

COMMENTARY

The AfCFTA and Supply Chain Integration

A Governance and Logistics Analysis for the Democratic Republic of Congo

Jean-Paul Mbuyi¹|Patrice Luboya^{2,3}|Léonie Kabasele⁴

¹ Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomiques (INERA)

² Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomiques (INERA)

³ Official University of Mbuji-Mayi

⁴ Department of Research, Université Catholique du Congo

Correspondence: jmbuyi@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents a transformative framework for regional economic integration. Its potential impact on complex, fragmented supply chains in Central and Southern Africa, particularly for a nation with the Democratic Republic of Congo's logistical and governance challenges, requires critical analysis. This commentary analyses the AfCFTA's potential to reshape regional supply chains, with a specific focus on the governance and logistical constraints and opportunities for the DRC within Southern African trade networks. The analysis employs a structured, desk-based review of existing AfCFTA protocols, regional trade data, and governance literature, synthesising these to evaluate logistical and regulatory barriers to integration. A principal finding is that non-tariff barriers, particularly cumbersome border procedures and inconsistent customs administration, could undermine over 70% of the potential trade gains for the DRC unless specifically addressed by the agreement's implementation mechanisms. While the AfCFTA offers a significant opportunity for supply chain integration, its success for the DRC is contingent upon parallel, substantive reforms in domestic trade governance and regional logistics coordination. Policymakers should prioritise the harmonisation of customs procedures with neighbouring corridors and invest in targeted capacity-building for border agencies to expedite the movement of goods. AfCFTA, supply chains, trade governance, logistics, non-tariff barriers, regional integration This commentary provides a novel synthesis of logistics and governance analysis, framing the AfCFTA's success for the DRC not on tariff reduction alone, but on the concurrent resolution of entrenched procedural and administrative bottlenecks.

Keywords: *African Continental Free Trade Area, supply chain governance, regional economic integration, Southern Africa, logistics infrastructure, trade facilitation*

Article Highlights

- AfCFTA's success for the DRC hinges on resolving procedural bottlenecks, not just tariff reduction.
- Cumbersome border procedures and inconsistent customs administration are critical non-tariff barriers.
- Substantive reforms in domestic trade governance are a prerequisite for regional integration.
- Harmonising customs procedures with neighbouring

Core Policy Imperative

Policymakers must prioritise harmonising customs procedures and investing in border agency capacity to expedite goods movement and secure AfCFTA benefits.

This analysis frames integration success through the concurrent resolution of logistics and governance constraints.

corridors is a key policy priority.	
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