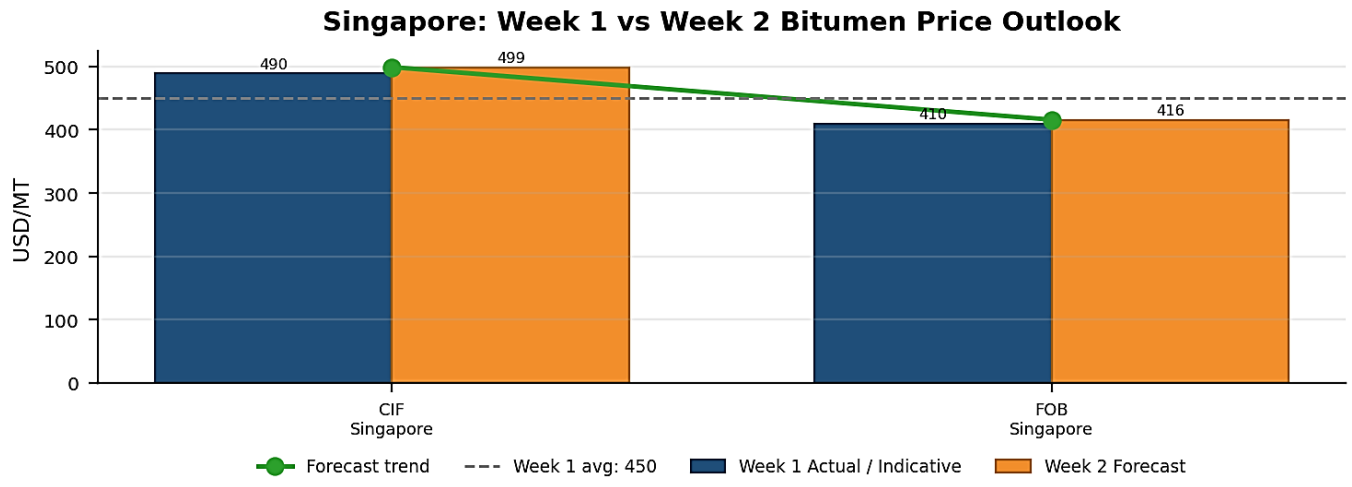


Chart: Singapore Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

China

Region: East Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
460 USD/MT	466 USD/MT	451-471	+6.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Chongqing	471 ± 10	477 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Hong Kong	463 ± 10	469 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Ningbo	451 ± 10	457 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Huangpu	464 ± 10	470 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Yunfu	463 ± 10	469 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Tianjin	460 ± 10	466 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Dalian	458 ± 10	464 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Guangzhou	463 ± 10	469 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Nansha	457 ± 10	463 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Zhuhai	451 ± 10	457 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

Prices are forecast to move only moderately higher because demand discipline is still visible, but localized logistics and port-specific delivery costs continue to shape spreads. Ports with already elevated Week 1 values remain more vulnerable to additional cost pass-through, while lower-priced ports are expected to narrow the gap only slightly rather than reprice aggressively. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Chongqing at 471 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Zhuhai at 451 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

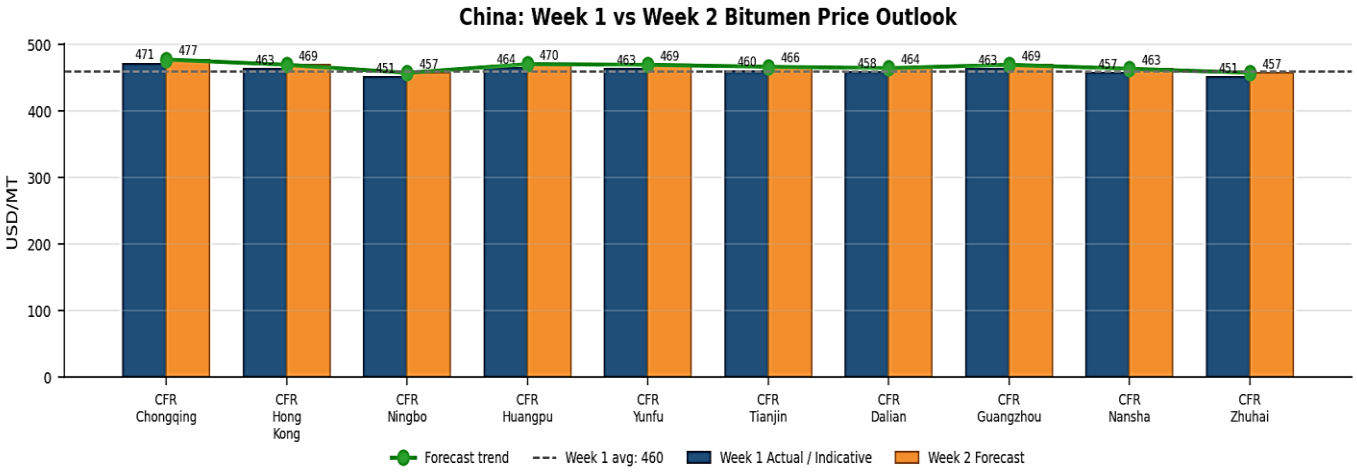


Chart: China Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

UAE

Region: Middle East | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
429 USD/MT	435 USD/MT	405-453	+6.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	FOB Jebel Ali	405 ± 10	410 ± 10	+5	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Jebel Ali	453 ± 10	460 ± 10	+7	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The market remains principally supply-led. Week 1 values already reflected limited transparency, logistics pressure and selective procurement; the Week 2 projection therefore assumes a restrained upward movement rather than a demand-driven rally. Export-linked entries show a narrower increase, while import or delivered terms carry a larger risk premium because freight availability, insurance and scheduling uncertainty are likely to remain embedded in final quotations. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Jebel Ali at 453 USD/MT, while the lowest is FOB Jebel Ali at 405 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

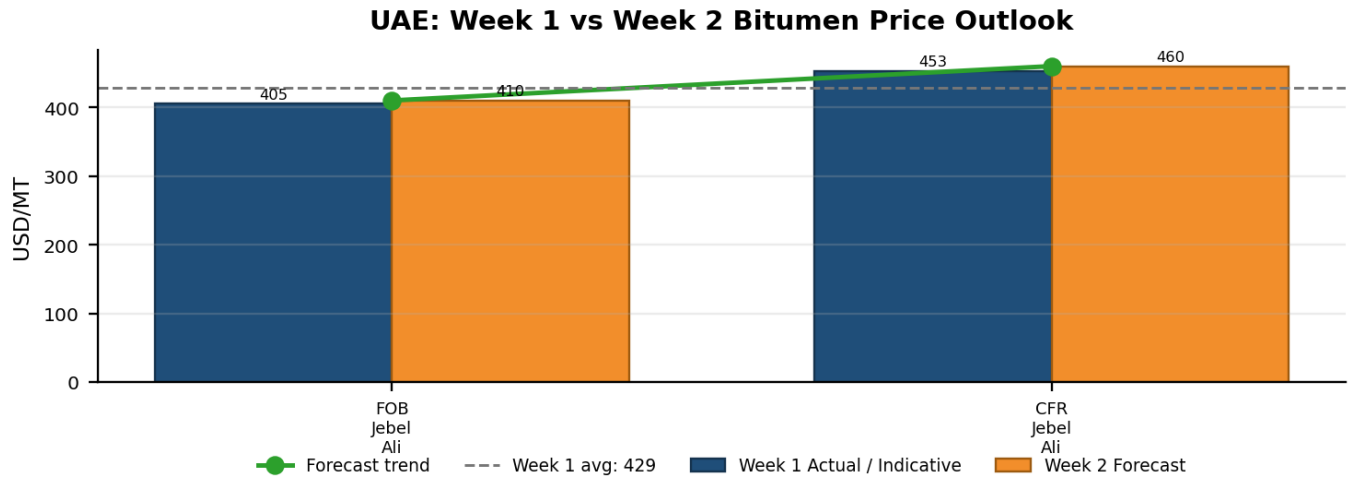


Chart: UAE Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Sri Lanka

Region: South Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
476 USD/MT	486 USD/MT	476-476	+10.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Colombo	476 ± 10	486 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The Week 2 outlook reflects import dependency and uneven procurement visibility. Buyers are likely to remain cautious, yet short-term supply constraints and freight uncertainty support a small increase across delivered quotations. The forecast does not assume a broad demand surge; it mainly prices in the continuation of logistical frictions and replacement-cost pressure. The single quoted location is forecast to rise from 476 to 486 USD/MT, showing a controlled firming pattern rather than a sharp breakout.

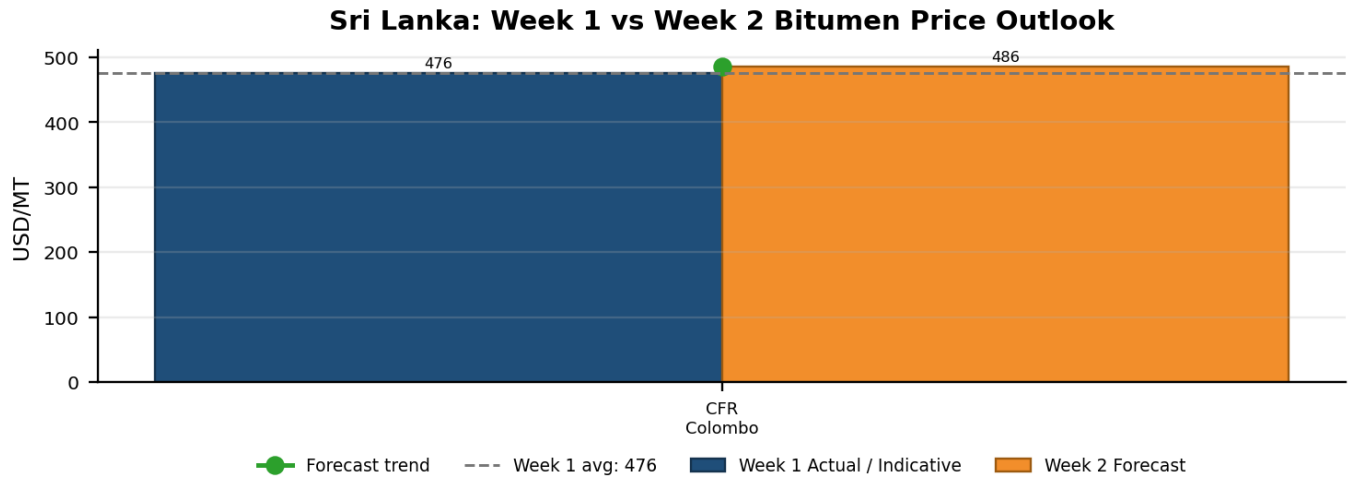


Chart: Sri Lanka Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Iraq

Region: Middle East | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
425 USD/MT	430 USD/MT	400-450	+5.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	FOB Bandar Abbas	450 ± 10	456 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	FOB Bandar Abbas	400 ± 10	405 ± 10	+5	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The market remains principally supply-led. Week 1 values already reflected limited transparency, logistics pressure and selective procurement; the Week 2 projection therefore assumes a restrained upward movement rather than a demand-driven rally. Export-linked entries show a narrower increase, while import or delivered terms carry a larger risk premium because freight availability, insurance and scheduling uncertainty are likely to remain embedded in final quotations. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is FOB Bandar Abbas at 450 USD/MT, while the lowest is FOB Bandar Abbas at 400 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

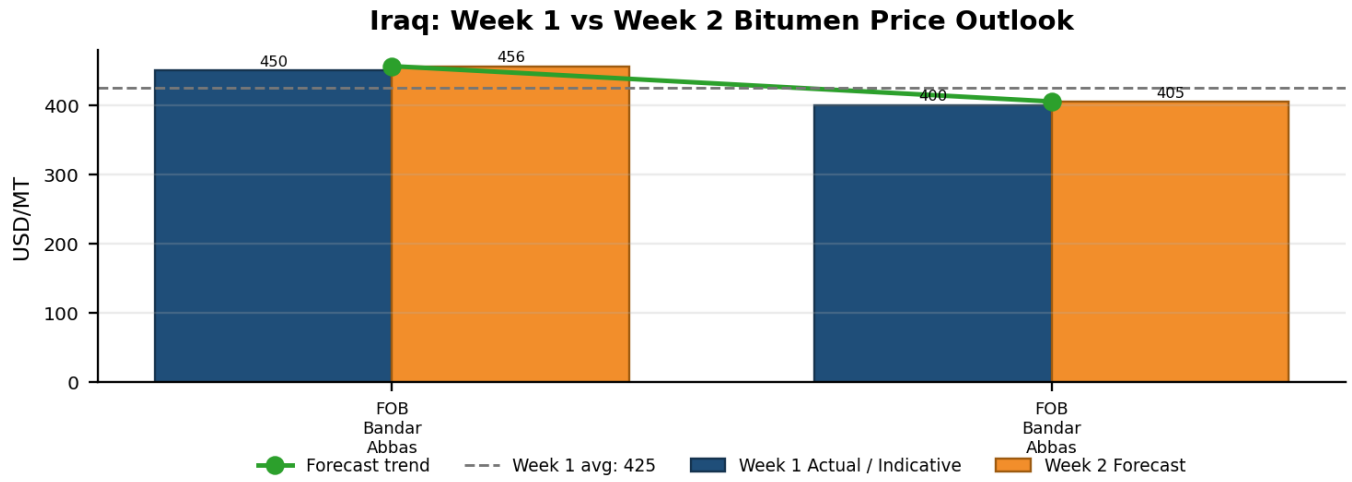


Chart: Iraq Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Turkey

Region: Mediterranean / Eurasia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
493 USD/MT	503 USD/MT	493-493	+10.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Istanbul	493 ± 10	503 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The regional picture points to a transport-sensitive market. Delivered CFR/CIF quotes are expected to edge higher in Week 2 as importers remain exposed to freight delays, vessel scheduling constraints and replacement-cost uncertainty. The increase is deliberately modest because demand is cautious; nevertheless, short-term procurement needs and regional supply irregularities keep prices from softening. The single quoted location is forecast to rise from 493 to 503 USD/MT, showing a controlled firming pattern rather than a sharp breakout.

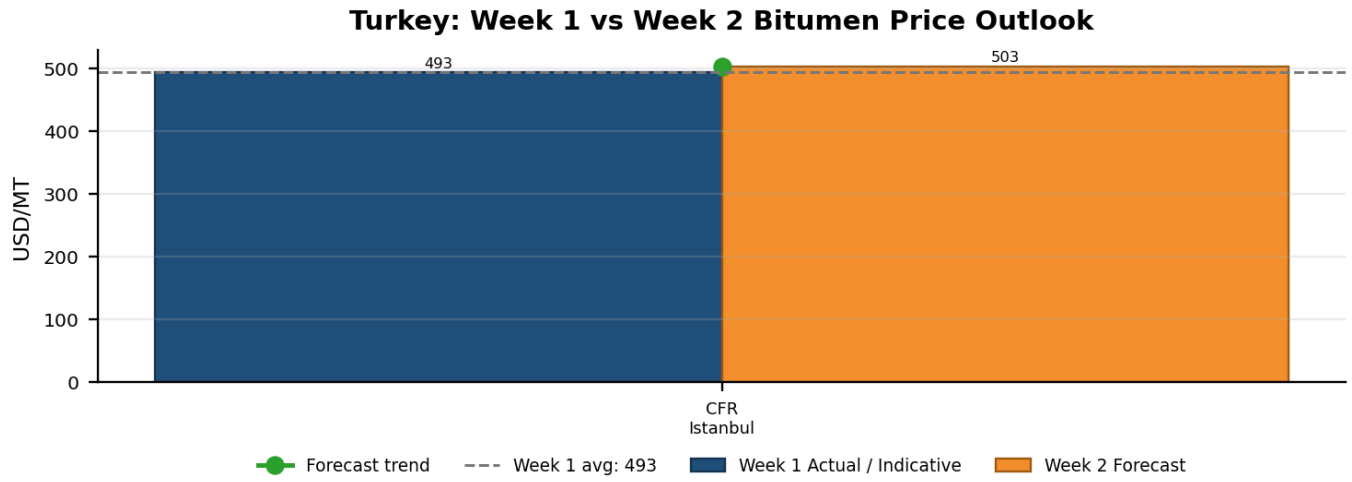


Chart: Turkey Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Australia

Region: Oceania | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
510 USD/MT	521 USD/MT	470-550	+11.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CIF Brisbane	550 ± 10	562 ± 10	+12	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	CIF Brisbane	470 ± 10	480 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

Australia is treated as a high delivered-cost market. The Week 2 projection reflects freight exposure, distance from major supply centers and the need to preserve continuity for infrastructure demand. Bulk remains lower than drum pricing, but both grades are expected to absorb incremental logistics and replacement-cost pressure. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CIF Brisbane at 550 USD/MT, while the lowest is CIF Brisbane at 470 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

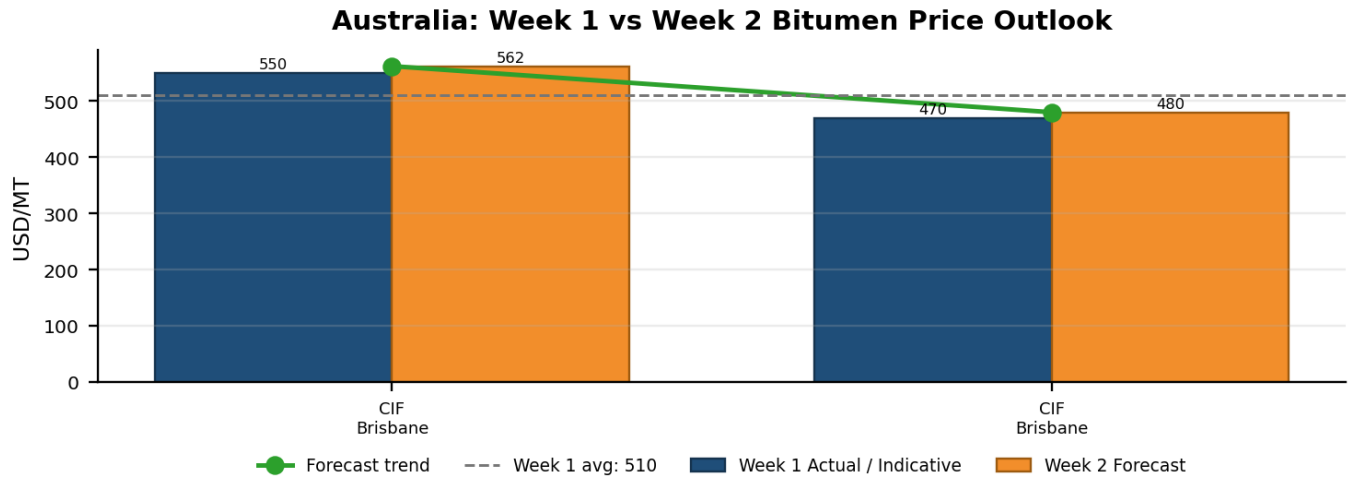


Chart: Australia Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

South Korea

Region: East Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
435 USD/MT	442 USD/MT	415-455	+6.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Busan	415 ± 10	421 ± 10	+6	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CIF Busan	455 ± 10	462 ± 10	+7	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

Prices are forecast to move only moderately higher because demand discipline is still visible, but localized logistics and port-specific delivery costs continue to shape spreads. Ports with already elevated Week 1 values remain more vulnerable to additional cost pass-through, while lower-priced ports are expected to narrow the gap only slightly rather than reprice aggressively. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CIF Busan at 455 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Busan at 415 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

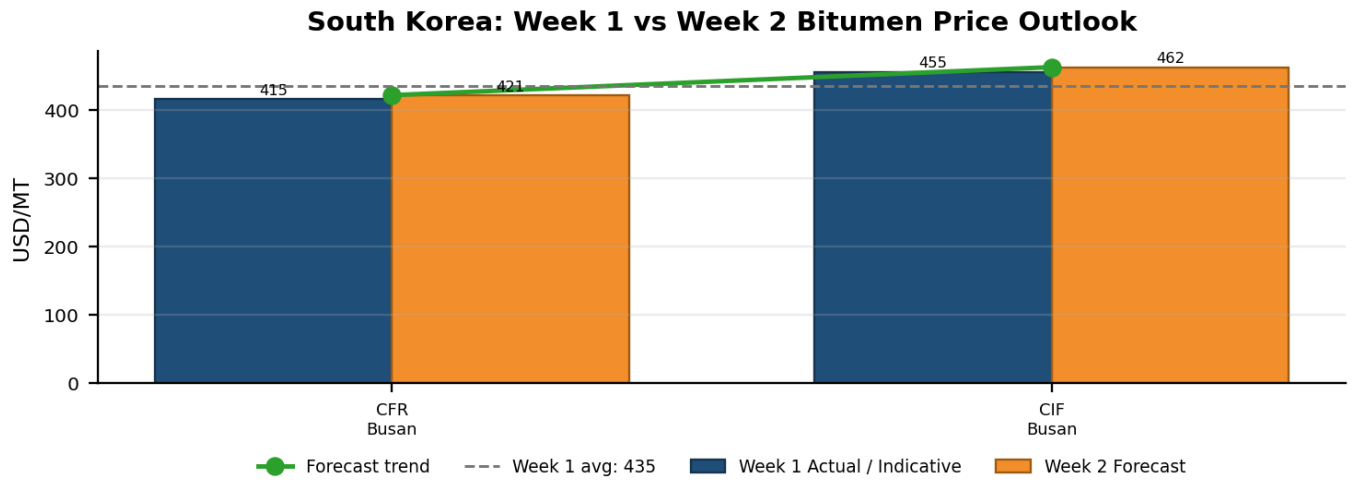


Chart: South Korea Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

India

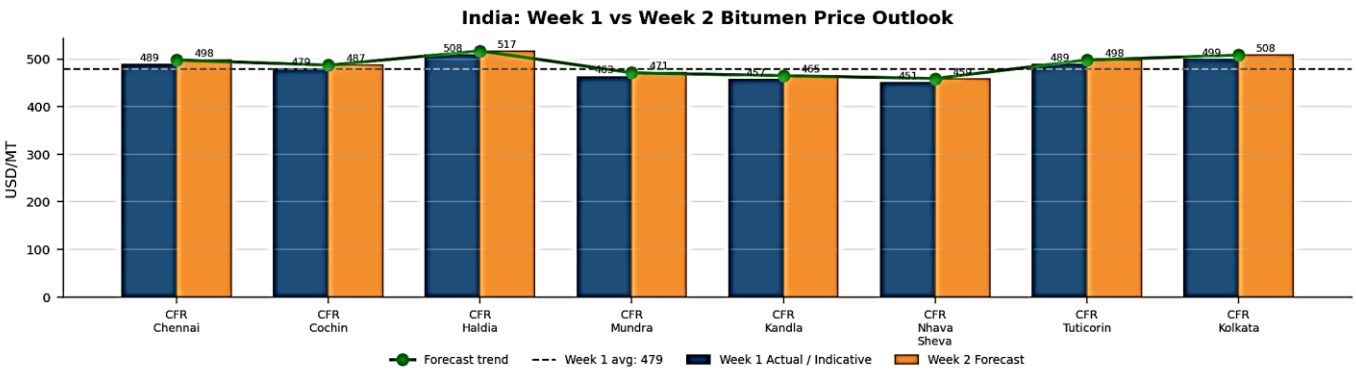
Region: South Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
479 USD/MT	488 USD/MT	451-508	+8.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Chennai	489 ± 10	498 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Cochin	479 ± 10	487 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Haldia	508 ± 10	517 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Mundra	463 ± 10	471 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Kandla	457 ± 10	465 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Nhava Sheva	451 ± 10	459 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Tuticorin	489 ± 10	498 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Kolkata	499 ± 10	508 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The Week 2 outlook reflects import dependency and uneven procurement visibility. Buyers are likely to remain cautious, yet short-term supply constraints and freight uncertainty support a small increase across delivered quotations. The forecast does not assume a broad demand surge; it mainly prices in the continuation of logistical frictions and replacement-cost pressure. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Haldia at 508 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Nhava Sheva at 451 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.



Malaysia

Region: Southeast Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
480 USD/MT	488 USD/MT	454-527	+9.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Penang	476 ± 10	485 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Kota Kinabalu	527 ± 10	537 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Port Klang	454 ± 10	462 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Pasir Gudang	461 ± 10	470 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The regional picture points to a transport-sensitive market. Delivered CFR/CIF quotes are expected to edge higher in Week 2 as importers remain exposed to freight delays, vessel scheduling constraints and replacement-cost uncertainty. The increase is deliberately modest because demand is cautious; nevertheless, short-term procurement needs and regional supply irregularities keep prices from softening. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Kota Kinabalu at 527 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Port Klang at 454 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

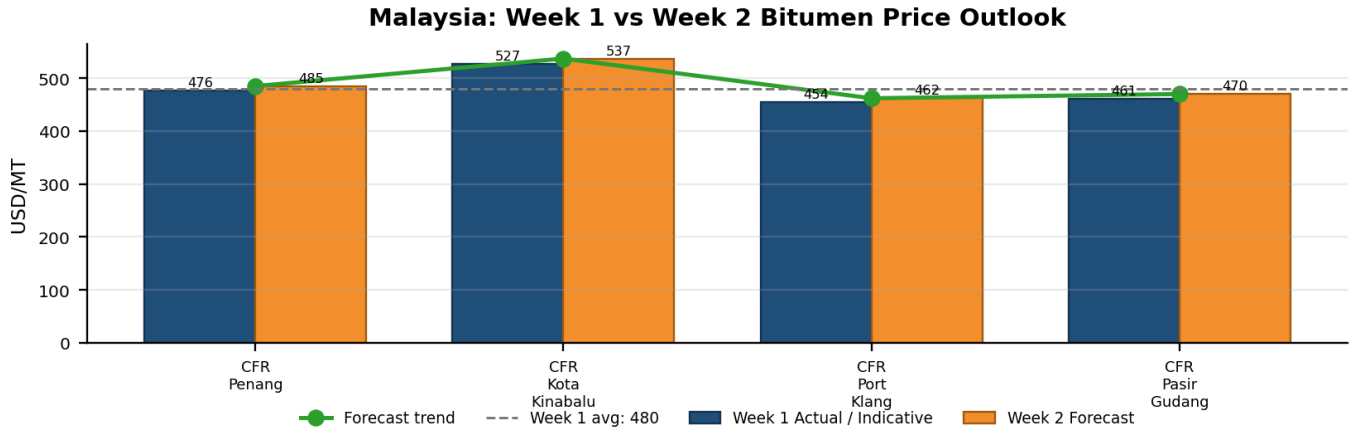


Chart: Malaysia Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Vietnam

Region: Southeast Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
454 USD/MT	462 USD/MT	453-454	+8.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Haiphong	453 ± 10	461 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Ho Chi Minh	454 ± 10	462 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The regional picture points to a transport-sensitive market. Delivered CFR/CIF quotes are expected to edge higher in Week 2 as importers remain exposed to freight delays, vessel scheduling constraints and replacement-cost uncertainty. The increase is deliberately modest because demand is cautious; nevertheless, short-term procurement needs and regional supply irregularities keep prices from softening. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Ho Chi Minh at 454 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Haiphong at 453 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

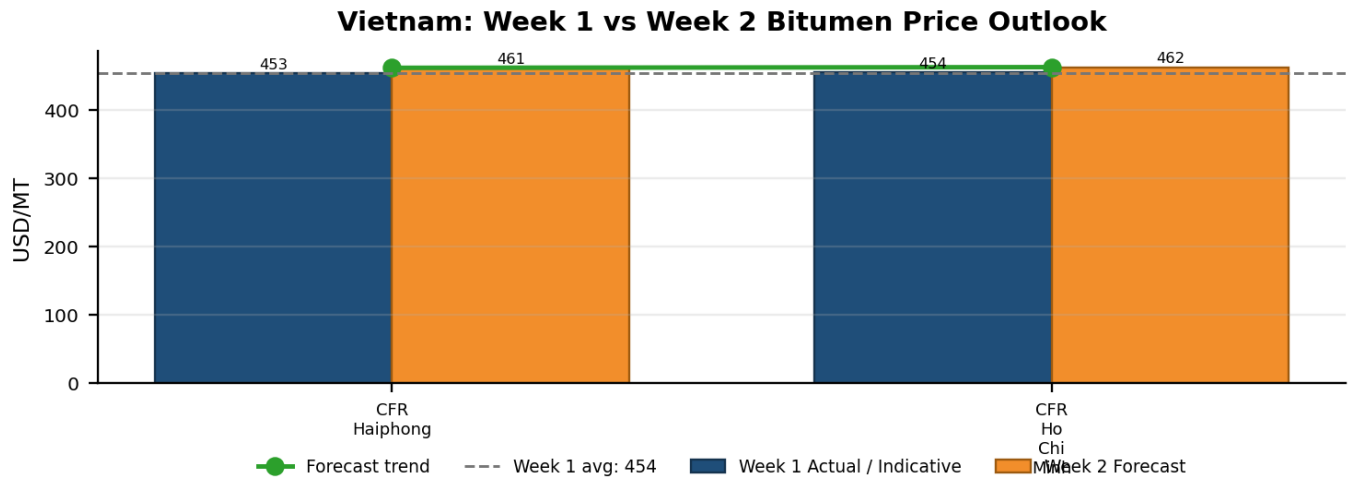


Chart: Vietnam Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Brazil

Region: Latin America | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
612 USD/MT	628 USD/MT	600-625	+15.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CIF Navegantes	625 ± 10	641 ± 10	+16	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CIF Santos	600 ± 10	615 ± 10	+15	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The Week 2 forecast assumes a stronger risk premium than most regions. Long-distance freight exposure, supply-chain opacity and localized refinery or terminal constraints make Latin American values more sensitive to disruption. The projected increase remains moderate, but the premium is wider than in more liquid regional hubs because replacement cargoes are more expensive and slower to secure. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CIF Navegantes at 625 USD/MT, while the lowest is CIF Santos at 600 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

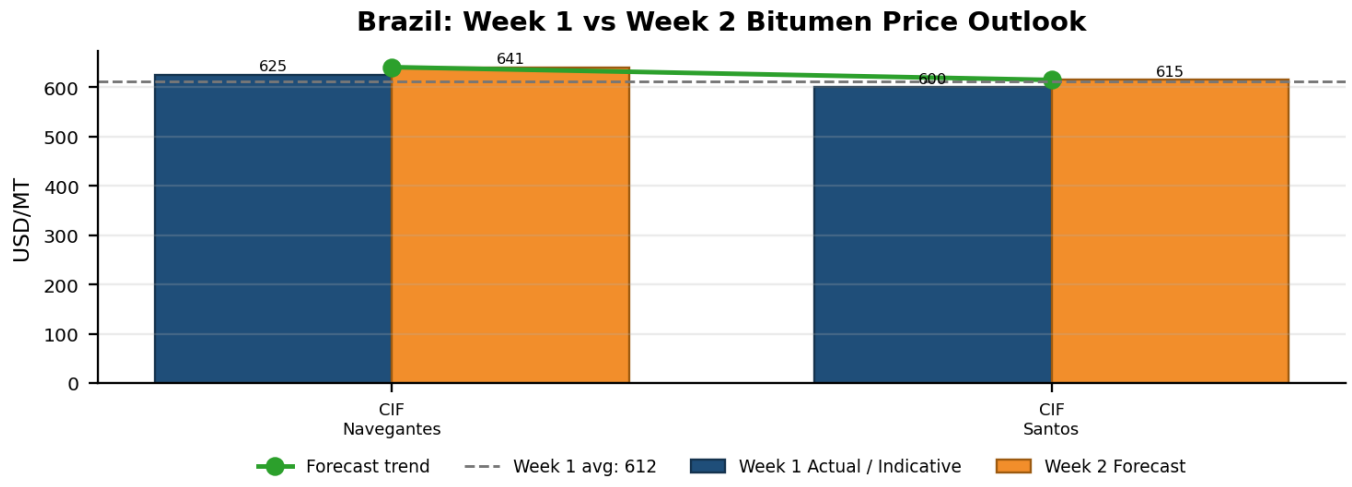


Chart: Brazil Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

South Africa

Region: Africa | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
560 USD/MT	572 USD/MT	560-560	+12.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CIF Durban	560 ± 10	572 ± 10	+12	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The outlook is shaped by import dependency and the cost of securing reliable supply into a relatively freight-sensitive market. The Week 2 forecast assumes continued upward pressure from logistics and distribution constraints. Demand is not treated as overheated; the projected gain mainly reflects the difficulty of maintaining stable delivered benchmarks under uncertain shipping conditions. The single quoted location is forecast to rise from 560 to 572 USD/MT, showing a controlled firming pattern rather than a sharp breakout.

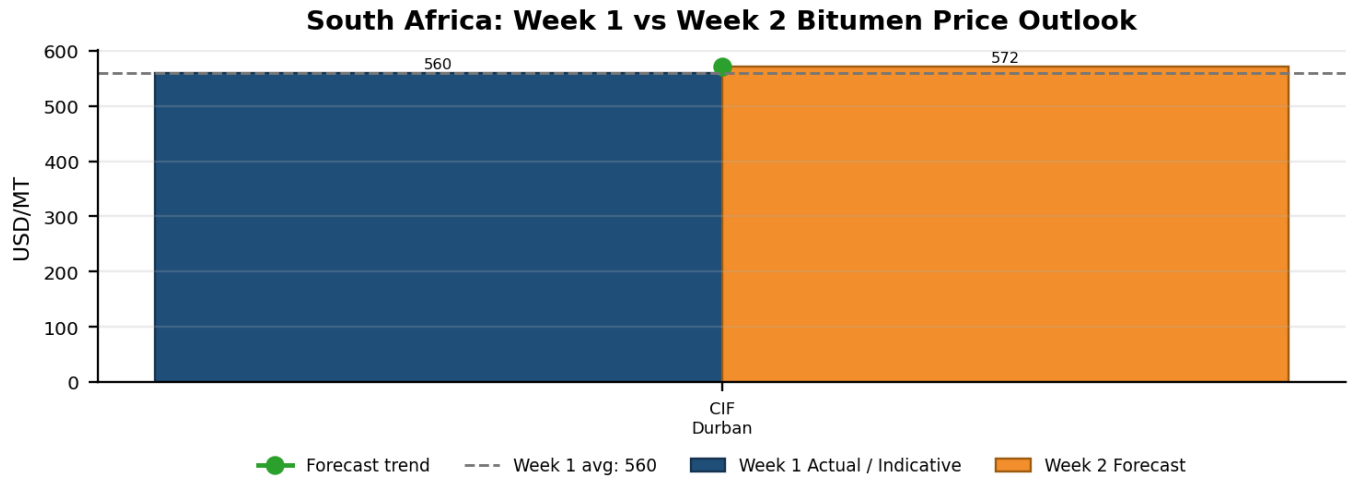


Chart: South Africa Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Indonesia

Region: Southeast Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
474 USD/MT	483 USD/MT	468-483	+9.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Belawan	483 ± 10	492 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Jakarta	470 ± 10	479 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Surabaya	468 ± 10	477 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The regional picture points to a transport-sensitive market. Delivered CFR/CIF quotes are expected to edge higher in Week 2 as importers remain exposed to freight delays, vessel scheduling constraints and replacement-cost uncertainty. The increase is deliberately modest because demand is cautious; nevertheless, short-term procurement needs and regional supply irregularities keep prices from softening. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Belawan at 483 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Surabaya at 468 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

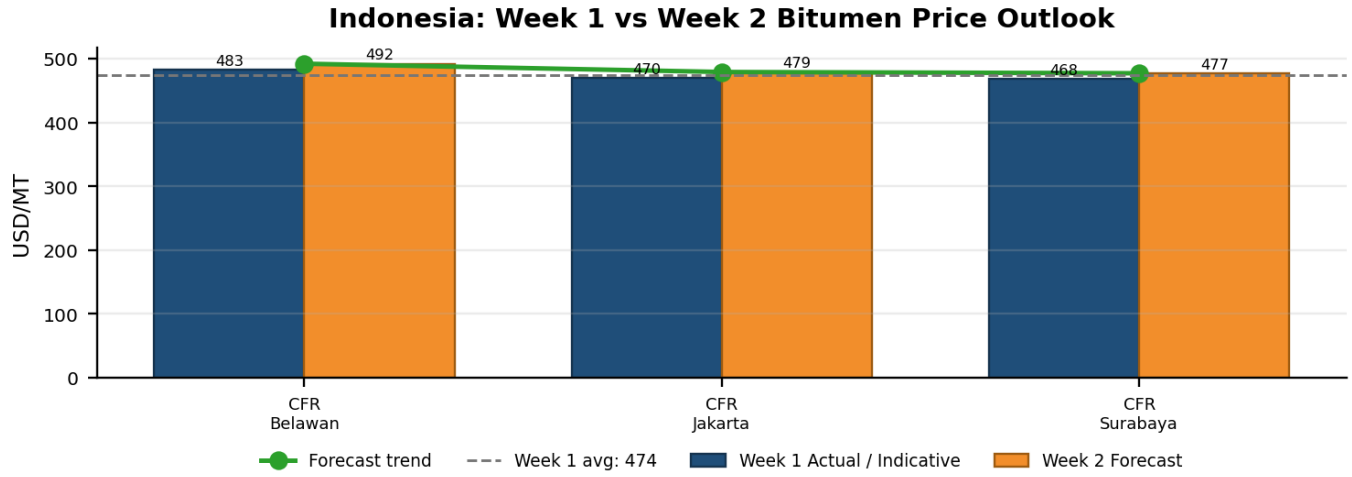


Chart: Indonesia Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Bangladesh

Region: South Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
477 USD/MT	488 USD/MT	477-477	+11.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Chittagong	477 ± 10	488 ± 10	+11	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The Week 2 outlook reflects import dependency and uneven procurement visibility. Buyers are likely to remain cautious, yet short-term supply constraints and freight uncertainty support a small increase across delivered quotations. The forecast does not assume a broad demand surge; it mainly prices in the continuation of logistical frictions and replacement-cost pressure. The single quoted location is forecast to rise from 477 to 488 USD/MT, showing a controlled firming pattern rather than a sharp breakout.

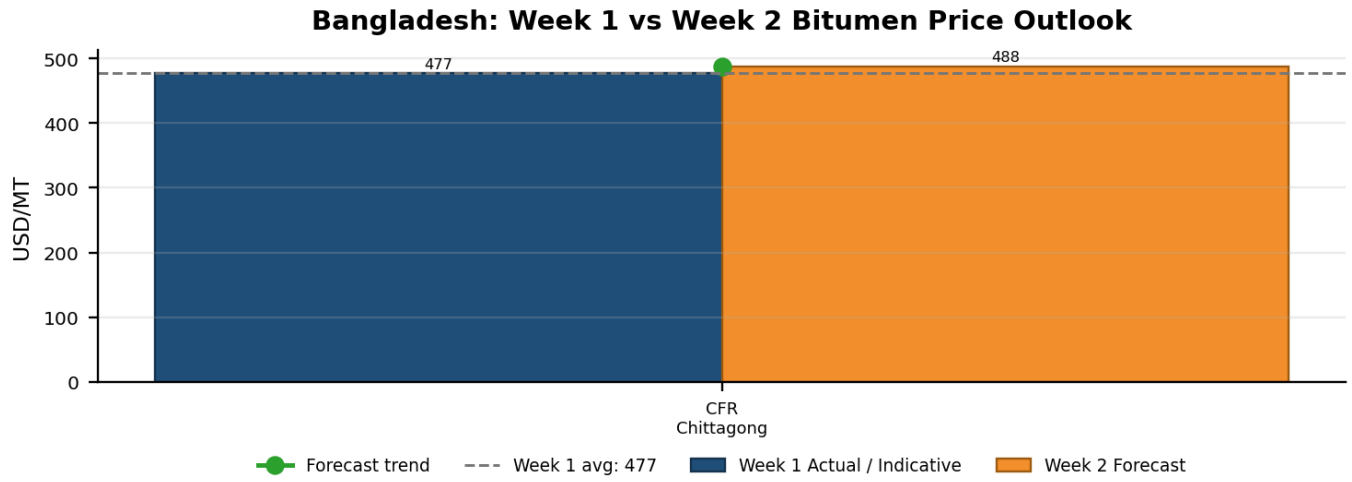


Chart: Bangladesh Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Thailand

Region: Southeast Asia | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
473 USD/MT	482 USD/MT	468-478	+9.0 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Bangkok	478 ± 10	487 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Laem Chabang	468 ± 10	477 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The regional picture points to a transport-sensitive market. Delivered CFR/CIF quotes are expected to edge higher in Week 2 as importers remain exposed to freight delays, vessel scheduling constraints and replacement-cost uncertainty. The increase is deliberately modest because demand is cautious; nevertheless, short-term procurement needs and regional supply irregularities keep prices from softening. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Bangkok at 478 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Laem Chabang at 468 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

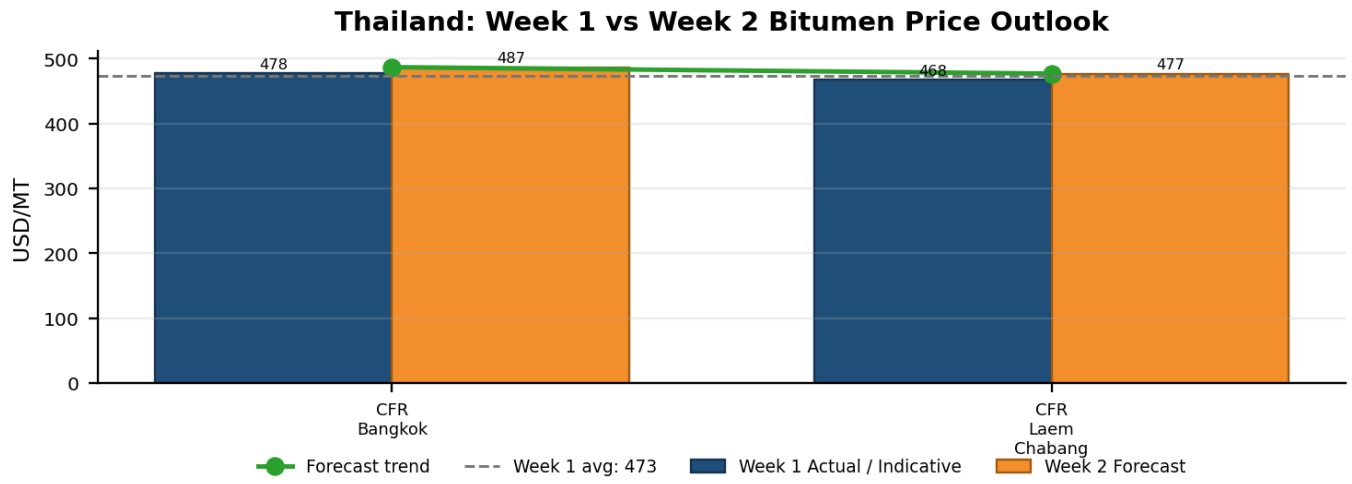


Chart: Thailand Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Venezuela

Region: Latin America | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
470 USD/MT	480 USD/MT	420-520	+10.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	FOB Jose Terminal	500 - 540	512 - 552	+12	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	FOB Jose Terminal	420 - 460	430 - 470	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	FOB Puerto La Cruz	490 - 530	501 - 541	+11	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	FOB Puerto La Cruz	410 - 450	420 - 460	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	FOB Amuay	480 - 520	491 - 531	+11	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	FOB Amuay	400 - 440	409 - 449	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

The Week 2 forecast assumes a stronger risk premium than most regions. Long-distance freight exposure, supply-chain opacity and localized refinery or terminal constraints make Latin American values more sensitive to disruption. The projected increase remains moderate, but the premium is wider than in more liquid regional hubs because replacement cargoes are more expensive and slower to secure. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is FOB Jose Terminal at 520 USD/MT, while the lowest is FOB Amuay at 420 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

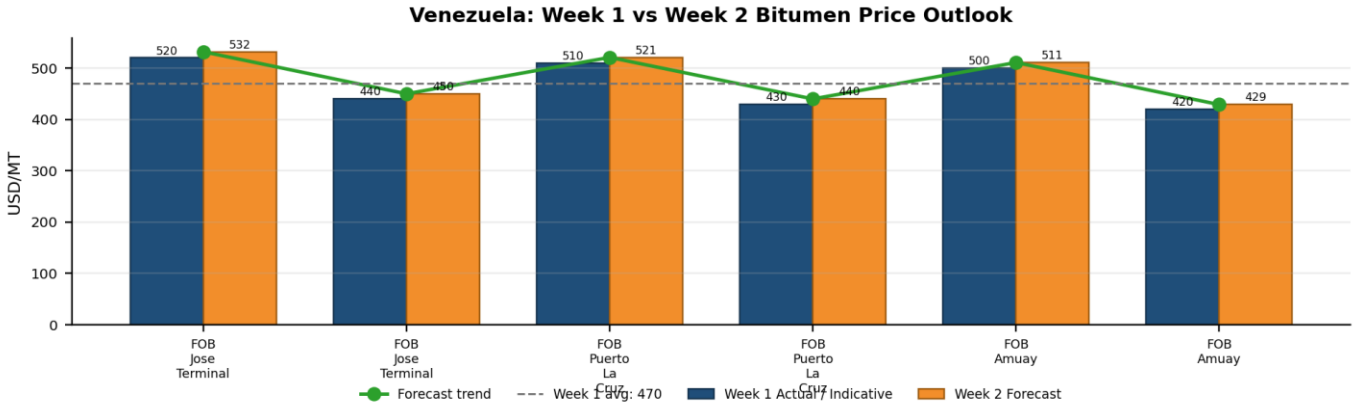


Chart: Venezuela Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Germany

Region: Europe | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
558 USD/MT	566 USD/MT	545-570	+8.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Hamburg	570 ± 10	579 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	CFR Hamburg	545 ± 10	553 ± 10	+8	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

European quotes are projected to firm slightly in Week 2 as Mediterranean and northern routes remain sensitive to freight and energy-market uncertainty. Bulk cargoes are expected to preserve a discount to drums, but the delivered-cost base remains firm. The spread between ports reflects local logistics, handling and inland distribution economics rather than a purely refinery-led pricing pattern. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Hamburg at 570 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Hamburg at 545 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

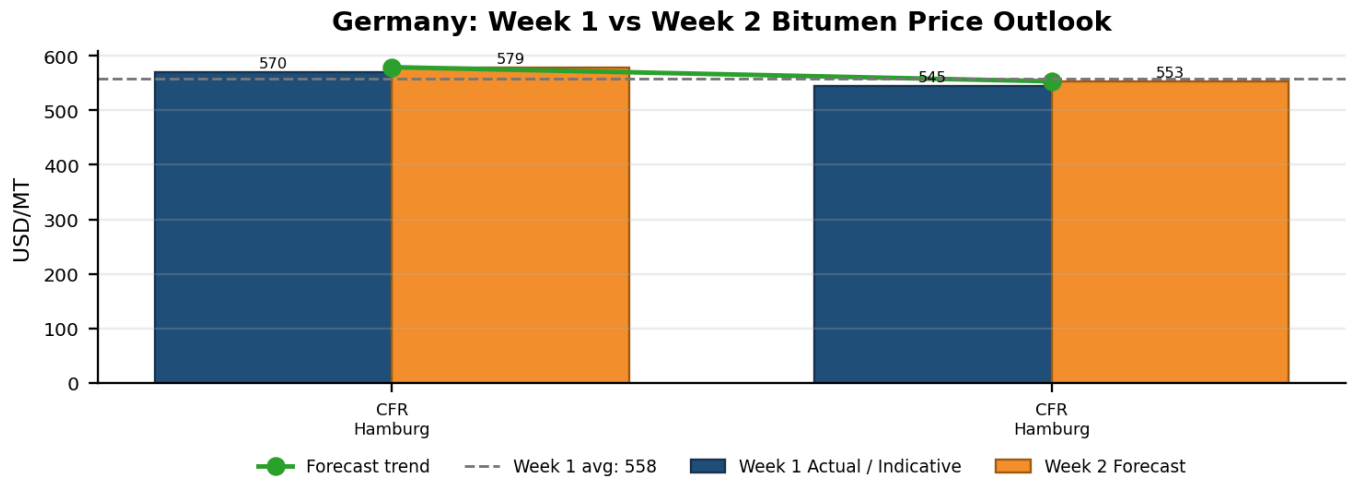


Chart: Germany Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Spain

Region: Europe | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
540 USD/MT	550 USD/MT	530-550	+9.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Barcelona	550 ± 10	560 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	CFR Barcelona	535 ± 10	544 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Valencia	545 ± 10	555 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	CFR Valencia	530 ± 10	539 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

European quotes are projected to firm slightly in Week 2 as Mediterranean and northern routes remain sensitive to freight and energy-market uncertainty. Bulk cargoes are expected to preserve a discount to drums, but the delivered-cost base remains firm. The spread between ports reflects local logistics, handling and inland distribution economics rather than a purely refinery-led pricing pattern. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR Barcelona at 550 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR Valencia at 530 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

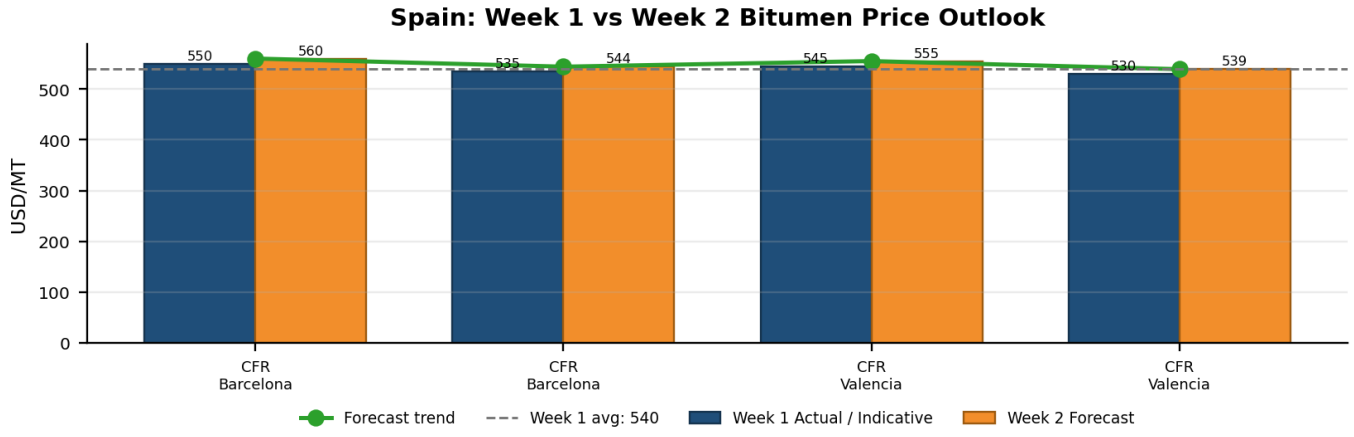


Chart: Spain Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

Italy

Region: Europe | Product focus: Bitumen 60/70 | Basis: port-specific quotations

Week 1 Avg	Week 2 Avg Forecast	Week 1 Range	Avg Change
525 USD/MT	534 USD/MT	500-550	+9.5 USD/MT

Date	Grade	Port / Basis	Week 1 Price	Week 2 Forecast	Change	Outlook
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR Genoa	540 ± 10	550 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	CFR Genoa	510 ± 10	519 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Drum	CFR La Spezia	550 ± 10	560 ± 10	+10	Firm / volatile
Week 1 / Week 2 May 2026	60/70 Bulk	CFR La Spezia	500 ± 10	509 ± 10	+9	Firm / volatile

Market Analysis

European quotes are projected to firm slightly in Week 2 as Mediterranean and northern routes remain sensitive to freight and energy-market uncertainty. Bulk cargoes are expected to preserve a discount to drums, but the delivered-cost base remains firm. The spread between ports reflects local logistics, handling and inland distribution economics rather than a purely refinery-led pricing pattern. Within the country table, the highest Week 1 reference is CFR La Spezia at 550 USD/MT, while the lowest is CFR La Spezia at 500 USD/MT. This spread signals how packaging, port economics and delivery terms are shaping local price formation.

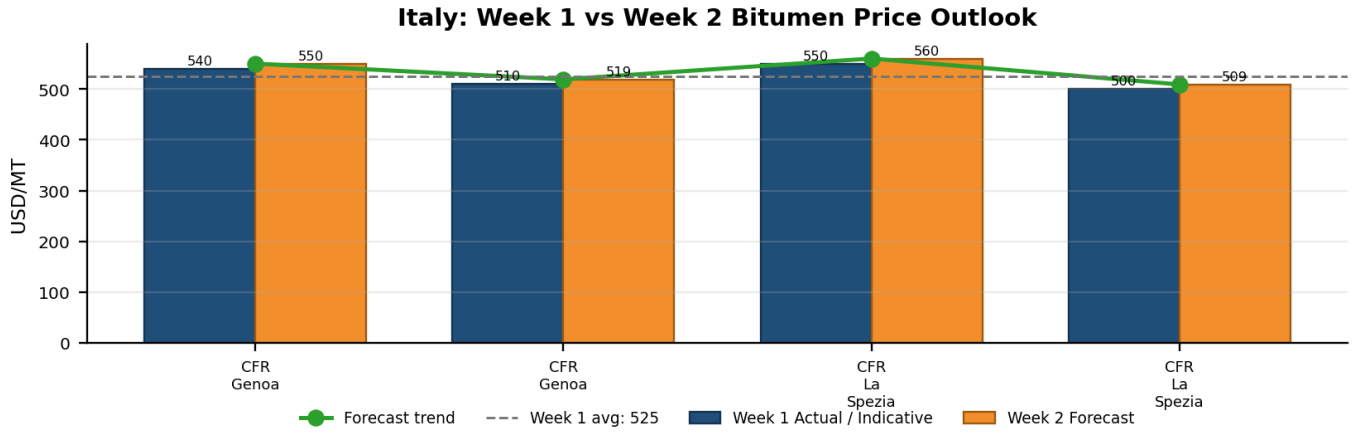


Chart: Italy Week 1 actual/indicative prices compared with Week 2 forecast estimates.

one-week Forecast

…Political Forecast…

1. Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz: The Core Political Risk

The Strait of Hormuz remains the most sensitive political point for the bitumen market. A large portion of Middle Eastern energy and petroleum-related trade is psychologically connected to the security of this route. Even when shipments continue normally, the market reacts strongly to any sign of military tension, diplomatic confrontation, vessel inspection, or insurance disruption. If political tension in the Persian Gulf remains high but contained, bitumen trade will continue, but under a cautious operating environment. Exporters from Iran, the UAE, Iraq-linked routes, and nearby hubs may continue shipping, but buyers will demand more flexible terms, shorter validity for quotations, and wider price ranges. The likely result would be:

- stable but nervous trade flows;
- slightly higher freight-related costs;
- more indicative pricing rather than firm pricing;
- delayed decision-making by buyers;
- increased sensitivity to daily political news.

If there is a direct security incident near Hormuz, such as a vessel delay, military warning, port disruption, or temporary restriction in shipping confidence, the market could react sharply even before actual supply is reduced. In this scenario, bitumen buyers in India, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Europe may immediately start seeking alternative sources or asking for revised quotations. Freight companies could raise charges, insurers may adjust risk premiums, and sellers may reduce quote validity from several days to only 24–48 hours. immediate increase in CFR prices;

- stronger premium for nearby stock availability;
- higher advantage for suppliers with inventory outside the Gulf;
- possible delay in shipments from Bandar Abbas, Jebel Ali, and related regional ports;
- increased use of regional storage hubs.

2. Iran-Related Trade: Sanctions, Corridors, and Strategic Pressure

Iran remains politically central to the regional bitumen market because of its production role, export geography, and access to both maritime and land routes. Any political change around Iran has a direct influence on market sentiment.

If Iran-related trade continues under the current pattern, with restrictions but no major new shock, the market will likely remain active but opaque. Buyers will continue using established

channels, but pricing may stay approximate because transaction visibility is limited. In this case, Iranian-origin bitumen may remain competitive, especially in nearby markets, but political risk will keep a discount or complexity attached to some transactions. Traders may rely more on intermediaries, flexible payment routes, and alternative logistics.

The likely result would be:

- continued exports despite uncertainty;
- stronger role for private traders and intermediaries;
- persistent gap between official benchmarks and actual transaction levels;
- cautious behavior from buyers exposed to compliance risk;
- increased relevance of FOB Bandar Abbas and nearby routes.

If sanctions pressure increases, or if monitoring of shipping, banking, or intermediaries becomes stricter, the market could become more fragmented. Some buyers may reduce direct exposure, while others may continue purchasing through more complex routes. This would not automatically remove supply from the market, but it would increase transaction costs and reduce transparency. Freight, documentation, payment settlement, and insurance would become more difficult. The likely result would be:

- higher hidden costs in trade;
- wider price gaps between regions;
- stronger reliance on re-export or indirect trade;
- more volatility in nearby import markets;
- reduced confidence among larger institutional buyers.

3. UAE and Gulf Re-Export Dynamics

The UAE has traditionally played an important role as a logistics, storage, and redistribution hub. Politically, its position matters because many regional trade flows depend on UAE-linked infrastructure, port access, and commercial neutrality.

If the UAE maintains its current role as a stable logistics center, it will continue to provide balance to the regional market. Even when other routes face pressure, Jebel Ali and related UAE channels can help stabilize trade. The likely result would be:

- continued regional redistribution;
- stable premium for UAE-linked cargoes;
- strong demand for reliable documentation and logistics;
- support for buyers seeking lower political exposure.

If UAE-Iran trade becomes more politically constrained, or if regional alignment pressures intensify, some flows may shift away from traditional UAE channels. This could force traders to

use alternative ports, longer routes, or less efficient logistics structures. The likely result would be:

- higher transaction complexity;
- increased freight costs for some routes;
- lower flexibility in regional redistribution;
- stronger role for Oman, Iraq-linked routes, or direct shipment alternatives;
- increased uncertainty in Gulf pricing.

4. Eurasian Corridors and Land-Based Trade Routes

One of the most important political trends is the growing importance of land corridors connecting Iran, Central Asia, China, Russia, and surrounding markets. These corridors are becoming political tools, not just transport routes.

If Eurasian corridor development continues steadily, bitumen trade could slowly become less dependent on maritime chokepoints. Rail and land routes may not replace shipping, but they can provide strategic backup. The likely result would be:

- stronger trade resilience;
- reduced dependence on Hormuz for some markets;
- increased importance of Iran as a transit country;
- better access to Central Asia and China-linked demand;
- gradual shift toward corridor-based pricing.

This would be a long-term positive development for market stability.

If political tension affects borders, customs coordination, rail agreements, or transit permissions, land-route expansion could slow. This would return more pressure to maritime routes and reduce logistics flexibility. The likely result would be:

- higher dependence on ports;
- reduced route diversification;
- more pressure on Gulf shipping;
- increased uncertainty for overland buyers;
- slower development of alternative trade channels.

If governments actively support corridor development through agreements, subsidies, customs simplification, or infrastructure investment, the bitumen market could benefit significantly. Overland trade would become more predictable, and exporters would gain more options. The likely result would be:

- stronger long-term supply security;
- reduced exposure to maritime crises;
- improved access to inland demand centers;

- more stable trade with Central Asia and China;
- increased geopolitical value of transit countries.

5. Import-Dependent Countries: Political Sensitivity of Buyers

Countries such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Brazil, and South Africa are highly exposed to political and logistics risks because they rely on imported bitumen. If political risk remains moderate, importers will continue buying but with caution. They may avoid large commitments and prefer flexible procurement windows. The likely result would be:

- short-term purchasing behavior;
- stronger demand for reliable suppliers;
- more attention to freight risk;
- limited inventory rebuilding;
- stable but cautious market sentiment.

…Economic Forecast…

1. Global Infrastructure Spending: The Main Economic Driver

The single most important economic force supporting the bitumen market in 2026 is infrastructure investment. Governments across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America continue prioritizing:

- highway construction,
- logistics modernization,
- urban expansion,
- industrial corridors,
- and transport connectivity projects.

Unlike speculative commodity demand, infrastructure consumption tends to be long-term and policy-driven. This gives the bitumen market a stronger structural demand base compared to many other petroleum products. If current infrastructure programs continue at their present pace, bitumen demand is likely to remain resilient throughout May and early summer 2026. Consumption growth may not be explosive, but it would remain stable enough to support prices. In this environment:

- procurement activity remains consistent;
- contractors continue replenishing inventories;
- governments maintain ongoing projects;
- and importers avoid aggressive destocking.

2. Freight and Logistics Economics: The Hidden Pricing Engine

One of the biggest economic changes in the bitumen industry is the growing importance of logistics costs. Freight is no longer a secondary factor — it has become one of the central pricing mechanisms of the market. Shipping costs, insurance premiums, port congestion, container shortages, and route instability now influence final pricing almost continuously. If current logistics conditions continue without major disruption, freight costs will likely remain elevated but manageable.

This means:

- vessels continue operating;
- shipping routes remain open;
- but costs stay volatile due to risk and inefficiency.

Under this scenario:

- CFR prices remain supported;
- FOB markets remain relatively competitive;
- and importers continue paying logistics premiums.

The likely outcome would be:

- moderate upward support for global prices;
- regional price fragmentation;
- and stronger pricing differences between nearby and distant markets.

If shipping disruption intensifies due to:

- geopolitical tension,
- insurance spikes,
- vessel shortages,
- or port delays,

3. Refinery Economics and Feedstock Dynamics

Bitumen supply ultimately depends on refinery operations and crude processing economics.

Although bitumen is often treated as a downstream byproduct, refinery strategy has become increasingly important because refiners now balance:

- fuel margins,
- petrochemical output,
- export economics,
- and heavy residue utilization.

If refinery operations remain relatively stable, bitumen supply should remain available but controlled.

Under this scenario:

- producers maintain export programs;
- availability remains adequate;
- but sellers continue protecting margins.

The likely result would be:

- manageable supply conditions;
- stable export activity;
- moderate pricing support;
- and limited oversupply risk.

If refiners reduce bitumen-oriented output because of:

- stronger fuel margins,
- maintenance shutdowns,
- feedstock shortages,
- or operational constraints,
- availability could tighten rapidly.

4. Buyer Behavior and Procurement Economics

One of the defining economic characteristics of the current market is cautious procurement behavior. Most buyers are currently avoiding:

- excessive inventory accumulation;
- long-duration commitments;
- and speculative purchasing.

This reflects uncertainty around:

- freight costs,
- political risk,
- price direction,
- and financing conditions.

5. Economic Risk Ranking for May 2026

The most important economic risks are:

1. Freight and logistics volatility

2. Infrastructure spending slowdown

3. Refinery supply tightening

4. Currency weakness in import-dependent markets

5. Inflation-related financing pressure

6. Regional oversupply risk

7. Procurement hesitation by buyers

8. Feedstock cost instability

… Bitumen Price Forecast…

1. Core Market Structure: Why Prices Remain Supported

Several structural factors are preventing major price declines:

A. Freight Costs Remain Elevated

Shipping costs continue supporting CFR prices globally. Even where FOB markets appear relatively stable, delivered prices remain under pressure due to:

- insurance costs,
- vessel availability,
- route instability,
- and port inefficiencies.

Many governments continue funding road and transport projects. This creates a stable consumption base that prevents deep demand collapse. Although supply exists, the market lacks complete confidence in uninterrupted delivery schedules. Buyers therefore continue paying a risk premium. Most buyers remain cautious and avoid overstocking, meaning inventories in many regions are not large enough to absorb major disruptions comfortably. Together, these factors create a price floor beneath the market.

2. Base Scenario — Controlled Volatility (Most Likely Scenario)

FOB prices in the Middle East are likely to remain relatively competitive because producers still need export flow continuity. Likely trend:

- stable to slightly bullish;
- limited weekly increases;
- stronger price sensitivity to freight than crude oil.

CFR markets are likely to remain firmer because freight and logistics continue supporting delivered prices. Likely trend:

- gradual upward movement;

- wider regional spreads;
- increased volatility in import-dependent markets.

Regional Outlook:

Asia likely remains relatively firm because:

- infrastructure demand continues;
- import dependency remains high;
- and freight exposure is significant.

India, Southeast Asia, and China-linked regions may continue showing strong CFR support.

European prices likely remain supported due to:

- freight costs,
- energy market uncertainty,
- and Mediterranean logistics pressure.

African import markets may continue facing elevated CFR levels because of:

- shipping dependency,
- currency pressure,
- and limited local production capacity.

Brazil and nearby markets may remain expensive relative to Asia because of transport distance and regional logistics structure.

3. Extreme Volatility Scenario — Fragmented Pricing Market

One increasingly realistic possibility is not a single global direction, but regional fragmentation. Under this scenario:

- some regions experience tightness,
- others face oversupply,
- and pricing loses global uniformity.

Traditional arbitrage opportunities become harder because logistics unpredictability disrupts normal trade flow. This scenario is becoming increasingly visible in 2026.

4. Forecast Probability Assessment

Most Likely Scenario (≈55%)

Controlled volatility with moderately firm prices.

Bullish Shock Scenario (≈25%)

Freight or geopolitical escalation pushes prices sharply higher.

Bearish Correction Scenario (≈15%)

Demand slowdown and freight stabilization soften prices gradually.

Extreme Fragmentation Scenario (≈5%)

Regional price divergence intensifies dramatically.