



# Why Supply Chain Resilience Starts with Better Trade Data

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## SUPPLY CHAIN

# Why Supply Chain Resilience Starts with Better Trade Data

By Sayari Analyst Team · Published September 2025

*USTR's 2025 policy initiative reveals the core gap: companies can't build resilient supply chains without knowing what they're actually routing.*

The U.S. Trade Representative published a six-paper policy series in January 2025 on supply chain resilience. The papers addressed tariff strategy, investment screening, labor enforcement, and industrial policy. But one paper cut to the structural problem that makes all of those policies difficult to execute: data. The paper, titled "Improving Data and Analytical Tools to Promote Supply Chain Resilience," made an observation that sounds simple but explains why most supply chain resilience initiatives fail: companies cannot trace their supply chains in real time because the data is unstructured, dispersed, and rapidly outdated. This is not a problem the USTR invented. It is a problem the USTR discovered by watching companies try to respond to Section 301 tariffs on Chinese goods. When tariffs doubled on specific product categories, companies had to reroute supply from China to Vietnam, Mexico, or India. But they couldn't reroute because they didn't actually know what they were routing. They knew who they bought from. They didn't know who that supplier bought from, or where those sub-tier materials originated.

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## Tariff Evasion Through Structural Opacity

A supplier in Vietnam might be using Chinese yarn that arrives via transshipment and gets relabeled as Vietnamese. A Mexican maquiladora might be importing Chinese textiles under the IMMEX duty-free program and exporting finished goods as Mexican-origin. An Indian factory might be powered by Chinese equipment and using Chinese-sourced components. The tariff that was supposed to pressure China was being evaded through structural opacity three tiers deep. This happens because supply chains operate on the basis of need-to-know contracts. Tier-1 suppliers don't ask where their suppliers source materials—they ask for price and quality. Tier-1 buyers don't need to know their tier-2 dependencies until a tariff, a labor allegation, or a sanctions violation forces the question. By then, weeks have been lost. The CBP Enforce and Protect Act (EAPA) investigations are beginning to target companies and suppliers that use tariff evasion schemes—routes that look compliant at tier-1 but fail at tier-2 and tier-3. Companies that don't have visibility into their sub-tier relationships are sitting ducks for these investigations. A supplier using a prohibited source, rerouting through an intermediate, or exploiting a program like Mexico's IMMEX without the buyer's explicit knowledge—these are situations where the buyer's ignorance is not a defense. It is evidence of insufficient control.

## Resilience Theater vs. Real Resilience

Resilience, properly defined, is the ability to absorb a shock and recover. But resilience requires visibility before a shock arrives. Most companies have invested in resilience theater instead: dual sourcing on paper, alternative suppliers listed on a spreadsheet, relationships that look good in an annual review. When the shock comes—a tariff revision, a geopolitical event, a disclosure of forced labor in a supply chain tier they didn't know they had—the alternatives don't exist or aren't workable because their capacity is already committed elsewhere. The Section 301 tariff experience taught the USTR that something is always breaking. A tariff revision happens overnight. A labor allegation surfaces via news article. Sanctions are added to a list. A supplier relationship is exposed through public investigation. By the time a company finds out through traditional channels, they are already exposed. Companies that built tier-N visibility ahead of shocks were able to respond in days. Companies that didn't are still reorganizing their supply chains now, three years after Section 301 tariffs took effect. Some have given up on particular markets entirely because they couldn't identify alternatives quickly enough.

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## Tier-N Visibility as Competitive Advantage

The USTR recognized that companies cannot build real supply chain resilience without data infrastructure. Not policy. Not tariff threats. Data. Specifically, visibility into who supplies your suppliers, which suppliers are dual-sourced or single-source, where materials actually originate, and which dependencies are exposed to the same regulatory or geopolitical risk. This is what the USTR called "analytical tools to promote resilience." It is not analytical tools in the dashboard sense. It is data infrastructure that lets a procurement team answer real questions in real time: If we lose Vietnam supply, what's the impact to our tier-2 dependencies? If Chinese inputs are banned, which of our suppliers are exposed? If this supplier goes down, who else can we turn to, and do they have actual available capacity? Those questions require tier-N visibility. Not just direct relationships. Not just tier-1 and tier-2 where you might have a contract that specifies sourcing. Tier-3, tier-4, and beyond-the dependencies that exist but are not formally tracked because traditional supply chain management assumes you don't need to track them unless something breaks.

## Building Infrastructure for Real Resilience

The USTR paper frames this as a policy problem—the U.S. needs better supply chain data infrastructure so companies can be more resilient and less dependent on Chinese manufacturing. But the real problem is commercial. Companies that have tier-N visibility are winning market share from companies that don't. Companies that know which suppliers are dual-sourced are sleeping at night. Companies that don't know are managing crises. The path to real supply chain resilience is unglamorous: build tier-N visibility, keep it updated, and model the impact of various shocks before they happen. That work is not something a compliance dashboard can do. It requires data infrastructure that lets you traverse supply chain networks the way a network engineer traverses a data network—mapping nodes, identifying single points of failure, finding alternative paths. This is the infrastructure the USTR called for. This is what companies that survived Section 301 without disruption actually built. And this is what companies that want to build resilience—not resilience theater—need to deploy now.

Sayari's supply chain mapping platform does exactly this: it maps your suppliers, your suppliers' suppliers, and beyond—showing you actual corporate relationships and dependencies, not what supplier databases guess them to be. Explore Sourcing & Procurement to understand how tier-N visibility works, review Sayari Map to see how real supply chain networks are visualized, and request a demo to map your own supply chain the way the USTR says companies should—with data, not assumptions.

Please visit [sayari.com](https://sayari.com) to learn more.

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