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Egypt's Cement Export Surge and U.S. Supply-Chain Risk

Between long-overdue infrastructure repairs and the ongoing data center boom, America is building at a rapid pace. Though vitally important, these projects face a looming threat: a shortage of reliable cement. The U.S. currently imports over 20% of the cement it uses each year, and domestic production is in decline — leaving American communities increasingly exposed to foreign suppliers engaged in anticompetitive practices.

Chief among them is Egypt. Backed by subsidized energy and aggressive government support, Egypt has become the world's third-largest cement exporter and is now explicitly targeting "distant markets like the U.S." Its subsidized product threatens to undercut American producers and workers, compromise the quality of materials used in critical infrastructure, and deepen U.S. dependence on foreign construction materials at a moment of national need.

EGYPT'S CEMENT EXPORTS SURGED NEARLY 50% IN 2025 — RISING FROM 8 MILLION METRIC TONS TO 12 MILLION METRIC TONS.

SOURCE: S&P GLOBAL, ENTERPRISE AM

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 STATE-BACKED EXPORT EXPANSION THREAT

Egypt poses a significant threat to U.S. cement production, driven by an aggressive, government-directed push to expand exports. Egyptian cement producers benefit from fixed, subsidized natural gas prices that artificially lower their production costs, while the government sponsors trade missions and licenses new capacity — targeting a return to roughly 82–83 million tons of nominal capacity. On the back of this state support, Egypt's finished cement exports are projected to jump roughly 50%, from 8 million to an anticipated 12 million metric tons this year.

Already the world's third-largest cement exporter, accounting for roughly 7% of global cement exports, Egypt is now building port terminals capable of loading Panamax-sized vessels expressly to serve the United States. Its own industry leaders state plainly that the U.S. "will account for a larger share of exports moving forward" — raising concerns about subsidized foreign cement displacing American production and creating trade distortions.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While comparable sectors, including iron and steel, benefit from longstanding protections that prioritize American-made materials in domestic construction, cement does not. That gap leaves the foundations of our roads, bridges, hospitals, and homes exposed to subsidized foreign products of uncertain quality; at the very moment America is building at a historic scale. Washington has already recognized the danger of foreign cement overproduction, opening investigations into the cement practices of Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Egypt is not facing the same scrutiny, despite subsidized energy inputs, active state backing, and an export machine now explicitly aimed at the U.S. market.

To ensure America's infrastructure is built with reliable, American-made materials, policymakers must:

Open a Section 301 investigation under the Trade Act of 1974 into Egypt's subsidized cement production and export practices, ensuring they do not distort U.S. markets.

Extend Build America, Buy America preferences to cement, granting it the same standing as domestic iron and steel.

Designate cement a national security material, so the U.S. maintains an adequate domestic supply for critical transportation, water, energy, and military infrastructure.