

## CEMENT DEPENDENCE

# How The UAE Is Deepening America's Reliance on Foreign Construction Materials

U.S. cities and communities are facing daunting costs to repair outdated infrastructure, with research estimating total urban infrastructure needs at \$1.03 trillion. Making these critical and long-overdue investments in our roads, bridges, water infrastructure, energy facilities, and more will require America to prioritize a more resilient and independent supply chain. But an uncomfortable truth remains: the U.S. imports over 20% of the cement we use each year, raising serious concerns

about the quality of materials used in construction while weakening a cornerstone of American industrial manufacturing. Multiple countries are contributing to this challenge, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has seen significant year-over-year growth in its cement manufacturing industry, with estimates projecting it will reach 7.4% annual growth in 2026.

**THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES IS A TOP GLOBAL CEMENT EXPORTER, WITH THE U.S. SERVING AS THE PRIMARY DESTINATION FOR ITS EXPORTS.**

SOURCE: OBSERVATORY OF ECONOMIC COMPLEXITY

## U.S. CEMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

**34 STATES**  
producing cement

Source: U.S. Geological Survey

**\$159 BILLION**  
in economic impact

Source: American Cement Association

**577,000 JOBS**  
supported

Source: American Cement Association



## THE EXCESS CEMENT PRODUCTION CAPACITY THREAT

The UAE poses a significant cement overcapacity threat driven by a structural mismatch between its domestic production capabilities and internal demand. Despite rising cement demand in the UAE, projections for 2026 indicate it will reach approximately 23.5 million tons. Meanwhile, the UAE has the capacity to produce between 37 and 38 million tonnes annually, far outpacing its domestic demand for materials needed to support major projects across the country, including in cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Of the six Gulf Cooperation Council nations, the UAE has the second largest cement production capacity in the region, operating 18 cement-related plants. This overcapacity could push UAE producers to increasingly rely on exports to the United States to absorb excess supply, raising concerns about possible trade distortions.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen domestic cement production and protect American communities from an influx of unreliable imports, policymakers must prioritize a trade agenda that puts domestic producers and workers first. While federal trade action is necessary, a comprehensive strategy also involves closing a loophole in the Build America, Buy America Act. Currently, cement remains excluded from these preferences, a stark disparity compared with the protections afforded to other critical construction inputs such as iron and steel.

Additionally, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative must expand its investigations into global overcapacity. To ensure a level playing field and reciprocal trade, the UAE must be subject to a Section 301 investigation to address trade practices that purposefully disadvantage U.S. markets. To ensure the foundations of our nation's infrastructure are built with safe, sustainable, and American-made materials, policymakers must:

**Expand the Section 301 investigation** under the Trade Act of 1974 to include the excess production of cement, ensuring it does not manipulate U.S. markets.

**Expand Buy America requirements** to ensure cement receives the same protections as U.S. iron and steel sectors.

**Recognize cement as a national security material**, guaranteeing the U.S. has an adequate supply for essential transportation, water, energy, and military-related infrastructure.