

Trade Facilitation and Transportation Linkages: Vehicles for Enhancing Competitiveness

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1. Introduction

Botswana is landlocked and therefore requires a simple, cost effective, efficient and predictable trade transaction process in order to be competitive. This also means that the process of exporting and importing, including transportation and payment has to be world class.

However Botswana continues to score poorly in the World Bank rankings on the ease of trading across partly because of its geographical location as a landlocked country but also due to the complex procedures (or non-tariff barriers.)

2. Operators continue to face a number of non-tariff barriers (NTB) such as:

a) Inconsistencies in weighbridge readings

A trucker who has been cleared at one Weigh Bridge is likely to be stopped at the next one. This brings into doubt whether due care is taken to calibrate weigh bridges in order to avoid such inconsistencies and inconveniences caused to hauliers.

b) Roadblocks

Truckers complain of repeated stops at the behest of authorities before reaching their destinations. These lead to time delays and costs

c) Truck height and length

Due to lack of standardised procedures, trucks continued to be flagged for traffic violations simply because of different application of rules on truck height and length (due to fitted bull bars.)

d) Kazungula Ferry delays

Trucks experience delays of up to a week to cross into Zambia from Botswana. However a bridge is being built over the Zambezi river and it

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is hoped that once complete it will facilitate the movement of goods into and out of Botswana.

e) Stray animals

Some operators have also expressed concerns at the threat posed by stray animals on the Trans Kalahari Corridor. Accidents have occurred as a result of trucks knocking down stray animals, leading to unnecessary time delays and destruction of assets.

3. Conclusion

a. Electronic single window

Botswana is in the process of developing an electronic single window. The initiative which is spearheaded by the Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) will bring interested parties such as security agencies, banks and tax authorities into a common platform in order to accelerate goods clearance and payment. The solution is also expected to lower the costs for doing business and thereby boost Botswana competitiveness.

b) A multiple-entry SADC Business Visa.

It is imperative for business in not only Botswana but the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) as a whole to lobby for not only the free movement of goods and services within the region, but of business people and capital as well. That would mean that a business visa granted to a non SADC national to enter Botswana for example, should be recognised by a fellow member state such as South Africa or Zimbabwe.

c) Increase opening hours for some borders

Some of Botswana's border posts should operate on a 24 hour basis to facilitate the movement of goods. At the moment the busiest border closes at midnight.