Not just a price crisis. A supply crisis.

On the world benchmark, urea costs less than it did before the war. That is not the same as being back in supply. Since March the world has gone without **4.1–6.8 million tonnes** of urea, eight to fourteen months of everything Sub-Saharan Africa uses in a year, and the loss is growing: Qatar's plants ran at about a fifth of normal in the third quarter. Eight months into the war there is no ceasefire, the Strait of Hormuz is shut to fertiliser, and Gulf fertiliser exports in September were 71% below a year earlier. The world price stopped falling in September, and the granular urea that reaches Africa costs more than it did before the war. In September, East African farmers paid more than twice the world price; South African prices have come back to their normal level.

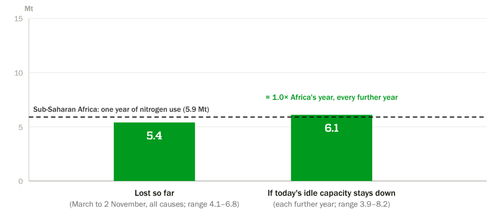
For Africa, which imports most of the fertiliser it uses, this is a supply risk, not only a cost. That is why CAP-A's work now centres on **bio-input supplements and substitutes**: biochar, compost and organic blends, bio-stimulants and rock dust, made from local material. Used alongside imported fertiliser they make each tonne go further; where imports do not arrive, they are what the soil has.

1 · What the world has lost

million tonnes of urea never produced, against Sub-Saharan Africa's entire annual nitrogen use (urea-equivalent)

The loss so far is about a year of Africa's nitrogen, and it is growing

left: tonnes lost from March to 2 November 2026. right: what each further year costs if the capacity still idle stays idle



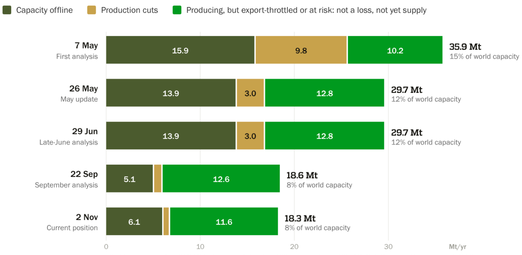
● Hover a bar for what is in it

2 · How the shock has changed shape

urea capacity affected, million tonnes a year, at each date CAP-A ran the analysis: offline, production cuts, and producing but unable to reach the market

Less capacity is offline than in May. More of it cannot reach the market, and Qatar runs at a fifth of normal.

Iran and Qatar restarted in part in early May; Egypt and Oman left the at-risk band. Qatar's output then fell further in the third quarter, so most of its capacity is idle rather than merely throttled, while 11.6 Mt of Gulf capacity produces into a Strait of Hormuz that is closed to fertiliser: the supply exists, the access does not. For scale: the world has about **240 Mt a year** of urea capacity and made about 204 Mt in 2025, so the first analysis touched roughly 15% of world capacity and today's position about 8%.



World urea capacity = 240 Mt/yr (nameplate); actual 2025 production = 204 Mt. Sub-Saharan Africa uses = 5.9 Mt a year.

● Hover a bar for the plants in it · click for the plant-by-plant detail, first analysis vs that date

3 · What urea costs

US$ per tonne. World Bank monthly urea series (prilled, FOB Middle East), December 2025 to September 2026 (October due), with FOB Egypt granular spot points to 27 October; then what East & Southern African farmers paid (African Market Observatory)

Lower world prices do not mean supply has returned to normal. And they have stopped falling.

two benchmarks, two readings of "recovered": the World Bank series (prilled urea at a Gulf port, FOB Middle East) halved from its April peak to $390 in August and turned up to $408 in September, **14% below February**; Egyptian granular, which reaches Africa and Europe without passing the Strait, is now **above its February level** ($535 on 27 October against $480–485). Neither says urea is cheap; both say the war premium went, and is creeping back, while the Strait stays shut to fertiliser

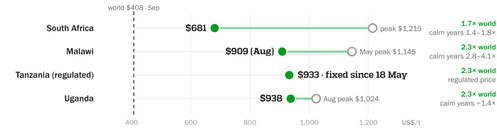


● World Bank urea, monthly average ◇ FOB Egypt granular, spot quote -- pre-war February level

▲ **Why the price rose, and why it fell.** Supply disruptions drove urea prices sharply higher: Iran and Qatar offline, the Strait shut, $472 to $857 a tonne in two months. Our reading is that prices then fell as buyers reduced or delayed purchases, expectations of Chinese exports increased, and other suppliers (Egypt, Nigeria, the US, Russia) helped fill the gap: world urea imports in the second quarter were only 6% below a year earlier, though they cost 70% more. The fall therefore did not show that Gulf supply routes had recovered, and the months since bear that out: with no ceasefire, Gulf fertiliser exports 71% below a year earlier in September (Kpler) and fertiliser transits of the Strait close to zero in September and October, the world price turned up in September and spot prices rose through October as buyers who had waited came back.

For African farmers, price relief has reached the south, not yet the east

South Africa's price fell to $681 in September (–44% from its peak) and is back inside its normal ratio to the world price; Uganda eased to $938 but is still 2.3× the world price; Malawi (August $909) and Tanzania's regulated price ($933) have no September figure yet. Urea, US$ per tonne, retail (bagged, inland); hollow dot = 2026 peak, filled dot = latest month (September; August for Malawi), dashed line = world price in September. Source: African Market Observatory (CCRED, University of Johannesburg); Grain SA



○ 2026 peak ● latest month (Sep 2026; Aug for Malawi) -- world price, September ($408)

Paying more than the bulk world price is not by itself an unusual premium: a bagged retail price inland always sits above a port price. The fair test is each country's calm-year ratio, shown at right. South Africa is back inside its range; Uganda is still above; Malawi is within its range on August figures

What explains the price changes? Evidence and uncertainties ▼

BOTTOM LINE

The world has lost 4.1–6.8 Mt of urea since March, eight to fourteen months of Sub-Saharan Africa's nitrogen, and the loss is growing because Qatar's output fell further in the third quarter. The plants have partly come back; the sea lane has not, and no ceasefire is in sight. World prices stopped falling in September and the granular urea Africa buys now costs more than before the war. Relief has reached South African farmers but not yet East African ones, and Malawi goes into planting 300,000 tonnes short. **For Africa this is a supply risk as much as a price story, and the surest supply is the one that does not have to cross a strait.**

Source: CAP-A internal analysis, 2 November 2026. Figures are urea or the urea-equivalent of nitrogen demand; ranges show low–high estimates; bars show range midpoints. Sub-Saharan African demand shown for scale.

Production lost: CAP-A internal analysis to 2 November 2026; offline capacity at 100% of nameplate. Capacity snapshots: CAP-A internal analysis at 7 May, 26 May, 29 June, 22 September and 2 November 2026 (plant statuses re-checked 28 October–2 November). Plant statuses: ICIS, Argus, Industries Qatar H1 and nine-month 2026 results (QCInte, Qatar Tribune), GÜBRETAŞ/KAP, MEED, Fertiglobe, OMIFCO, SABIC Agri-Nutrients Q3, TBS, QCInte, The Daily Star, NFDC. Prices: World Bank Pink Sheet, Mar/Jun/Sep/Oct 2026 (urea), E. Europe, prill spot FOB Middle East); FOB Egypt granular: Argus 27–28 Feb and 27 Oct 2026, trade weeklies. African prices: AMO Price Tracker Jul–Sep 2026 (CCRED, UJ); Grain SA; Fertiliser Association of Malawi via The Nation. Trade and shipping: ITC 15 Sep 2026; Kpler (The National, 31 Oct 2026); Lloyd's List Intelligence 22 Oct 2026; World Visualized/Syz. Sulphur: SMM. Outlook: World Bank Commodity Markets Outlook, Oct 2026. Price explanations: CAP-A internal analysis.