

## SpaceX's Mega-IPO Faces a Huge Risk No One Knows About

Investors poring over the S-1 were focused on reward. They should also have been looking at helium — a supply chain risk the company didn't mention.

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**By AI Root**

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SPACE X 2025 REVENUE

**\$19B**

Primarily from Starlink broadband

HELIUM SPOT PRICE

**\$1,000+**

Per mcf, up from ~\$500 typical

SpaceX's S-1 IPO registration statement had investors poring over every line to find any edge in valuing Elon Musk's rocket company.

They were looking for reward. But they should also have been looking for risks. And there is one that SpaceX did not mention: helium, one of the world's most abundant chemical elements, which is very hard to get right now because of tariffs and the Iran war.

SpaceX did not respond to a request for comment about its helium risk.

All registration statements include the basics: a business description and financial data. SpaceX estimates its addressable market at \$28.5 trillion, with AI accounting for the vast majority of that. The company had almost \$19 billion in 2025 sales, most from its Starlink space-based broadband internet service.

Registration statements also list risk factors. SpaceX has more than three dozen. The first is Starship, the huge, fully reusable rocket system that will dramatically reduce the cost of reaching orbit. If Starship is not reliable, launch capacity goes down, and costs and business headwinds go up.

Others are fairly typical: laws governing AI, competition, the economy, and talent acquisition and retention. But nowhere is helium mentioned, even though Musk referenced it in a 2024 post. The noble gas, completely colorless, odorless, and tasteless, is used in rocket propulsion. Shortages and rising costs would impact SpaceX's business development plans.

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*“The global helium market is structurally an oligopoly, with production heavily concentrated in the United States, Qatar, Russia, and Algeria. This concentration renders the global supply chain exceptionally vulnerable to regional geopolitical tensions and trade restrictions.”*

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That assessment, from London merchant bank Ocean Wall, cuts to the core of the risk. SpaceX does list supply chain challenges as a risk factor, but the document goes no further than that on helium specifically.

Qatar produces about a third of the world’s helium annually. Helium is a byproduct of natural gas production, and Qatar’s ability to produce and export both natural gas and helium has been significantly restricted by the closure of the Hormuz Strait because of the Iran war.

The U.S. is the world’s largest helium producer and has reserves roughly 100 times its annual production, which might mean SpaceX’s biggest risk is rising prices rather than a physical shortage. Other industries are threatened by potential disruption too. A large share of the gas is also used in the semiconductor and medical industries.

Industrial gas companies such as Air Products are working to mitigate any impacts. “Air Products’ helium supply chain is very resilient with multiple sources in the U.S., in addition to our long-term partnerships in Algeria with Sonatrach and in Qatar with QatarEnergy,” the company said on its April earnings call.

Air Products is ready for whatever comes its way. Hopefully, so is SpaceX.

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