

Finding the right source: Shutdowns and tight shipping challenge foreign sourcing and production



[Thomas Russell](#)//Senior Editor, Furniture Today • July 19, 2021

HIGH POINT — Ongoing challenges related to container availability and pricing combined with temporary countrywide shutdowns related to the global pandemic have made it extremely difficult for wood and upholstery resources to predict what's next in global sourcing.

Many say they are hoping for stability in container pricing along with further decreases in COVID-19 cases before committing to any plans to further develop sourcing in Asia or elsewhere. Others, while not totally abandoning Asia, say they are looking to the West, including parts of Europe and North and South America, for opportunities.

...

Diversifying the mix

Others said they, too, believe that ultimately diversifying one's sourcing portfolio will help ride out future challenges whether they be with supply chain, logistics or needing to offer new looks and materials in the marketplace.

Full line furniture resource Sunpan sources its mix out of China and Vietnam, as well as Malaysia, Indonesia and India.

While it continues to source product throughout Asia — and could likely grow in some of those countries — it has since diversified its sourcing beyond Asia to places such as Mexico, where it has developed a line of bedroom and dining room furniture, and Canada, where it has developed a line of domestic upholstery.

Now it is considering further diversifying within Mexico as well as places such as South America and Eastern Europe.

“Just like in a stock portfolio, you need to be really well diversified now more than ever,” said Carl Lovett, vice president, sales, noting that the pricing of the domestic upholstery is comparable with its Asian-sourced upholstery, of a model that is priced using a \$5,000 per container scenario.



[Thomas Russell](#)//Senior Editor, Furniture Today

I'm Tom Russell and have worked at Furniture/Today since August 2003. Since then, I have covered the international side of the business from a logistics and sourcing standpoint. Since then, I also have visited several furniture trade shows and manufacturing plants in Asia, which has helped me gain perspective about the industry in that part of the world. As I continue covering the import side of the business, I look forward to building on that knowledge base through conversations with industry officials and future overseas plant tours. From time to time, I will file news and other industry perspectives online and, as always, welcome your response to these Web postings.