

Cross-Border

East Africa leads OSBP race

The expansion of One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) is a critical priority for improving cross-border trade and logistics efficiency.

Industry experts say fragmented regulatory frameworks, duplicated inspections and inconsistent enforcement across borders remain among the biggest constraints to corridor performance across the continent.

According to Amine Idriss Adoum from AUDA-NEPAD, regulators are increasingly promoting corridor-wide approaches to address these challenges and improve predictability.

“When freight moves across Africa, it does not move in pieces; it moves as part of a chain,” he said. “If one part of that chain slows down, the entire corridor slows down.”

He said corridor-wide regulation was essential to ensure that rules and procedures remained consistent

from origin to destination. This includes harmonised border procedures, road controls and transport standards.

“These improvements increase efficiency, which increases confidence and that in turn drives investment,” he said.

One of the most effective instruments for improving corridor performance has been the introduction of OSBPs, which allow border control agencies from neighbouring countries to operate jointly within a single facility.

Adoum said OSBPs addressed three key corridor bottlenecks: misalignment between countries, duplication of border processes and uneven enforcement.

“When you establish a proper OSBP you can significantly reduce processing time,” he said.

Evidence from East Africa shows the impact of the model. At several border crossings between Kenya and Tanzania,

border processing times have dropped from roughly 11 hours to just three hours following the introduction of OSBPs.

Across East Africa, more than 30 OSBPs are already operational, with around 80 more planned across the continent.

Similar approaches are now being promoted in West Africa as part of broader efforts to strengthen regional transport corridors.

According to Hannes van Wyk of Tolcon, a fundamental change is required in how borders and transport corridors are approached.

“You have to think region first and then corridor,” he said at the Infrastructure Africa conference in Cape Town.

“Too often we run into a number of problems because of a lack of harmonisation and because it was not approached from a regional perspective, but from the country.

Interoperability, integration, harmonisation and scalability are necessary if we want to improve cross-border trade.”

Adoum said one of the biggest problems facing African corridors was the lack of alignment between countries in areas such as customs procedures, inspection requirements and operating hours.

“Documents are often checked more than once, enforcement standards differ and transport operators face inconsistent roadside inspections,” he said.

In practice, improving corridor performance requires a number of coordinated actions.

These include aligning customs procedures and documentation, reducing duplicated inspections, integrating digital systems and establishing joint corridor management committees that share performance indicators.

Consistent axle-load enforcement across borders is also essential.” LV

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