

***By Mike Short, president of global freight forwarding at C.H. Robinson.***

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It's safe to say that 2020 will not be a year easily forgotten. This past year has been full of adjustment. Around the globe, our personal and work lives were upended with very little warning.

As the pandemic spread, spending time with friends and family, water cooler conversations with co-workers, and even dependence on a resilient supply chain turned out to be necessities we had taken for granted. And normal has yet to return.

As the New Year approaches, it's time to look at ways you can make a smart plan for global shipping in 2021. But, before I share what the outlook for 2021 looks like, I want to say thank you to the ocean and air carriers, port and airport operators, truck drivers, customs agents, and the many other logistics professionals who work hard to bring a little normal to our doorsteps and grocery store shelves.

## **Current events impacting global shipping in 2021**

“By staying on top of supply chain management trends and issues, you can make sure that your company can readily adapt to changes”. — [FinancesOnline](#)

Headlines and news can significantly impact trade—either regionally or globally. While it's impossible to predict all that 2021 has in store, you can at a minimum prepare for the following:

### **The ongoing Brexit situation**

If you export from the EU to the UK and vice-versa, Brexit will mean extra administration chores and delays for your shipments. It is also to be expected that new customs charges and other fees will be introduced as of January 1, 2020.

For more information about Brexit and the impact it may have on your business, [read our recent blog](#) on the topic.

### **Global trade and tariffs**

There are several things that may influence trade and tariffs in the coming year.

For example, some significant changes were made to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) recently, most notably that certain Thailand-origin goods are no longer GSP eligible as of December 1, 2020. More broadly, the entire GSP is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2020 if Congress does not renew.

Check out our [Trade & Tariff Insights](#) for more details on these and other updates.

## **Global demand for coronavirus vaccines**

Of course, similar to 2020, the pandemic may be the largest disruptor on the shipping market again in 2021. Vaccines have started hitting some markets already and full global rollouts are expected in early Q1 2021.

The initial vaccine distribution will also coincide with the Chinese New Year, when we historically see a large influx of retail merchandise ahead of the weeklong holiday in China.

With vaccines likely moving via air freight, we expect peripheral products, such as syringes, gauze, cotton to move via ocean, which could mean tightened capacity for both air and ocean shipments.

## **Expect challenges from 2020 to continue in 2021**

Looking at the ongoing events around the world, many of the challenges we've experienced in 2020 are not going away—and there are potentially new challenges on the horizon. If there is one thing the supply chain industry needs to learn from these ongoing challenges, it is agility. Supply chains need to be flexible enough to absorb these shocks, major or minor, that comes on its way.

Through our technology and global suite of service offerings, including ocean, air, customs brokerage, trade compliance, and surface transportation, we help customers mitigate the unplanned risks and changes of global shipping. Our people are willing and eager to help you plan for shipping in the coming year.

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*This article was originally posted on [C.H. Robinson's blog](#).*