

Pause on tariffs prompts US retailers to upgrade summer import forecast



The summer import surge is expected to end given the uncertainty over what will happen once the temporary tariff reprieves expire in July and August. Photo credit: Ungureanu Catalina Oana / Shutterstock.com.

Laura Robb, Associate Editor | Jun 9, 2025, 4:06 PM EDT

US retailers on Monday significantly upgraded import projections through August amid the temporary pauses in effect on the so-called reciprocal tariffs implemented by the Trump administration. Cargo landing at the country's ports in July will be 20% higher than the forecast made in May by the National Retail Federation (NRF) and Hackett Associates.

Their June Global Port Tracker (GPT) shows the first upgrade to US import projections since February, before the first round of tariffs were announced in April.

"Tariff reductions will lead to a surge in imports in June through August as importers take advantage of the various 90-day pauses," Hackett Associates Founder Ben

Hackett said.

A pause on higher tariffs on most of the US' trading partners is in effect until July 9, while the pause on the 145% tariff on imports from China is due to expire Aug. 14.

The GPT's updated forecast calls for July US imports of 2.13 million TEUs — up 20.3% from last month's GPT but still well below the 2.32 million TEUs brought in during July 2024. Retailers expect August imports to reach 1.98 million TEUs, up 8.8% from May's forecast.

“[Shippers] are now looking to get those orders and cargo moving in order to bring as much merchandise into the country as they can before the reciprocal tariff and additional China tariff pauses end in July and August,” said Jonathan Gold, NRF's vice president for Supply Chain and Customs Policy.

June import projections were also upgraded from the May GPT, with retailers expecting 17.5% higher volumes at 2.01 million TEUs. Preliminary May volumes of 1.91 million TEUs are expected to be 5.5% higher than forecast last month.

A soft Q4

But the summer surge is expected to end given the uncertainty over what will happen once the temporary tariff reprieves expire.

Retailers slightly downgraded import expectations for September to 1.78 million TEUs, which would also be a 21.6% drop compared with the year-ago month. And in its initial forecast for October, the GPT projects imports of 1.8 million TEUs, almost 20% lower than October 2024.

“The peak for the winter holidays will come early this year, making it simultaneous with the peak for the back-to-school season,” Hackett said. “If higher tariffs are not delayed again, we can expect the final four months of the year to see declining volumes of imports.”

The updated forecast brings the first-half projection for US imports to 12.54 million TEUs, up 3.4% from expectations made in May and 3.7% higher than actual first-half 2024 volumes.

The GPT is published monthly using import data collected from 13 ports on the US East, West and Gulf coasts.

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