

CARAVAN

THE EXECUTIVE NEWSLETTER OF
QASR AL ANQAA GROUP OF COMPANIES

VOL. 1 | ISSUE 07 | September 2026 | Dubai

WHEN MACHINES ENTER THE MARKET

How AI and Digital Commerce
Are Reshaping Global Business?

Access. Judgment. Trust. Responsibility.



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WHEN MACHINES ENTER THE MARKET

How AI and Digital Commerce Are Reshaping Global Business?

CEO'S NOTE

THE DECISION IS STILL OURS



By Dr. Hossein Azarbaijani

Founder & CEO, Qasr Al Anqa Group of Companies

The Question Behind the Offer

A supplier offers a better price. The delivery schedule looks acceptable. The buyer is ready to proceed.

Then someone asks a question that should have been answered earlier: can we actually execute this transaction under the proposed payment terms?

Anyone who has spent time in international trade knows how quickly an attractive offer can become a difficult decision.

The price is only one part of it. There is the counterparty, the financing, the logistics, the documentation and the commercial relationship that may continue long after the cargo has been delivered.

Good decisions require bringing these considerations together. Until recently, much of a manager's time was spent simply getting the information into the same room.

That is beginning to change.

The Difference Between Using AI and Thinking Differently

Artificial intelligence is already entering ordinary business activity. Yet having access to it and changing how an organisation makes decisions are two very different things.

McKinsey's August 2026 global survey found that nearly nine in ten respondents reported regular AI use in at least one business function. Yet only 37% attributed a positive impact on their organisation's operating earnings to AI.

The distinction matters.

“A FASTER ANSWER IS NOT ALWAYS A BETTER DECISION.”

An organisation can produce reports faster, answer customers sooner and process more information without improving the decisions that determine its commercial performance.

For businesses in our region, the challenge is particularly relevant. PwC's 2026 Middle East CEO Survey found that only 22% of regional CEOs agreed that their most-used AI tools had access to all relevant organisational documents and data.

A machine cannot reliably inform a commercial decision when the information needed to make that decision remains fragmented across departments, systems and individuals.

The advantage will not belong simply to the company with the most AI tools. It will belong to the organisation that brings better information into the decisions that matter.

What Should Human Judgment Be Spent On?

In Issue 03 of CARAVAN, our AI Perspectives section asked how artificial intelligence might shape global trade and its geopolitical environment.

This time, we are asking a different question: what happens when the transaction itself begins to pass through machines?

For management, the implications go beyond efficiency.

If machines can increasingly compare commercial alternatives, identify inconsistencies and assess possible outcomes, managers should have more room to concentrate on the decisions that require experience, accountability and an understanding of relationships.

Whether to trust a new counterparty. Whether to accept a lower margin for a strategic customer. Whether a profitable transaction is worth the exposure it creates.

These are not merely questions of information. They are questions of judgment.

The Responsibility Remains

As machines become more involved in commercial decisions, responsibility must become clearer, not more distant.

A faster recommendation does not make a weak assumption stronger. An automated approval does not remove accountability for its consequences.

Before giving a system greater authority, every business leader should be able to answer one question:

If the machine makes the wrong commercial decision, who in our organisation is responsible for recognising it before the transaction becomes irreversible?

That is where the next stage of management begins.



WHY THIS ISSUE MATTERS

For most of CARAVAN's history, technology sat outside the transaction — a tool traders used to move faster through the same steps. That is no longer accurate.

Software now sits inside the transaction itself: reading specifications, comparing suppliers, flagging contract deviations, scoring leads, and increasingly, deciding who even gets found in the first place.

None of that removes the moment a person has to put their name — and the company's exposure — behind a decision. It just moves that moment later, and raises the cost of getting it wrong.

This issue looks at that shift from five different angles: the boardroom decision, the live transaction, the customer relationship, the physical infrastructure behind it, and a company's own visibility to the systems now doing the looking.

In this new market, the machine can shorten the search. It cannot shorten the responsibility.

Sources for Editorial Verification

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WHEN MACHINES ENTER THE MARKET

How AI and Digital Commerce Are Reshaping Global Business?

COVER STORY

THE DEAL GETS FASTER. THE RISK DOES NOT DISAPPEAR.

In a frozen-meat import, AI can shorten the work before a decision. It cannot make the commercial commitment that follows it.



By Rami Ahmed Hassan
CARAVAN Editorial Team

Consider one transaction: an importer is sourcing frozen beef from an overseas supplier.

The specification is precise. Product grade, cut, packing format, production dates, veterinary documentation, halal requirements, temperature conditions and delivery terms all have to match. Price matters, but a cheaper offer is irrelevant if the shipment cannot clear inspection, the certificates do not stand up to verification, or the supplier cannot perform against the agreed terms.

Without AI, much of the work begins with people looking for information.

The procurement team identifies possible suppliers through existing contacts, databases and referrals. Quotations arrive in different formats. Someone compares specifications line by line. Company histories and available risk information are checked separately. Certificates are collected and their details compared with the requirements of the transaction. Commercial teams exchange revised offers. Legal or procurement staff compare the proposed contract against previous agreements and approved clauses.

None of these tasks is conceptually difficult. Together, they consume time because information arrives fragmented.

This is where machine-assisted tools are starting to change the shape of the work.

AI-assisted procurement platforms — increasingly used across trade-heavy sectors, according to recent industry reporting on B2B sourcing technology — can help structure sourcing requirements, narrow a supplier field against defined criteria and consolidate supplier intelligence into a single comparable view. Contract-analysis tools can extract clauses, compare language and flag deviations against a standard template. The machine is not deciding whether frozen beef should be purchased. It is reducing the amount of searching, reading and comparison required before somebody makes that decision.

Run the same transaction again.

The importer enters the required product specification. Instead of manually working through a long supplier universe, software helps narrow the field against defined criteria. Quotations are converted into comparable fields. Differences in packing, specifications, Incoterms or payment proposals can be surfaced rather than discovered during another round of emails.

Then come the documents.

Here an important distinction matters: not everything digital is AI.

Electronic veterinary certification, government traceability databases and cold-chain sensor systems are, on their own, digital infrastructure — not intelligence. What AI adds is the layer on top: extracting information from these documents and data streams, comparing fields across sources, finding inconsistencies and directing attention to exceptions rather than requiring a person to check everything by hand.

For a meat importer, that difference is practical. A system may detect that a certificate number, production establishment, shipment detail or contractual requirement does not match another document. It can flag the discrepancy immediately.

But a flag is not an approval.

The same applies to the contract. Software can compare the supplier's draft against the buyer's standard terms and identify changes in inspection rights, claims periods, governing law, delivery obligations or payment conditions. What previously required people to find every difference manually can increasingly begin with an exception report.

The transaction has become faster because the machine has compressed the work of finding differences.

Then it reaches a line it should not cross.

Suppose the supplier meets the product specification and the documentation checks produce no unresolved exception. The commercial offer is attractive. But the supplier requests payment terms that expose the importer before performance has been fully demonstrated.

The system can describe that exposure. It can retrieve the supplier's history, compare the proposed terms with policy and flag the departure from previous transactions.

It still cannot accept the exposure.

That is the handoff point: approval of the final payment and contractual terms that create the importer's binding commercial exposure.

A named executive must decide whether the company will put its money and legal position behind this counterparty on these terms.

Why here?

Because the question has changed.

Until this point, the transaction is largely asking: What does the evidence say? AI is increasingly capable of helping answer that question.

At final approval, the question becomes: Are we prepared to carry the consequences if this supplier does not perform?

The consequences arrive after the decision: delayed shipment, rejected goods, a certification dispute, a temperature excursion, a claim that cannot be recovered, or money committed to a counterparty that fails to deliver as expected. Software can estimate, detect and warn. It cannot become the party that accepted the commercial exposure.

This is the operational boundary that matters.

In the old transaction, people spent much of their time finding information before making a decision. In the AI-assisted transaction, machines can do more of the finding, sorting, comparing and flagging.

That should make the deal faster.

It should not make the signature automatic.

The machine can bring the transaction to the decision table sooner. Someone still has to put the company's name on the decision.



WHERE THE MACHINE STOPS

Stage	Role
Supplier discovery	Search, structure and compare a wider supplier field against defined requirements.
Document checking	Extract fields, compare documents and flag inconsistencies for review.
Contract comparison	Identify deviations in clauses, payment conditions and commercial obligations.
The handoff	When final payment and contractual terms create binding exposure, the task shifts from analysing risk to accepting it. That decision belongs to an authorised human.

“ THE MACHINE CAN BRING THE TRANSACTION TO THE DECISION TABLE SOONER. SOMEONE STILL HAS TO PUT THE COMPANY'S NAME ON THE DECISION. ”

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP

A SCORE IS NOT A CUSTOMER



By Atefeh Hosseini

Business Development Manager,
Qasr Al Anqaa Group of Companies

I spent years as a journalist before I moved into business development. Back then, a large part of my job was deciding what deserved attention — not producing more words, but finding the one sentence that mattered.

Today, working in a multinational company, I face a different version of the same problem. More information than we can process. More leads than we can investigate. More content than anyone needs to read. And now, machines that can produce and sort all of it remarkably fast.

That is useful. It is also where I think we need to be careful.

Content is no longer a production problem. HubSpot's 2026 State of Marketing reports 80% of marketers now use AI for content creation. But 52% also say AI has made content so easy to produce that it has become less effective, and 62.7% believe the market needs more distinctly human content to stand out from the volume.

If everybody can produce ten posts before lunch, producing an eleventh is not an advantage. Knowing which one should exist at all is.

I use AI comfortably at the start of the process. I trust it far less near the end. Before anything goes public, someone needs to read it as a person: does it say something true, does it sound like us, does it actually belong in that market?

Lead scoring is almost the opposite problem — not too much output, but too much confidence in a number. A lead scored 92 feels precise. It is not a customer. It is a reflection of the data we fed the model, and Gartner estimates that poor data quality alone costs organisations an average of \$12.9 million a year.

So I don't ask AI "who should we pursue?" I ask "where should we look first?"

AI drafts. AI sorts. People verify.
People decide.



**“ AI drafts. AI sorts.
People verify. People decide. ”**

Speed was never our scarce resource.
Attention is — and it is not one I would outsource.

WHERE AI HELPS — AND WHERE I STOP IT

Activity	Where AI Helps	Where I Would Not Trust It Alone
Content Creation	First drafts, repurposing, multilingual adaptation, faster production	Factual accuracy, brand voice, cultural fit, the decision to publish
Lead Scoring	Sorting large lead pools, spotting patterns, suggesting priorities	A score reflects the data behind it — it's an indication, not a qualification



CARAVAN AI READINESS CHECKLIST

Seven questions before putting AI into a live Marketing or BD workflow

- 1 Who is the named person checking AI content before it publishes?
- 2 Who can actually judge whether a translation belongs in that market?
- 3 What signals are driving a lead's high score?
- 4 What's causing leads to lose points — or is nothing?
- 5 Have we manually spot-checked the top-ranked leads?
- 6 When did we last review the data behind the scoring model?
- 7 Who is authorised to override the machine — and is that ever recorded?

A COSTLY LESSON: THE LEAD EVERYONE WANTED

An instructional scenario, not a report of a specific incident.

A company rolls out AI lead scoring. Several accounts land at the top with unusually high scores — convincing enough that sales works the list exactly as ranked.

Weeks later, the pattern is obvious: the CRM data behind those scores was incomplete, old interactions were overweighted, and casual browsing had been read as buying intent. The system had done exactly what it was built to do. The team had simply treated a ranking as a conclusion.



**The machine can tell you where to look first.
It should not decide what you see.**

Source: HubSpot 2026 State of Marketing Report - Gartner (cited via CRM-Tech, 2026) - Warrily, AI Lead Scoring (2026) - LeadFaste, AI Lead Scoring for Sales 2026



COMMODITY RADAR

THE COPPER BEHIND THE CHATBOT

AI may be changing how business is done. But building the infrastructure behind it still depends on an older industrial reality: electricity, copper, transformers and the time required to bring new supply to market.



By Amit Tata | International Sales Manager,
Qasr Al Anqaa Group of Companies

We tend to talk about artificial intelligence as though it lives entirely inside a computer. We discuss the models, the software and the companies developing them. What receives considerably less attention is the physical infrastructure required to keep those systems running.

A data center needs electricity. That electricity must reach the facility through a grid capable of carrying it. The equipment generates heat that must be removed continuously. Every stage depends on materials and manufactured components that cannot be produced simply by writing better software.

For anyone working in commodity trading, this is where the AI story becomes particularly interesting.

According to the International Energy Agency, global data-center electricity consumption increased by 17% in 2025. Electricity demand worldwide grew by approximately 3%. The IEA expects electricity consumption at AI-focused data centers to triple by 2030.

That growth has a physical cost.

Copper: the metal behind digital growth

Copper is needed in electrical wiring, transformers, power distribution and cooling equipment. It also connects data centers to the electricity networks supporting them.

But AI is not entering an empty copper market.

The same metal is needed for electric vehicles, renewable energy, industrial development and grid expansion.

In January 2026, S&P Global published Copper in the Age of AI, projecting global copper demand to reach 42 million metric tons by 2040. Without substantial investment and additional supply, the shortfall could reach 10 million metric tons annually.

The difficulty is not simply finding copper underground.

Bringing a new copper mine from discovery into production takes an average of 17 years. Permitting, financing, construction and declining ore grades all affect the timeline.

An AI company may announce a new facility today. A mining company cannot respond by opening a new mine next quarter.

The two industries operate on very different clocks.

The bottleneck before the data center

Transformers present another immediate challenge. A data center may have its buildings completed and servers installed, yet remain unable to operate without the necessary electrical connections.

The IEA has identified transformer and turbine supply chains among the constraints affecting data-center development.

This changes how we should read infrastructure announcements. A planned facility is not necessarily an operational one.

Between the announcement and the first functioning server sit equipment availability, manufacturing capacity, construction schedules and electricity access. Critical minerals add another layer of exposure. Gallium and germanium, used in semiconductor technologies, depend on geographically concentrated production and processing. Export restrictions have already demonstrated how quickly availability and prices can change.

AI did not create these vulnerabilities. It is adding demand to supply chains already serving several competing industries.

What commodity traders should watch

For a trading house, the question is not simply which metal may become more expensive.

It is where growing demand meets limited production capacity, and where the time required to expand supply becomes as important as price.

Technology companies can revise investment plans in months. Industrial capacity may take years to respond.

For years, we have asked how quickly AI can advance.

The commodity market is introducing another question:

How quickly can the physical world support it?

“
How quickly can the physical world support it?
”



GULF CAPITAL

THE GULF IS BUYING THE SUPPLY CHAIN, NOT JUST THE DATA CENTERS

The Gulf is investing billions in AI infrastructure. Less visible is where its sovereign capital is going next: copper mines, critical minerals and the industrial capacity needed to turn digital ambition into physical infrastructure.

The Gulf's ambitions in artificial intelligence are no longer measured in pilot projects.

Stargate UAE, developed by G42's Khazna Data Centres with OpenAI, Oracle, Nvidia and Mubadala, carries an investment value exceeding \$30 billion for a planned 5-gigawatt campus outside Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia's HUMAIN has secured 211 land plots and assembled a \$2.5 billion data-center fund, a \$5 billion AWS partnership, a \$1.2 billion National Infrastructure Fund facility and a \$5 billion DataVolt agreement at NEOM. Across the GCC, more than 170 data-center projects worth over \$93 billion are being planned or developed.

The scale is difficult to ignore. But the more interesting development may be happening thousands of kilometers away from those campuses.

Gulf capital is moving upstream, into the materials required to build them.

Africa: securing the metals

In December 2023, Abu Dhabi's International Resources Holding acquired a controlling stake in Zambia's Mopani Copper Mines for \$1.1 billion. It also committed \$1.9 billion to develop four mines with Sakima, the Democratic Republic of Congo's state mining company. Meanwhile, AD Ports is developing river-port infrastructure at Matadi, extending UAE logistics capabilities into the DRC's mineral export corridor. Qatar has invested \$500 million in Ivanhoe Mines' Kamoa-Kakula copper complex, while Saudi Arabia's Manara Minerals, established by PIF and Maaden, has committed to investing \$15 billion in critical minerals by 2030. Its \$2.5 billion acquisition of a 10% stake in Vale Base Metals was an early move.

These investments are not exclusively about AI. Copper already serves energy, transport and industrial markets. But expanding data-center infrastructure adds another source of demand to the same supply chain.

Central Asia: resources without processing

A similar pattern is emerging in Kazakhstan. The country holds an estimated 20 million tonnes of rare-earth deposits and 2 million tonnes of tungsten reserves. Abu Dhabi's ADQ has joined a \$1.8 billion consortium exploring Kazakhstan's mineral sector, while Saudi Arabia has signed a separate mining cooperation agreement. The challenge is not simply access to resources.

Kazakhstan lacks domestic rare-earth separation and processing capacity. Export routes also remain dependent on long overland corridors, including a 4,250-kilometer route through the Caucasus.

For investors, the opportunity extends beyond ownership of mineral deposits. Processing, transport and access to international markets may prove equally important.

Where commodity traders enter the picture

Taken together, these investments suggest a broader position emerging for Gulf sovereign capital: connecting resource-rich countries with the industrial markets that need their minerals.

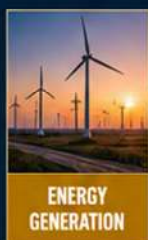
It is a familiar commercial function, applied to a different generation of infrastructure.

Saudi Arabia's planned copper smelter, targeting approximately 400,000 tonnes of annual capacity, points toward regional processing ambitions. Meanwhile, transformer delivery times exceeding two years create immediate pressure on Gulf data-center developers and EPC contractors.

That pressure may create opportunities for alternative equipment sourcing from manufacturers in China, South Korea and India, alongside cooling systems and modular infrastructure.

The Gulf is not simply financing AI's future demand. It is investing in the physical supply chains that may determine how quickly that future can be built.

THE PHYSICAL CHAIN BEHIND AN AI DATA CENTER



ENERGY
GENERATION



GRID
TRANSFORMERS



COPPER
WIRING



COOLING
SYSTEMS



DATA CENTER
INFRASTRUCTURE



AI
COMPUTE

Every digital expansion begins with physical infrastructure.



MEAT

THE GLOBAL BUSINESS OF PROTEIN
From Livestock to International Markets

World beef production: **62.2M t** (2025) | Poultry — only protein still growing: **+3%** (2026F) | India dominates buffalo meat: **4.35M t** | China's new beef tariff: **55% over-quota** (Jan 2026)

1 GLOBAL PRODUCTION



BEEF & VEAL

World total **62.2M t** → **61.0M t** forecast 2026



POULTRY

World total **110.7M t** forecast 2026, **+3%**



SHEEP & GOAT

World total **~16.5M t**

Latest available data



BUFFALO MEAT

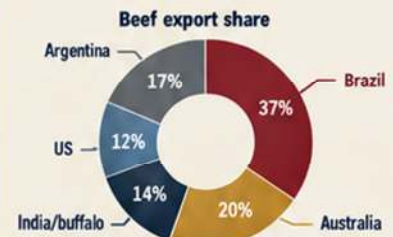
World total **6.9M t**

Latest available data



2 MAJOR EXPORTERS / IMPORTERS

Meat Type	Top Exporter	Top Importer	Key 2026 Signal
Beef	Brazil (4.0–4.3M t)	China (~3.8M t)	China's 55% over-quota tariff, Jan 2026
Sheep/Goat	Australia (363K t)	Saudi Arabia +25%, Qatar +30%	Strong Gulf demand growth
Poultry	Brazil (30–36% share)	Saudi Arabia, UAE, Mexico	Halal chicken fastest-growing
Buffalo	India (\$5.1B, +25.6%)	Vietnam, Egypt, UAE, Iraq	Iraq +99.5% YoY, standout market



3 TRADE ROUTES MAP



4 COLD CHAIN / MARKET ACCESS



TEMPERATURE

Frozen ≤ -18°C
Chilled red meat ≤ +7°C
Chilled poultry ≤ +4°C



SHIPPING

Reefer containers dominate (40ft HC = 90%+ of volume), not specialized vessels



CERTIFICATION

WOAH/OIE veterinary certificates
Halal: ESMA (UAE), SFDA (Saudi)
Plant-level approval required for UAE/Saudi/China access



Regulatory changes

Saudi SFDA circular (March 2025), draft GCC halal standard GSO 2055-1:2026, India's I-CAS certification expansion (April 2026).

5 SUPPLY CHAIN FLOW



6 MARKET SIGNALS & OUTLOOK 2026



SUPPLY

- US cattle herd at 86.2M head, lowest since 1951
- Poultry only growing category



DEMAND

- China's beef tariff reshaping flows
- India buffalo exports firm at 1.7M t



RISK

- Novel SAT-1 FMD strain in China
- HSN1 avian flu on all 7 continents



OUTLOOK

- Prices likely to stay elevated
- Feed cost signal currently unresolved



US fed steer \$240–242/cwt (+7–8% YoY) · Australian lamb \$11–12/kg dw (all-time high, March 2026)

WHY IT MATTERS



Feeds a growing population



Links trade policy to protein prices



Certification now shapes market access



Four meats, four risk profiles

“Meat doesn't move as one commodity. It moves as four — each with its own supply cycle, its own trade route, and in 2026, its own political risk.”

MARKET RADAR

Two Weeks, Ten Markets, Ten Different Stories

DIFFERENT
MARKETS
A SHARED
WORLD



By Josephine Beaumont | CARAVAN Editorial Team

Ten commodity lines, seven categories, one fortnight — and remarkably little consensus on where global markets are heading. Here is the fortnight's market intelligence, organized around the signals that matter to traders.



SOFTS & SWEETENERS

SUGAR

The clearest directional shift on the board. The International Sugar Organization did more than revise its 2026–27 outlook — it reversed it, replacing an expected surplus with a projected global deficit of 260,000 tonnes. Thailand's harvest has weakened, India's monsoon disappointed, and the EU faces a substantial production decline. When three major producing regions underperform simultaneously, markets begin repricing supply long before the final harvest figures arrive.

↗ Direction: **tightening.**



GRAINS

RICE

A subdued fortnight, significant in itself after a turbulent year. Asian export prices edged lower during the week of September 20 — fragrant rice declined \$5/t and jasmine slipped \$2/t — amid thin trading and cautious buying. The underlying picture remains familiar: India's removal of export restrictions expanded global availability, leaving Thailand and Vietnam competing aggressively to defend market share. That competition continues to restrain prices beyond the current reporting period.

→ Direction: **soft, stable.**



PROTEINS

MEAT - POULTRY

Beef prices barely moved because the underlying supply constraint remains unresolved. The US cattle herd, at its smallest since 1951, represents a structural, multiyear challenge rather than a fortnightly fluctuation. Record prices consequently held firm. The broader picture appears in this issue's Commodity Dossier, p.6. Poultry prices also remained broadly steady, although one persistent risk deserves attention: H5N1 continues circulating across all seven continents. A quieter news cycle does not mean the underlying disease threat has diminished.

↗ Direction: **beef — holding at record highs. Poultry — stable, with avian influenza risk.**



FATS & OILS

EDIBLE OILS & FATS

The category where government policy increasingly outweighs agricultural conditions. Soybean oil's rally has been propelled primarily by biofuel mandates, including Washington's proposed 60% increase in 2027 blending requirements and Indonesia's planned move from 40% to 50% palm-biodiesel blending. Both drivers remained firmly embedded in market expectations throughout this reporting period. Anyone evaluating edible oils through crop forecasts alone risks missing the forces currently shaping prices.

↗ Direction: **firm, policy-driven.**



BEVERAGES

TEA

The least eventful category on the desk this fortnight. Prices remained elevated but largely unchanged, with no development in the news flow substantial enough to alter market direction. East African auction volumes remain the principal variable worth monitoring, rather than any isolated headline or short-term price movement.

→ Direction: **flat.**



SPECIALTY / RELATIONSHIP-PRICED

PULSES & LEGUMES - FOOD INGREDIENTS & ADDITIVES

Two categories that resist conventional market-chart analysis. Neither has a comprehensive public benchmark index — a reflection of how these products trade, not an absence of commercial activity. Prices depend heavily on supplier relationships, product specifications, origin and individual transaction terms. This fortnight's assessment is therefore necessarily different: public price indicators reveal little, while direct supplier and buyer intelligence provides the commercially relevant picture.

→ Direction: **not index-tracked — deal-by-deal.**



FERTILIZERS & AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

UREA - SULFUR

Urea offers the fortnight's clearest lesson in market reversal. Middle Eastern benchmarks surged earlier this year amid genuine concerns over supply disruption. Beijing subsequently released additional export quotas during July and August, easing availability and allowing prices to surrender much of their earlier gains. This reporting period brought no comparable new movement; instead, the market consolidated around the levels established after China's intervention, awaiting clarity on future export availability. Sulfur presented a different picture: no meaningful new catalyst emerged, leaving prices elevated relative to Chinese benchmarks but essentially unchanged.

→ Direction: **urea — below previous highs, consolidating. Sulfur — flat.**

Ten commodity lines, seven categories and no common market direction — precisely why comprehensive monitoring matters more than following whichever commodity dominates the headlines.

QAA's AI Commodity Intelligence Platform tracks all ten continuously, extending well beyond CARAVAN's fortnightly reporting cycle. Our Market Advisory service adds trend analysis, purchase-timing signals and regular client briefings, helping businesses recognize turning points like urea's reversal while they are unfolding, rather than after the opportunity has passed.

Explore live market intelligence and our advisory services at intelligence.qasralanqaa.com, or connect with QAA through our official website at qasralanqaa.com.

EXECUTIVE VOICE

When the Customer Is an Algorithm



By Sara Sayyad—
The CARAVAN Editorial Team

“Not because its credibility is questionable. Because that credibility has never been made legible to a machine.”

There is a question every company in this region knows how to answer about a prospective buyer: does this person trust us?

Ask the same question about the system increasingly standing between that buyer and the market, and the answer becomes less certain. Most companies have spent years earning the confidence of people. Far fewer have considered what it takes to establish credibility with a machine.

The distinction matters because the first encounter between a buyer and a supplier may no longer involve either company speaking to the other.

An AI procurement agent does not visit your office, recognize a familiar surname, or remember the transaction your father completed with its client's family twenty years ago. It works with what it can access and evaluate: company registrations, structured product information, verifiable certifications, transaction records where available, and the consistency of a business's identity across different sources.

A company may have spent decades earning an excellent reputation and still be absent from the results an automated sourcing system presents to its user.

Consider what being discoverable once meant in regional trade. A listing in the right directory. A booth at a major exhibition. A recommendation from a broker who knew the market. A telephone number passed between two people who trusted each other.

Those channels have not disappeared. They remain essential to the relationships through which complex transactions are negotiated and completed. What is changing is the sequence in which a potential buyer encounters them.

Increasingly, a digital system may determine which suppliers deserve human attention in the first place.

It may compare registration details, product specifications, certifications, geographic coverage and published company information before anyone makes a call. An outdated address, an expired certification displayed as current, or three different versions of a subsidiary's name may be details a longstanding business partner would readily explain. To an automated system assessing consistency and reliability, they may instead become reasons for further verification, lower visibility or exclusion from a shortlist.

There is an uncomfortable implication here for businesses that have built their commercial standing almost entirely through relationships.



A reputation that cannot be verified digitally may never reach the person who would have valued it most.

This is not a call to chase search rankings or manufacture an online image more impressive than the business behind it. It is an argument for treating a company's digital identity as part of its commercial infrastructure.

Registration details should agree across sources. Certifications should be current and independently verifiable. Product information should be sufficiently structured to support comparison. A company's legal entities, operating locations and commercial capabilities should be understandable without requiring a personal introduction to explain them.

These are not simply marketing concerns. They increasingly affect whether a business enters the procurement process at all.

The next generation of buyers may still prefer the familiar reassurance of a personal relationship. They may still negotiate over coffee, visit a facility and rely on people whose judgment they trust. But the list of companies they choose to meet could already have been shaped by a system operating long before the first conversation.

For a region whose commercial history rests so heavily on personal trust, the adjustment is significant. It asks businesses to translate something deeply human — a reputation earned through years of keeping promises — into evidence that can travel independently of the people who built it.

That does not diminish the value of relationships. It changes what a company must do to ensure those relationships have the opportunity to begin.

“The handshake may still close the deal. But increasingly, the algorithm decides who gets through the door.”

CLOSING REMARKS

Ten commodity lines, seven categories and a changing definition of who gets discovered, trusted and chosen.

This issue has examined what happens when intelligent systems enter the commercial process — from the way businesses find suppliers and evaluate risk to the changing infrastructure of global trade itself.

The next question is what happens when those systems begin acting on the information they collect.

CARAVAN returns in two weeks with another examination of the forces reshaping international business.

Until then, the trading desk remains open.

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Intelligence That Informs Better Business Decisions

From market entry to investment execution, QAA combines research, commercial intelligence and advisory expertise to support businesses operating across international markets.

SERVICE	WHAT WE DELIVER
Market Research	Sector-specific analysis of demand, pricing, competition and market-entry opportunities, helping businesses understand a market before committing resources.
Trade Intelligence	Supplier and buyer intelligence, commodity-market monitoring, trade-route analysis and compliance insights across QAA's international trading network.
Business Valuation	Independent assessment of business value to support acquisitions, disposals, capital raising and strategic ownership decisions.
Investment Advisory	Structured support for investment opportunities, asset sourcing, transaction evaluation and deal structuring across regional and international markets.

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CARAVAN is the executive newsletter of Qasr Al Anqaa Group of Companies, published every two weeks.

