

Brazil Brief

Brazil Amid Global Trade Reconfiguration: New Agreements and Tariff Barriers

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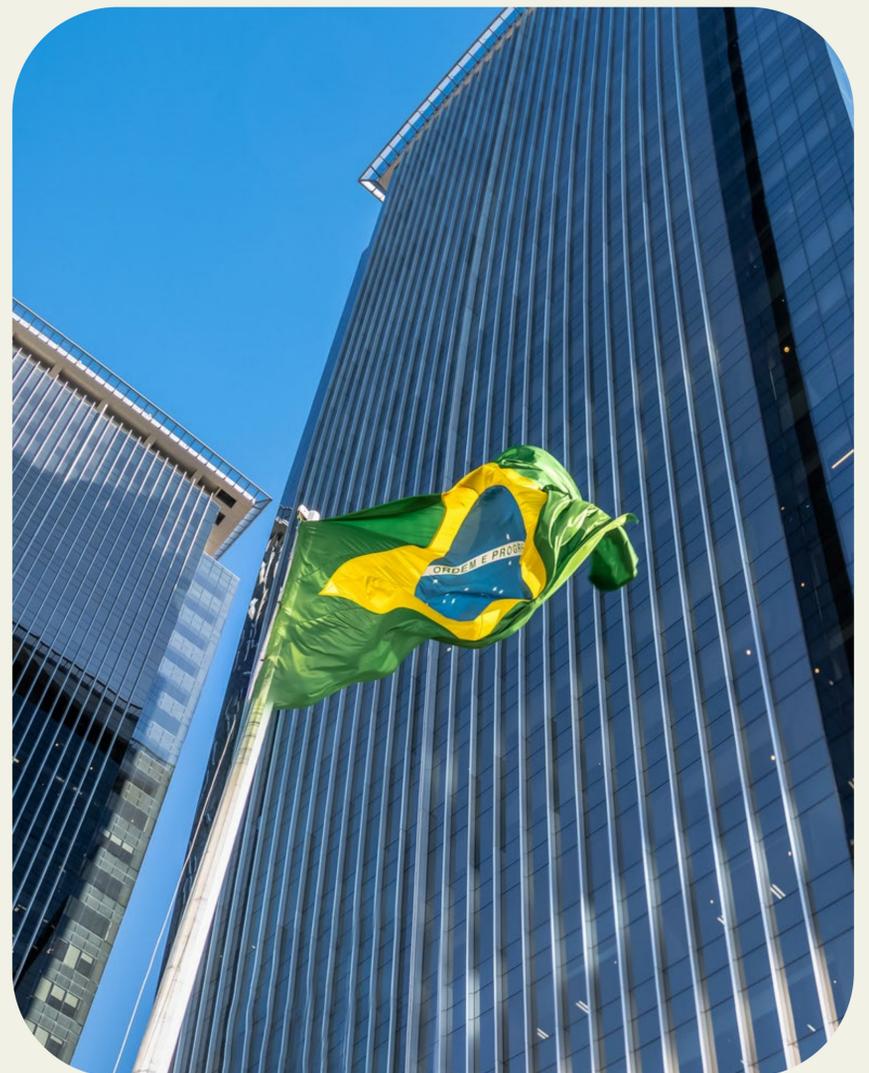
**Vieira
Rezende**

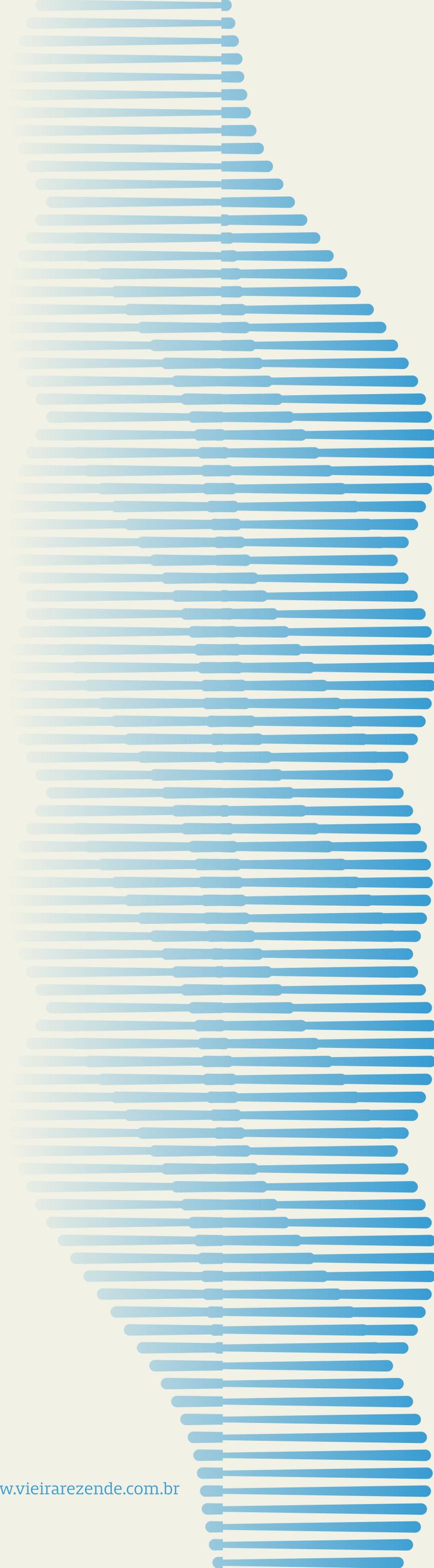
Between Tariffs and Trade Agreements: Brazil's Strategic Position in a Fragmenting Trade Order

Global trade enters 2026 shaped by two parallel dynamics. On one side, major economies are intensifying tariff measures and industrial policy initiatives. On the other, regional trade agreements are accelerating as countries seek to secure market access and regulatory predictability. Supply chains are increasingly being redesigned not only around cost efficiency, but also around economic security, geographic diversification, and institutional stability. As a result, the global environment is becoming both more complex and more selective.

Within this context, Brazil is emerging as a relevant diplomatic and commercial player. The country maintains strong economic ties with the United States, and continues to deepen its partnership with China—its largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching US\$171 billion and capital goods imports growing 11.5% over the past year—and is advancing negotiations on agreements with the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the bloc comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein. At the same time, ongoing negotiations with Canada and Japan signal an expansion of trade dialogue and investment facilitation.

This dynamic reinforces Brazil's role as the leading economy in Latin America and as a regional platform for global production chains. In a scenario of increasing geoeconomic fragmentation, Brazil's ability to engage constructively with multiple economic blocs strengthens its position as a point of convergence between markets.





This external positioning is accompanied by a parallel process of domestic institutional reform. The regulatory modernization agenda—which includes tax reform, updates to foreign trade regulations, consolidation of the port regulatory framework, and policies to promote cabotage shipping—aims to bring Brazil closer to international standards of governance and operational efficiency. At the same time, new cycles of concessions and investments in logistics infrastructure are intended to address longstanding bottlenecks and expand the country’s capacity to integrate into global value chains.

The combination of active economic diplomacy and ongoing domestic institutional adjustments places Brazil in a distinctive position within the evolving global trade landscape. However, effective strategic integration will depend on coordinated implementation across trade policy, infrastructure development, and legal certainty. In this edition of Brazil Brief, experts from Vieira Rezende examine how agreements with the European Union and EFTA expand market access, how port modernization supports this process, and which tax and regulatory instruments can transform commercial opportunities into structured, long-term investment operations.

Europe's Geopolitical Repositioning and the Strengthening of Brazil as a Strategic Partner



Camila Borba Lefèvre
Partner | Corporate/M&A

The signing of the agreements between Mercosur and the European Union and between Mercosur and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) represents more than a simple reduction in tariffs. It reflects a broader process of regulatory convergence and institutional repositioning at a time when major economies are reassessing their trade strategies. In an environment marked by increasing selectivity and the strategic use of tariffs, comprehensive and legally structured agreements serve as instruments of predictability.

The progress of these negotiations—after more than two decades of discussions in the European Union—places Brazil within a trade framework that prioritizes clear rules, integrated production chains, and legal certainty for investment flows. Although the agreement with the EU remains in the ratification phase and is still subject to internal debates within the European bloc, its formalization is already influencing medium and long-term business decisions.



Brazil maintains a diplomatic stance of neutrality and preserves relevant trade relations with the United States, China, and Europe. In a context where some economies are increasingly resorting to tariffs, strengthening agreements with other blocs becomes a strategy for diversification and predictability.

Camila Borba Lefèvre

From a sectoral perspective, the effects extend beyond agribusiness. The gradual reduction of tariffs and the alignment of regulatory standards are expected to impact industries such as chemicals and pharmaceuticals, machinery and equipment, electronics, and transportation. Integration within production chains is also likely to intensify, particularly given that a significant share of Brazilian industry relies on imported inputs and technology.





Tariff reductions improve local competitiveness and may stimulate productive investments in the country, including in industrial sectors with higher added value.

Camila Borba Lefèvre

There is also an important institutional dimension. The agreement expands access for European companies to Brazil's public procurement and bidding processes, creating a more symmetrical environment for domestic and foreign investors. At a time when infrastructure projects are expanding, this regulatory convergence strengthens predictability and helps reduce competitive asymmetries.

The ESG agenda is also central to this equation. The European Union has increasingly incorporated requirements related to traceability, sustainability, and decarbonization into its trade policies. Brazil, with its predominantly renewable energy matrix and established environmental regulatory framework, is well-positioned to meet these standards.



Companies producing in Brazil, using clean energy and complying with environmental regulations, tend to gain a competitive advantage when accessing the European market.

Camila Borba Lefèvre

Sustainability is no longer simply a reputational commitment; it is becoming an integral component of business strategy.

Port Infrastructure as a Foundation for Global Integration



Bernardo Mendes Vianna
Partner | Maritime

Expanding Brazil's trade agenda requires robust physical infrastructure. The growing flow of goods and the expansion of access to international markets are placing increasing pressure on the country's logistics capacity. The steady rise in container traffic, combined with structural changes in the shipping industry, particularly the deployment of larger vessels and increasing operational efficiency, requires continuous investment in dredging, deepening access channels, and modernizing port terminals.

The Port of Santos, the country's main logistics hub, is already discussing further deepening of its navigation channel to accommodate vessels with greater container capacity, enabling significant gains in logistical scale. At the same time, the concessions and leasing policy structured by the Ministry of Ports and Airports and the National Waterway Transportation Agency (ANTAQ) is expanding private participation in the sector. This movement combines capital attraction, regulatory predictability, and the expansion of installed capacity.

Although the Southeast region—home to Brazil's main ports, including Santos and Rio de Janeiro—continues to play a central role in national logistics, the current investment cycle is not limited to this area.



Frederico Siqueira
Associate | Maritime

Ports in the North and Northeast regions are gaining importance, both because of their geographic proximity to European shipping routes and their strategic role in export chains, particularly those connected to North America. This regional diversification of logistics infrastructure helps reduce systemic costs, increase competitiveness, and strengthen the resilience of Brazilian foreign trade.



International agreements expand foreign trade and increase long-distance maritime flows, while the BR do Mar program strengthens coastal shipping. They are complementary instruments.

Bernardo Mendes Vianna

The BR do Mar program—a federal initiative designed to encourage cargo transportation between Brazilian ports through fleet expansion and regulatory flexibility—is part of the sector's broader modernization strategy. According to Vianna, the clear allocation of responsibilities among ANTAQ, the Ministry, and the Navy reinforces legal certainty and supports long-term investment decisions.

The environmental dimension is also gaining increasing relevance. The decarbonization of maritime transport has already become part of the European regulatory agenda and is influencing global financing conditions and operational standards. According to Frederico Siqueira, a member of the Maritime Law team at Vieira Rezende, the adoption of green shipping practices is set to play an increasingly strategic role in Brazil.



As Brazil deepens its commercial integration with Europe, adapting to emission-reduction and energy-efficiency standards becomes a competitive advantage for ports and operators.

Frederico Siqueira

Infrastructure prepared to accommodate new technologies and alternative fuels is becoming integral to the sector's economic rationale.

In this context, port modernization goes beyond addressing historical bottlenecks and becomes a central component of the strategic architecture supporting Brazil's integration into global trade.

Where Are the Opportunities in the Brazilian Port Sector?

- Participation in port terminal auctions and leasing processes promoted by ANTAQ.
- Dredging projects aimed at accommodating larger vessels and increasing port capacity.
- Structuring concession projects through consortia and joint ventures with local operators.
- Investments in technological modernization and infrastructure designed to support more efficient and environmentally sustainable vessels.
- Logistics development in ports located in Brazil's North and Northeast regions, strategically positioned along trade routes to Europe and North America.

Legal Certainty, Taxation, and Compliance: Executing the Commercial Strategy



Paloma Amorim da C. Rosa

Partner | Tax & Customs

Amid the opportunities created by the opening of new markets, Brazil's expansion in international trade cannot rely solely on the signing of bilateral agreements or on increased investment in infrastructure. In an environment where tariffs and non-tariff barriers are increasingly used as instruments of economic policy, the legal framework governing operations becomes a central element of competitiveness.

The effectiveness of tariff benefits depends on strict compliance with rules of origin, accurate tax classification, and full traceability throughout the production chain.



The tariff benefit is not automatic. Signing the agreement is only the starting point. The structure of the operation must be adapted to the technical and customs requirements.

Paloma Amorim da C. Rosa

At the same time, compliance instruments are becoming increasingly integrated into companies' strategic frameworks. The Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program, implemented by Brazil's Federal Revenue Service, for example, signals the country's alignment with international best practices for secure and efficient trade. Certified companies operate with greater predictability and in closer alignment with global compliance standards.

Tax reform is part of this broader process of institutional rationalization. Although the transition period requires adjustments, the stated objective is to simplify consumption taxation, reduce long-standing distortions, and bring the Brazilian tax system closer to international practices. Alongside customs modernization and the negotiation of new trade agreements, the country is seeking to build a more transparent business environment that is compatible with global value chains.

In a global landscape increasingly marked by fragmentation and selectivity, trade agreements, infrastructure development, and regulatory architecture can no longer be treated as separate agendas. Instead, they form part of an integrated strategy for international engagement. By aligning trade policy, institutional modernization, and legal certainty, Brazil not only expands market access but also strengthens its role as a stable and, in many respects, more reliable link between major economic centers. The opportunity is clear. The decisive factor will be the ability to structure it with technical precision, institutional coordination, and a long-term vision.

Foreign Desks and Economic Diplomacy in Practice

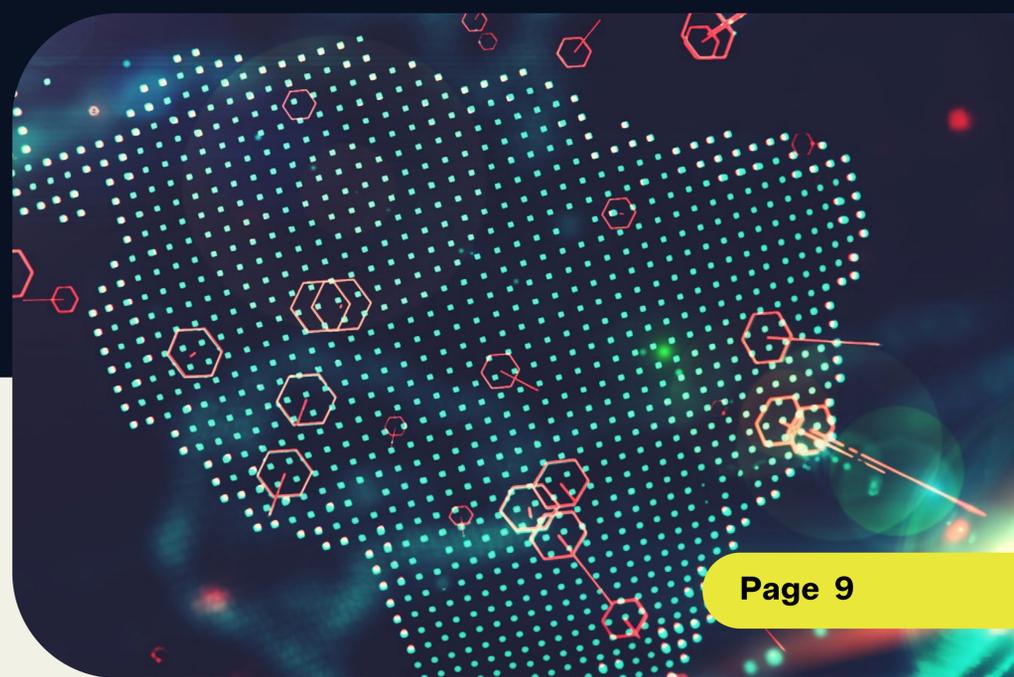
The intensification of trade relations between Brazil and its European partners is also reflected in Vieira Rezende's international structure. The firm maintains desks dedicated to strategic jurisdictions within the evolving context of regulatory integration and expanding investment flows between Mercosur and Europe.

The **Dutch Desk**, led by partner **Camila Borba Lefèvre**, monitors investments by Dutch companies that use Brazil as a productive and logistical platform for regional operations. Given the Netherlands' central role as a commercial gateway to the European Union, coordination between the legal frameworks of both markets becomes a key factor in the effective implementation of cross-border operations.

The French and Norwegian desks operate in a coordinated manner in sectors with significant strategic overlap. The **French Desk**, led by partner **Bernardo Mendes Vianna**, focuses on energy, infrastructure, maritime, and oil sectors—areas that have historically been central to the economic relationship between Brazil and France and that continue to play a prominent role in the bilateral investment agenda.

The **Norwegian Desk**, led by partner **Daniela Davila**, concentrates on the energy, oil and gas, and offshore sectors, bringing strong technical expertise to these sectors. Since 2011, the firm has maintained an institutional partnership with the Norwegian law firm Wikborg Rein, which provides strategic support to both desks, particularly in cross-border transactions involving European structures and assets in Brazil.

The convergence of the energy, maritime, and offshore sectors strengthens the technical capabilities of both practices at a time when the Mercosur–EU and Mercosur–EFTA agreements are increasing regulatory predictability and promoting greater integration of production chains. In an environment of ongoing trade reconfiguration, this coordinated structure enables the firm to advise French and Norwegian investors on adapting to new market access rules, the decarbonization agenda, and the expansion of infrastructure projects in Brazil.



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Bernardo has more than 25 years of experience in the areas of maritime and port law, notably in dealing with disputes involving maritime transport of cargo and foreign trade in general: shipowners, charterers, transporters, P&I Clubs, insurance companies, maritime agents, terminals and port operators, shipyards, tradings, shippers and consignees and cargo owners.



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Paloma's experience includes the analysis and structuring of tax planning, the identification and application of Special Tax and Customs Regimes, tax benefits and incentives, and the assessment and measurement of risks and tax exposure generated from their respective enjoyment. Other activities, such as defining strategies and advising on administrative and judicial disputes, are also included in the list of your skills.



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Camila is a partner in the corporate law and mergers and acquisitions area, having a strong presence in businesses involving joint ventures, corporate restructuring and business structuring. She has a vast practice in the technology, agribusiness and renewable energy sectors.



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Frederico has experience in disputes involving national and international maritime transport, as well as matters related to the occupation and use of port areas, interaction with port authorities, and the regulation of maritime claims with insurers. He also advises on the negotiation and drafting of maritime contracts, including shipbuilding, sale and purchase, and chartering of vessels.

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