

Air cargo stakeholders to fast-track AfCFTA operational progress

As air cargo and logistics industry stakeholders prepare to seize new opportunities presented by the new Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement with the industry gearing up to help fast-track cross-border partnerships and business growth.

"Cross-border trade has been growing in recent years, but the AfCFTA offers exciting new air cargo opportunities across what is now the world's largest free trade area, with an integrated market of 1.3 billion consumers. We expect strong growth across all industries, and in previously untapped areas such as pharmaceuticals, perishables and e-commerce," says Suzette Scheepers, CEO of Messe Muenchen South Africa.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

The African air cargo sector's industry exhibition and conference, Air Cargo Africa 2021, will focus on new AfCFTA opportunities and challenges, giving leading industry players an opportunity to seal cross-industry collaboration agreements and discuss the operational implementation of the AfCFTA agreement.

While Africa's key export markets remain the European Union and Asia, intra-African trade increased steadily in 2018, growing by 17% to reach \$159bn, according to African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank). Stakeholders hope to see the new free trade agreement growing trade to 53% by the mid-2020s, contributing \$70 billion to the continent's GDP.

Strengthening networking corridors

Africa's air freight sector could see strong growth on the back of the AfCFTA agreement, particularly if carriers are able to collaborate more, improve efficiencies and cost controls, and develop specialised infrastructure for the efficient handling of goods such as pharmaceuticals and perishables, Scheepers says.

"The Air Cargo Africa trade show, conference and awards engage leaders across the global and pan-African air cargo community to strengthen networking corridors with Africa – making this platform all the more important at a time when the industry is considering ways to implement the AfCFTA to the benefit of the entire continent," says Scheepers.

The conference will bring together industry bodies, airlines, airports, cargo handling companies, charter brokers, express services, forwarding agents, and suppliers of IT and control systems, logistics equipment and services, and security services from across Africa and around the world for two days of solution discovery, knowledge sharing and networking.

Running alongside the exhibition, the high-level industry conference presents a unique opportunity for international and African industry experts to debate trends, challenges and opportunities, and discover global best practice across topics such as digital developments, liberalisation and modernisation.

Air cargo Africa, presented by Messe Muenchen South Africa, will be staged at the Sandton Convention Centre from 9–11 February 2021.

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