The Agro *Journal*



AI editorial illustration of a container vessel and quayside crane.

Two California ports handled 45% of US containerised grain exports

Los Angeles and Long Beach handled about 346,000 TEU of grain exports in January–September. A tentative port labour agreement brings the next decision to a union vote.

Market facts

The container share

In its 26 November Grain Transportation Report, USDA cited PIERS data showing that Los Angeles and Long Beach together handled about 346,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) of outbound grain from January through September 2026. That represented 45% of the US grain export container count on the same TEU basis. Bulk grain loaded directly into ships falls outside that measure.

What the employers announced

On 21 November the Pacific Maritime Association said it and ILWU Local 26 had agreed provisional contract terms covering about 250 port watchmen. The existing contract was extended pending a vote by union members.

Inland grain movements

On a separate route, US Army Corps of Engineers figures in USDA table 10 show that barges moved 433,000 US tons of corn and 429,000 US tons of soybeans in the week ended 21 November. Those river movements are reported by weight. They cannot be added to a container count.

Release calendar

Barchart’s Austin Schroeder noted on 25 November that Thanksgiving would delay the weekly US export sales release. USDA confirmed that figures for the week ended 19 November were due on Friday, 27 November. Until then, both net sales and actual exports for that week remain pending.

NALAM perspective

What matters for a booking

A buyer moving grain in containers through Southern California has two dates to check with the carrier: the terminal gate cut-off and the booked sailing. The labour agreement addresses one source of uncertainty. A booking confirmation still has to name the terminal, vessel and cut-off.

A different question for bulk cargo

For bulk wheat or corn, the comparison starts with the loading terminal, vessel size and shipment window. A 45% share of container traffic gives a buyer no basis to reprice a Gulf bulk cargo, a Black Sea coaster or a soybean meal parcel on another route.

Sources

Checked 26 November 2026.

USDA AMS · Grain Transportation Report, 26 November, pp. 2–3 and table 10 (PDF)

Pacific Maritime Association · employer statement, 21 November

Austin Schroeder, Barchart · Corn Rallies into Thanksgiving Break, 25 November

Fastmarkets · Sunoil FOB Six Ports, USD/mt · AG-SSD-0003

Northwest European sunflower oil · FOB Six Ports · USD/mt · AG-SSD-0003. No fresh verified quote.