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A foot in America

China plus one made Indian chemical producers global by accident. Staying global means being inside the American market, not shipping into it.

For Indian producers who want to sell in America, or to have a facility or set-up there. You get the routes in compared on cost and time, your duty and registration position under each, and key contacts at US buyers and distributors.

CONSULTING · UNITED STATES MARKET ENTRY · SEPTEMBER 2026
With our associates in the US

1 The moment

The five years since the pandemic have been kind to this industry. Buyers who once placed everything in China wanted a second source, and Indian producers who had spent a decade selling domestically found themselves with order books in Rotterdam and Houston. Some are now global companies. Many more are ambitious, growing, and discovering that the next step is harder than the last one.

That step is the United States, and it is not an export problem. It is a question of standing. An Indian producer selling into America is an importer, and an importer is exposed to every tightening Washington chooses to make — on duty, on registration, on origin. A producer who owns something in America is a domestic supplier, with a domestic supplier's standing. The material may be identical. The position is not.

18%	0%	7 Feb 2026
Reciprocal tariff applied to Indian organic chemicals, plastics and rubber under the framework announced in February 2026	The tariff on the same material once it is produced, blended or finished inside the United States	Date the earlier 25% additional duty on Indian goods was removed and the reciprocal framework took its place

The arithmetic is blunt. On a container of organic chemical worth $200,000, an 18% reciprocal tariff is $36,000 — before freight, before the customs bond, before the compliance cost of being the importer of record. On volume, it decides whether the business pays at all. And it is a number set by policy, which means it can move again in either direction while your customer is deciding whether to rely on you.

There is more than one way in. You can sell through a distributor, open a sales office, set up your own company, run a facility there, or buy a US business. For each, we set out what it costs to set up and to run, what it needs in registrations and people, and how long before it earns.

How the work runs

1	**A first conversation**	What you want in America: a customer base, a plant, or simply a position.
2	**The routes**	Each costed, with its registrations, people and time to first revenue.
3	**The trade**	Landed cost in both directions, for the grades you make.
4	**The answer**	One recommendation; and, where buying is the route, the candidate search.

Time Six to twelve weeks for the study.

2 What the importer carries

Duty is the visible cost. These are the others, and they fall on the importer of record, not on the shipper.

Obligation	What it means in practice
TSCA certification	Every chemical shipment entering the United States must carry a signed certification, filed electronically with Customs before the shipment is released — either that the substances comply with the Toxic Substances Control Act, or that they fall outside it. The certifier gives a name, email and telephone number. The liability is personal and it sits with the importer or its agent.
Inventory status	A substance not on the TSCA Inventory cannot simply be sold. It requires a pre-manufacture notice to the EPA and a waiting period before commerce may begin. This is the single most common reason an Indian producer's first US order fails.
Anti-dumping and countervailing duty	A petition by a US producer can add duty retrospectively, at rates that make a contract unprofitable after it has been signed. Exposure follows the country of origin, not the seller.
Origin and marking	Country of origin governs duty, marking and procurement eligibility. Processing that does not substantially transform the material does not change it.
State regulation	California's Proposition 65 and equivalent state rules apply on top of federal law, and are enforced privately as well as publicly.
Transport and labelling	Safety data sheets to the US GHS format, hazard labelling, and transport classification — all in the American form, not the Indian one.

> **The point of the list.** None of these obligations disappears when you set up in America. What changes is who carries them, how early you see them coming, and whether your customer regards you as a supplier to plan around or a shipment to clear.

The study sets out your duty and registration position as an importer today, and how each route changes it.

3 Four ways in

They differ in cost, in speed, and in how much of the tariff and regulatory position they actually change. Most companies we work with end up with the third or the fourth, having assumed at the outset that they wanted the first.

Route	What it gives you	Time to stand up
Liaison office	Presence, a local voice, customer visits, and someone to answer a Tuesday morning telephone call. It does not change your tariff position.	6–10 weeks
Distribution or agency	Reach without fixed cost. You remain the importer, and the relationship with the end customer belongs to somebody else.	2–4 months
Acquisition	An existing customer base, staff, permits and — decisively — a domestic manufacturing or finishing position. The fastest route to being treated as an American supplier.	6–18 months
Blending or finishing plant	Domestic standing built rather than bought. Slower and often cheaper; permits and hiring are the constraint, not capital.	12–24 months

Why acquisition is usually the honest answer

The American chemical middle market is full of businesses whose owners are retiring: family-owned formulators, blenders, distributors and finishing operations, sound on their numbers, with customer relationships two decades old and no successor. They rarely reach an auction process. They are found by knowing the trade — which is the same way a price is found.

Our associates in the US work with a handful of subject-matter specialists who know that market. We bring the other half: what the material is worth, who buys it in India and in America, and whether the business being sold is well or badly placed for what the next five years will do to its feedstock.

Where buying is the route, you get a screened list of candidates by segment and geography: what each does, what it earns, and why it is available.

4 Buying a company: what actually happens

Indian buyers are told that American national security review will stop them. For the businesses described here, that is usually wrong, and knowing why is worth money.

When review is mandatory	Only for what the regime calls TID businesses — critical technologies, critical infrastructure or sensitive personal data — and then chiefly where a foreign government holds a substantial interest in the buyer, or where the technology would require an export licence. A family blending business is not usually any of these things.
When it is voluntary	Most transactions within the regime's reach do not meet the mandatory test. Filing is then a judgement about certainty rather than a legal requirement — and non-notified deals are actively pursued afterwards, so the judgement matters.
How long	A short-form declaration typically 5–8 weeks. A full notice 3–5 months: 45 days of review, often a further 45 days of investigation.
What it costs	Declarations carry no fee. Notices are charged on deal value, from about $750 at the smallest end.
The direction of travel	Current policy explicitly favours faster treatment for investors from allied countries, and mitigation agreements have become markedly less common than they were.

> **What we do here, and what we do not.** We are not lawyers, bankers or accountants, and we do not pretend to be. We work alongside our associates in the US, who are. What we bring is knowledge of both markets in the same detail, at the same time, from one desk — which is what tells you whether the business is worth buying at all.

5 Which way should the trade run?

Not every answer is export. American chemistry retains genuine cost advantages in several intermediates and in feedstock-linked products, and for some Indian producers the sensible structure imports from the United States rather than into it — or does both, through the same entity, netting the freight.

That question is settled with arithmetic rather than instinct: landed cost in both directions, at today's duty, with the freight and the currency as they are, across the grades you actually make. It is a week's work and it has changed the plan of more than one company that arrived certain it wanted a sales office.

6 How the engagement works

What lands on your desk

- The routes compared: distributor, sales office, own company, facility, or buying a business — what each costs to set up and to run, and how long before it earns
- Your duty and registration position as an importer today, and under each route
- Key contacts at US buyers and distributors for your product
- Where the trade should run, with the landed-cost arithmetic in both directions
- Where buying is the route, a screened list of candidates, and support through the conversations with owners
- A single recommendation, with the number attached

How long it takes

Six to twelve weeks for the study. An acquisition search runs as long as it runs — candidates are found, not ordered.

How it starts

A conversation about what you want in America. It helps to bring your product range, your current exports and the capital available.

Talk to the desk

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Sources and standing. Tariff position: United States–India Joint Statement, The White House, February 2026; and KPMG TaxNewsFlash, "United States removes tariffs on imports from India", 7 February 2026. Import obligations: US Environmental Protection Agency, "TSCA Requirements for Importing Chemicals". Investment review: White & Case, "Foreign direct investment reviews 2026: United States". This document describes the position as at September 2026 and is written to inform a commercial decision. It is not legal, tax or customs advice, and tariff measures in particular are changing quickly. Nothing here should be acted on without professional advice on the specific transaction.