CACUB

CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF CUSTOMS BROKERS



2025

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Welcome to CACUB Magazine 2025

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 edition of the CACUB Magazine, a publication that we envision as more than just a record of our activities. This magazine is designed to showcase the role of customs brokers across the Caribbean, highlight our shared challenges, celebrate our achievements, and provide a platform for dialogue among brokers, industry players, importers, and exporters. Our hope is that these pages will serve as both a resource and an inspiration—capturing the vibrancy of our profession and the vital contribution we make to regional and international trade.

In producing this magazine, CACUB aims to create a space where knowledge is exchanged, voices are amplified, and the profession of customs brokerage is recognized as a cornerstone of trade facilitation. From country reports to industry spotlights, we seek to shine a light on the experiences of our members while addressing the pressing issues of modernization, digitalization, and collaboration in today's global trading environment.

This publication also comes at a special moment for us, as we prepare to host the CACUB Regional Conference from September 25–27, 2025, in Miami, Florida. The conference will bring together customs brokers and trade professionals from across CARICOM and beyond, offering opportunities for discussion, learning, and networking in one of the world's most dynamic trade hubs.

As you turn the pages of this magazine and as we gather in Miami, we do so with a shared purpose: to strengthen the bonds of regional cooperation, to equip our members for the challenges of the future, and to ensure that the voice of Caribbean customs brokers remains strong and united.

Welcome to CACUB 2025—a year of dialogue, progress, and renewed partnership.

President
LOUIS FORDE
Caribbean Association of Customs Brokers

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ASYCUDA New Generation Digital Solutions for Efficient, Secure and Sustainable Trade

International trade is greatly accelerating in complexity due to various factors including supply chain disruptions, evolving regulations, exponential development of e-commerce and growing expectations for transparency and speed. This reality requires a foundational transformation in the methodologies deployed within customs and border processes.

In response, UNCTAD has developed the new generation of ASYCUDA; a generation which is demand-driven and strategically responsive. ASYCUDA New Generation is open-source, flexible, and powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning. This state of the art technology is also fully aligned with international standards and best practices set by ISO, the UN, the WCO, and the WTO.

ASYCUDA New Generation is underpinned by a unified architecture that transforms digital customs and PGAs from siloed software to a national platform for smart trade governance. Developed by UNCTAD, this architecture is modular and designed to evolve with each country and territories' goals and capacities. At the heart of this system are two key components: the ASYCUDA Cloud Framework and a set of clearly defined ICT objectives. Together, they ensure the technology is not only scalable and secure, but also strategically focused on long-term institutional performance.

UNCTAD is committed in ensuring that the continuous designs and development of its electronic trade and commerce solutions are largely client-driven. The recent launch of the another ASYCUDA SVG (Vincy) Electronic Single Window in the Caribbean region [VSWIFT] bears testimony to this firm commitment. The VSWIFT is fully framed on the ASYCUDA philosophy and the platform therefore aims to radically and positively impact the trade and business environment of



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. It provides a seamless, one-stop-shop fully automated system that allows traders to submit transactional information at a single point to fulfil most import and export related regulatory requirements. The VSWIFT implementation follows on the heels of its predecessors, Jamaica's JSWIFT and Barbados' BASYSW.

We strongly believe that a nation's economic fortunes are adversely impacted when its traders are continuously subjected to lengthy, costly and unnecessary delays whilst moving their goods from "ship to shelves". With this view, the main objective of UNCTAD's ASYCUDA New Generation Digital Solutions for Efficient, Secure and Sustainable Trade initiatives is to create favorable conditions within the trade and business environment of the implementing country via:

Efficiency, Operational Resilience and Agility:

- Designed to adapt to policy shifts, crises, and evolving trade patterns
- Real-time monitoring of goods at the consignment level allows customs to intervene proactively, before, during, or after arrival

Trust, Governance and Security:

- Built-in tools support secure data management, traceable decision-making, and regulatory integrity
- Risk & Selectivity Management Tool, empowering administrations to fast-track compliant traders, including Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs)

Transparency, Simplification and Harmonization

- Streamlined processes with fewer procedural steps and standardized formats
- Real-time notifications, dashboard visibility, and rules-based decision tracking ensure clarity and fairness for all users

Inclusion and Cooperation:

- Configurable to match national legislation, languages, and institutional models
- Promotes seamless coordination between customs, Partner Government Agencies (PGAs), cross border agencies and economic operators through secure data exchange

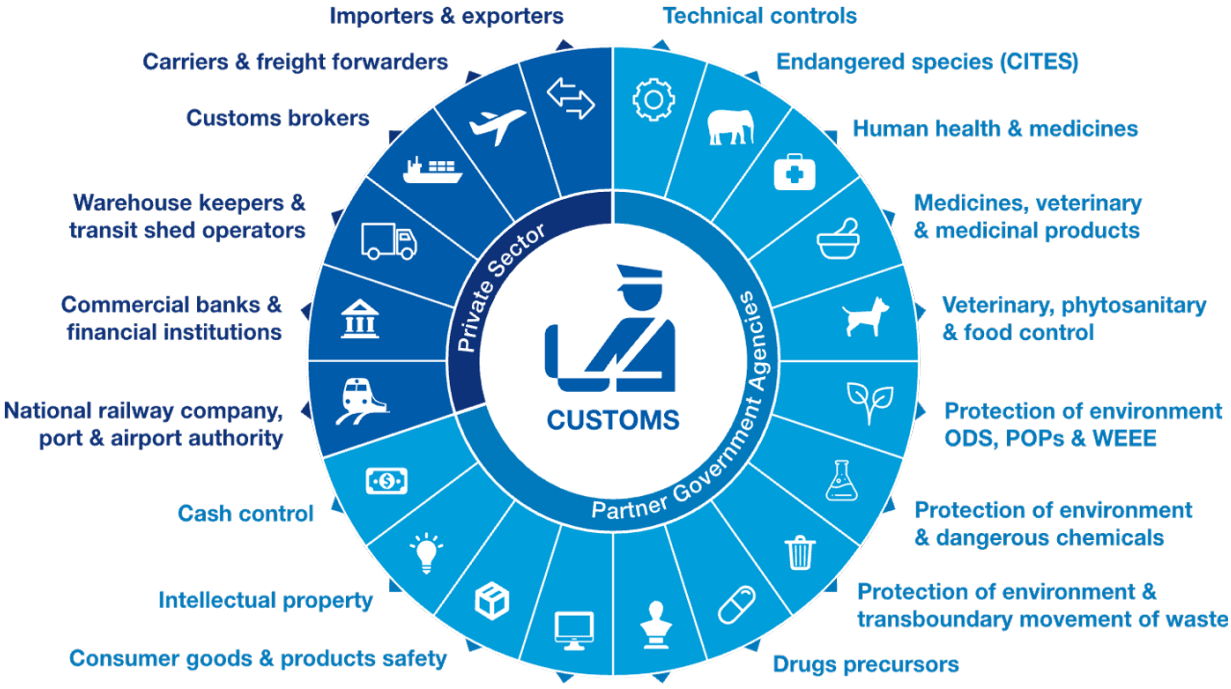
The ASYCUDA Electronic Single Window (ASYSW) platform is designed to automate the processes for licenses, permits, certificates and other documents (LPCO) issued by the various agencies involved in the regulation of international trade; integrate the processes of those agencies to the extent possible, to reduce redundancy, turnaround time, and the overall cost of service; provide a single, on-line point of entry for trader's application and response routines; and incorporate the business-to-business elements of the trade facilitation supply chain.

As a single access point, the ASYSW strategically provides services for:

- Electronic submission of LPCO applications
- Uploading supporting documents
- Consistency checks and data validation
- Real-time notifications
- Transaction tracking
- Electronic payments

The digital services provided via the system are designed and implemented to be consistent with the legislative and procedural framework under which the Partner Government Agencies (PGAs) operate. Traders who request ASYSW services for the processing of Licences, Permits, Certificates, and other (LPCO) prerequisite cargo clearance documents, will benefit from predictable and streamlined processing flows, which incorporate real-time transactional updates and notifications for the suite of services onboarded to the platform.

The ASYCUDA New Generation incorporates these imperatives into every layer of its system, making them central to how the platform delivers measurable, lasting improvements in trade governance. UNCTAD is therefore highly encouraged by the positive feedback received thus far from our various member States and looks forward to partnering with other regional governments and various regional stakeholders in extending these important services to a wider spectrum of countries in this region, to further enhance the ease of conducting trade and business in the Caribbean region.



21ST CENTURY BROKER



The role of a Customs Broker has evolved dramatically since over the past few years. No longer confined to document processing and customs clearance, today's brokers are strategic partners in trade, leveraging technology and cross-sector collaboration to keep goods moving efficiently across the Caribbean.

Modern brokers now work closely not only with importers, exporters, and customs authorities but also with multiple government agencies, advising on regulatory compliance, logistics strategies, and risk management. Their role has shifted from policy followers to policy influencers, actively contributing to trade reforms and national economic planning.

Technology has accelerated this transformation. Digital platforms, automated clearance systems, and real-time cargo tracking have become essential tools. Brokers who embrace AI analytics, cloud-based workflows, and integrated regional systems can anticipate delays, optimize shipments, and help businesses remain competitive in an increasingly complex global trade environment.

Yet challenges remain: congested ports, fragmented regulations across CARICOM, and high freight costs continue to test brokers' agility. The 21st-century Caribbean broker thrives not by avoiding these obstacles but by turning them into opportunities—adapting, innovating, and guiding trade in a digital age.

As global trade continues to change, so too will the demand for brokers equipped with both technical expertise and strategic insight, proving that the profession is not just evolving—it is redefining itself for the future of Caribbean commerce.



Guyana on the Rise

As we step into 2025, the Guyana Customs House Brokers and Clerks Association (GCHB-CA) proudly reflects on its enduring mission to represent and support the customs brokerage industry in Guyana. Founded in 1993, our journey from a small group of pioneers to a robust network of professionals underscores our commitment to fostering collaboration, advocating for fair regulations, and driving innovation in customs procedures. Our vision remains steadfast—to be the leading force in customs brokerage, contributing to Guyana's economic growth through efficient international trade.

This year, we celebrate significant advancements in trade facilitation, thanks to our partnership with the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). The implementation of systems like ASYCUDA World has reduced manual processes, shortened clearance times, and introduced robust risk profiling, ensuring a fair and consistent approach to declarations. With a 72-hours maximum processing time for imports—often less than 24 hours—and 24/7 submission capabilities, we are streamlining operations for importers and exporters alike. Our members, supported by increased training and online access to data via ASYCUDA, continue to uphold high standards while building capacity in the public domain.

Led by our dedicated Board of Directors and strengthened by affiliations with local and international partners, GCHBCA is poised to enhance its influence. We invite the Caribbean brokerage community to explore our journey, learn from our experiences, and join us in shaping a future of excellence in customs services.

BY MR. COLIN MOORE
President- Guyana Customs House Brokers Association



Guyana Customs Brokers Honoured at Inaugural Awards Ceremony

Some twenty-two retired and long-serving Licensed Brokers and Clerks were recognized for their dedication to the profession during the inaugural Guyana Customs House Brokers and Clerks Association (GCHBCA) Awards Dinner, held on Saturday, January 7, 2023.

Among the honorees were Ronald Ramcharran, Guyana's first Licensed Broker, and past Association Presidents Andrew Thorne and Morris Bart. Trailblazing female brokers Ingrid Bristol and Loretta Desir-John, the first women to attain Licensed Broker status in Guyana, were also celebrated for their leadership of DHL Guyana Limited and D&J Shipping, respectively.

In his address, GCHBCA President Colin Moore emphasized that professionalism and integrity remain the cornerstones of the brokerage profession. He highlighted the Association's strengthened position since joining the Shipping Association of Guyana, the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), and the Private Sector Commission (PSC)—all key stakeholders supporting trade and industrial development in Guyana's growing economy.

Comptroller of Customs Rohan Beekhoo underscored the importance of professional collaboration among stakeholders, including customs brokers, the PSC, GCCI, GMSA, and GRA-Customs. He noted the surge in imports and exports driven by oil discoveries, alongside the expansion of traditional sectors such as agriculture, mining, forestry, construction, and manufacturing. Beekhoo also commended government measures to maintain trade during the post-pandemic period, particularly during the Christmas season.

Awardees

David Dublin, Richard Austin, Andrew Thorne, Ronald Ramcharran, Keith Rahat, Kesho Motie, Watson Gray, Morris Bart, Leon Drakes, Ramnarine Makardajh Snr, Ingrid Bristol, Loretta Desir-John, Pooran Dat, Ian Junor, Mohamed Sadik, James Slater, Godfrey Pieters, Desmond Shepherd, Toolsie Beharry, Jameel Baksh, Ishwar Singh, Bramdeo Persaud.

Becoming a Licensed Customs Broker in Guyana

Customs brokers play an essential role in Guyana's trade environment, serving as the link between importers, exporters, and the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). They are licensed professionals who prepare customs documentation, ensure compliance with regulations, and facilitate the movement of goods through the country's ports. For individuals or businesses interested in pursuing this profession, the process of becoming a licensed customs broker is well established under the Customs Act (Cap. 82:01) and the guidelines issued by the GRA.

Who Can Apply

To become a broker, you must be a Guyanese citizen, at least 18 years old, and of good character. While some people, like importers acting for themselves, can deal directly with Customs, only licensed brokers may offer brokerage services to the public.

The Process

The journey begins when the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) announces its Customshouse Brokers Programme. Applicants must sit an exam covering customs laws and procedures. Successful candidates then provide security, usually in the form of a bond, before paying the licence fee.

A broker's licence is valid until December 31 of the year issued and must be renewed annually. Licences can be held by individuals, companies, or partnerships.

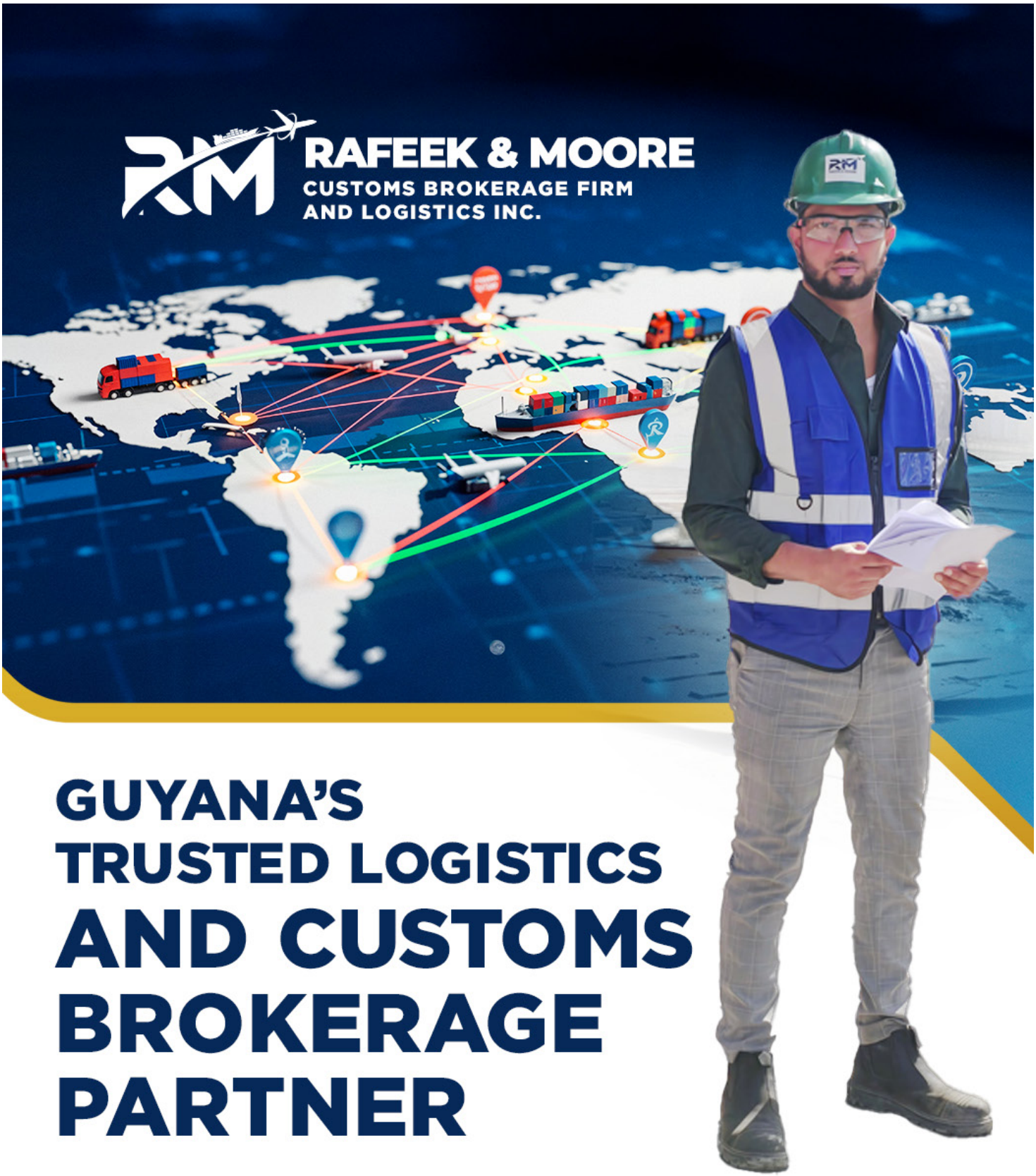
Working as a Broker

Licensed brokers must follow all customs regulations and are expected to use ASYCUDA World, the electronic system for processing trade documents. The GRA also publishes the official list of registered brokers, which shows who is trained in this system.

Why It Matters

With Guyana's trade volumes steadily growing, customs brokers are more important than ever. The role not only provides a professional career path but also supports the country's wider economic development.





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The Barbados Port Efficiency Committee (Bittersweet success)

Barbados has been working throughout this year to fast track the Facilitation of Trade through a Committee focusing on services and facilities at the Bridgetown Port. We are currently working towards other more permanent solutions such as the WTO type National Trade and Business Facilitation Committee being overhauled.
Committee Leadership

The Port Effciency Committee convened every 2 or 3 weeks chaired by the Minister of International Transport Mr. Ian Gooding-Edghill. The Prime Minister Ms. Mia Mottley chairs the meeting on a bi-monthly basis.
This Committee is a long standing one, but this year has seen a new impetus and energy especially with the now constant attention by Prime Minister Mottley.

Participants

Heads of all the Border Control Agencies, Service Providers and the relevant Worker's Unions are expected to attend meetings of the Committee. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of International Trade is the convenor, the Chaiman and the CEO of Barbados Port Inc, The Heads of the Shipping, Transport Intermediaries and the Barbados Customs Brokers and clerks Association (BCBCA), the Barbados Workers Unions, the National Unions of Public Workers, the Manufacturers and Employers Associations, Truckers, major businesses etc. all attend the meetings.

All matters are discussed by the committee except critical national security issues. The topics range from the purchasing of scanners, widening of access gates, staffing of border agencies, new fees, fixing ASYCUDA issues, auctioning of aged cargo etc. All these items are included on the agenda.

Successes

The Committee has seen relative success over the last eight (8) months. The PM's focus on increasing the staff compliment has been successful as services provided by Plant Quarantine, Port Health, Veterinary Services and Customs and Excise were cobbled by low staff compliment.
There was expansion of the Port's cargo tracking system showing information relevant to private sector needs. In addition, changes were made to the way manifest amendments are handled in ASYCUDA World, especially the messaging system and the time and ability to do these amendments.
Plant Quarantine, Port Health and Veterinary divisions have presented and implemented new risk management policies for the release of cargo, from what was previously an almost 100% inspection system to identifying high medium and low risk imports and creating criteria for inspection or immediate release has so far been successful and without any negative fallout.

Redraft

The other important agency presenting their draft "Regulation of the Importation and Trade in Used Motor Vehicles in Barbados" the Ministry of Energy and Business had to review



their new policy as the private sector, and the Prime Minister found issues with some of the proposals. The new policy attempts to reduce the age limit to three (3) years for imported used vehicles, including those using renewable energy. It also addresses the quality and other measure to protect consumers and regulate the used car dealers and garages. The revised policy has now been submitted for review.

No Consensus

One very dramatic request from the Prime Minister is that the Port moves to delivering cargo 24/7. The Port, the Manufacturers' Association and the Chamber of Commerce have all presented their written opinions as well as there have been verbal opinions from the private sector members. The majority seems to prefer a 2-shift system 5 or 6 days a week, starting at 7:00 am finishing 11:00pm. Capacity and current infrastructure seems to be influencing these opinions as well as research into other ports offering 24/7 service.

Sticks only

The private sector has seen its contribution on the Committee being bittersweet as the Prime Minister pushes for the implementation of three (3) new fines. The suggestions are 1) charging for the late presentation of cargo list by freight forwarders to the Port which can delay stripping of containers, this fee has now been implemented. 2) A reduction of the free days before excess storage fees begin; this is planned to be reduced from 5 to 3 days. 3) Finally, a fine to be imposed on the Importers/ Brokers for declaring shipments (assessing) after some predefined number of days.

These fines are being implemented and planned even whilst shipments already attract excess storage fees at the Port and Airport, Containers attract demurrage (rental fees) when returned late to the Port, and Importers suffer loss of sales and productions when they don't have timey access to their shipments.

This can almost certainly create increased cost to consumers in the near term and probably in the medium term as well if Port efficiencies lag and if other impediments hampering the clearance of cargo from the Customs and Excise end remain or don't improve comparatively.

The private sector has been fully represented and have attended each meeting positively contributing to and bringing solutions to the Committee whilst being offered only sticks and no carrots.

Bridgetown Port Inc (BPI)

In this article, the Port (BPI) had the focus placed on them and their services. One can point to delays in working cargo ships at the beginning of the year as being the catalyst for the new focus on the Port Efficiency Committee. Shipping Lines had implemented congestion fees due to the inefficiencies. Multiple factors including insufficient berths making it impossible to handle cargo whilst cruise ships are in port. Insufficient storage space and equipment also affected the Port's efficiency.

Whilst the Port is still struggling with the above issues, improvements have been taking place gradually and initiatives including a new berth which has already been equipped but is still be commissioned should improve cargo ship turnaround. A new portable scanner, soon to be installed to assist with container inspection should mean less down time. The purchase of a simulator to train equipment operators which should hopefully be installed this year, must, create a workforce which maximises the use of the equipment and increase cargo moves.

The Port's very capable Information Technology section has created very useful web tools for remotely servicing almost every service required by the private sector. They have now been tasked to produce the long overdue Trade Portal. The Barbados Customs Brokers and Clerks Association have pledged to assist in making the Portal attractive to foreign investors and those seeking information.

Written by Louis Forde
-President BACBCA
Assisted by Margaret Sharpe- Asst Secretary-Treasurer, CACUB



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Understand, Master, and Optimize Customs Operations in Haiti.

Territorial Reports- Haiti

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LICENSED CUSTOMS BROKER IN HAITI



Being a licensed customs broker in Haiti means living to the rhythm of ships, planes, and administrative formalities. Behind every container or package cleared through customs lies meticulous coordination, regulatory analysis, and contingency management. Here's a glimpse into a typical day in this profession where precision and speed are the key words.

Anticipate Before Acting

The day generally begins by reviewing messages and notifications from the client, the shipping/airline, and the ASYCUDA World automated customs system. This step allows for the verification of new arrivals of goods, the documents submitted by clients, and the identification of files requiring priority processing.

Connectivity, internet access has improved in recent years, but reliability can still be an issue due to occasional power outages and network disruptions.

In Haiti, whilst many importers and brokers are now adopting email and digital messaging platforms (such as WhatsApp and cloud-based tools) to share shipping documents, the level of adoption varies depending on the company's size and resources. Larger and more structured firms tend to rely almost exclusively on digital channels, whereas smaller businesses may still prefer in-person exchanges or physical copies. A quick glance at the sea and air arrival tracking table is essential for planning the day: knowing which ship is docked, which containers are being unloaded, and what delays are imposed by carriers or the administration.

Yes (I hear your questions as you read) ships can experience delays when unloading in Haiti, and these delays are influenced by several factors, including port congestion, customs processing times, and, increasingly, the security situation in certain areas around Port-au-Prince.

Job tip: systematically cross-reference information between the port, carrier, and client to avoid any bottlenecks.

After reviewing arrivals and defining the day's priorities, customs broker must move on to the crucial step that determines everything else: preparing and verifying documentation. This transition is natural, because without compliant and complete documents, even the best planning will remain theoretical. This is when anticipation turns into concrete action, ensuring that each required document is in order before initiating the customs clearance procedure.

Territorial Reports- Haiti

Documentation: the key to customs clearance

A customs broker's work always begins with verifying documents. For standard customs clearance, the key documents are:

- Bill of Lading or Air Waybill
- Commercial Invoice
- Packing List
- Certificate of Origin (depending on the applicable trade agreement)
- Import License or Special Authorization (for regulated products)

Always cross-reference data from the port, shipping company, and customer to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Each document must be compliant, with no errors in quantity, value, or description. A simple inconsistency can result in a file being blocked.
A single error, incorrect value, inaccurate description, or discrepancy in quantity can lead to a blockage and penalties.
Once the documents have been collected and validated, comes the stage where technical rigor becomes critical: the customs declaration. This is where the information contained in the documentation is translated into precise data in the ASYCUDA World system. Every detail, from the description of the goods to their value, becomes a code, a calculation, and a legal formality.

Customs Declaration

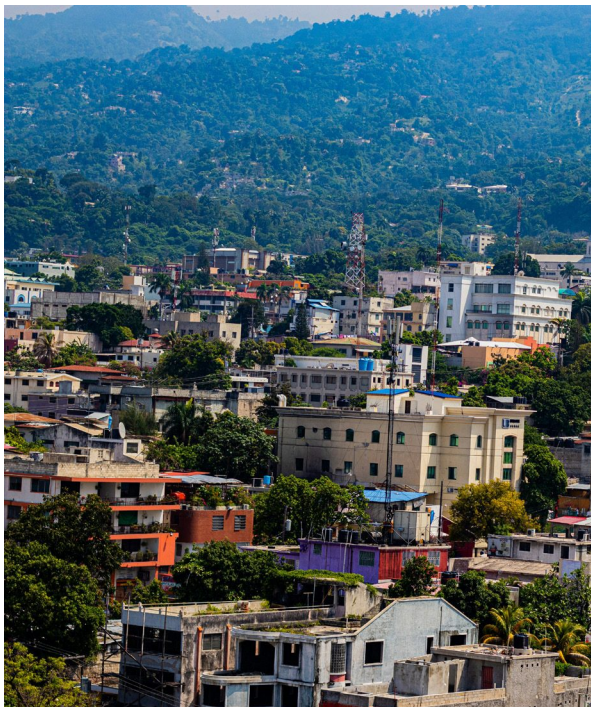
Next comes data entry into ASYCUDA World. This is where experience plays a crucial role: correctly classifying the goods according to the Harmonized System, applying the correct customs tariff, and calculating the duties and taxes due.

An incorrectly assigned code can not only delay delivery but also result in penalties. This is why vigilance is essential.

Remember: an incorrectly assigned code can block a shipment and generate significant costs. Fines are not always automatic but depend on the nature of the issue:

- If there is a query about the declared customs value of imported goods, customs may request additional supporting doc-





uments such as the commercial invoice, freight bill, and proof of payment.
- If the discrepancy is justified with proper evidence, the issue can often be resolved without penalties.
- However, if customs determines that there was under-declaration or non-compliance, fines and additional duties are automatically applied based on the Haitian Customs Code.

Once the declaration is registered, the work doesn't stop at the screen. On the contrary, it opens a network of exchanges and validations. The freight forwarder must mobilize the various stakeholders involved, because a file, no matter how well prepared, only advances if all parties communicate effectively and in a timely manner.

Coordination with Stakeholders

The broker becomes the conductor, acting as the liaison between several stakeholders:
- Client: Inform them of progress and obtain prompt instructions.
- Shipping or airline company: Retrieve original documents.
- Port/airport warehouse: Ensure the container or goods are available for inspection.
- General Customs Administration: Monitor the customs clearance process, manage physical inspections, and respond to any requests for clarification.
- Every interaction must be precise and documented to avoid wasting time.

Thanks to this coordination, the file progresses to the decisive stage: inspection. This is often the moment of truth, when the conformity of declarations is physically verified. Proper preparation and active follow-up allow this stage to be completed quickly and smoothly, paving the way for the release of the goods.

Inspection and Final Customs Clearance

If the cargo is selected for inspection, the freight forwarder must be present or represented to ensure that the inspection is carried out correctly and that observations are noted. Once compliance is confirmed and duties paid, customs issue the release order.
Once the exit authorization is obtained, the administrative side gives way to the operational side. The goods must leave the warehouse and reach the customer, which requires flawless logistical organization. Trucks, drivers, routes... every detail counts to meet the promised deadlines.

In Haiti, the logistics and customs clearance process must often be managed on a case-by-case basis due to the combination of security risks, infrastructure challenges, and administrative complexities. While we strictly follow official procedures, we also take extra measures to anticipate potential disruptions and protect the integrity of each shipment.

Because of the current context, discretion is essential when handling sensitive cargo or high-value goods. We coordinate closely, but selectively with trusted service providers such as licensed customs brokers, secured trucking companies, and port operators to minimize exposure and ensure safe delivery.

Post-customs logistics

The work doesn't end when the cargo leaves the port or airport. Delivery must be organized, road transport coordinated, and the customer receives their goods within the promised timeframe. Customer satisfaction depends on the smooth running of this step.
Customer Impact: It is often this last step that determines customer satisfaction and loyalty.

When delivery is assured, the day might seem over. However, a good customs agent knows that tomorrow's efficiency begins today. This is the time to finalize documents, archive proof of delivery, and plan for future arrivals to reduce unforeseen emergencies

Payments

For clients:

- We encourage electronic payments whenever possible, via bank transfers, online banking, or SWIFT transfers, to minimize the need for handling cash.
- For local transactions, some companies also rely on mobile money solutions (such as MonCash) to speed up payments and reduce risks.
- In certain cases, advance payments are requested to secure services like trucking or warehousing, especially when dealing with sensitive cargo or volatile conditions.
- For service providers:
- We coordinate payments case by case, ensuring that funds are secured before engaging third-party providers such as trucking companies or port operators.
- Because of occasional banking delays and cash-handling risks, we work only with trusted financial institutions and verified vendors.
- In high-risk situations, we may arrange for controlled, escorted transactions when cash payments cannot be avoided, although this is increasingly rare.

Anticipate the next day

At the end of the day, the customs agent reviews current files, prepares documentation for the next day's arrivals, and updates internal notes. This preparatory work is the best guarantee of efficiency.

In summary, a day in the life of a licensed customs agent in Haiti is a balance of administrative rigor, logistical coordination, and human resource management. This profession requires not only in-depth knowledge of customs regulations, but also the ability to react quickly to unforeseen events. Behind every successful transaction, there are hours of preparation, communication, and anticipation; all qualities that make this professional an essential link in international trade. A licensed customs broker in Haiti is an analyst, negotiator, logistician, and communicator. Between complex regulations and tight deadlines, they play a vital role in the smooth flow of international trade.

By Joas Stanley Cherestal,
Licensed Customs Broker in Haiti,
Member of the CACUB
Commissionnaire en Douane Agréé
I Consultant

Territorial Reports- Grenada

A Personal History of the Port of St. George's: Navigating a Legacy of Challenges



The Port of St. George's, a pivotal artery for Grenada's economy, was born from a moment of crisis. Its construction in the late 1950s was a direct response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Janet in September 1955, a storm that destroyed the port's previous wooden structure. This event was a stark reminder that even the inner harbor, renowned as the most sheltered in the Caribbean, was not invulnerable.

For many years, this port served as the lifeline for Grenada's dominant agricultural exports—cocoa, bananas, and nutmeg. It was the hub through which all our imports flowed, operating predominantly as a break-bulk facility. This was a labor-intensive and time-consuming process. The sight of scores of workers painstakingly loading and unloading vessels, often taking many days, was a familiar one. When palletization was introduced in the early 1970s, it brought little change to the fundamental workflow. The pallets were discharged from the vessel only to be broken down on the quayside, the cargo then transferred onto handcarts, and manually wheeled to the warehouses for repacking. This seemingly inefficient process continued for years until the introduction of forklifts.

A similar pattern of delayed adaptation played out with the arrival of containerized shipping. When the first containers reached our shores, they were not handled with specialized equipment. Instead, the ship's own gear would remain attached while the container was stripped of its contents. The empty container was then reloaded onto the ship. This process, a clear indication of a lack of proactive planning, persisted for many years until the port was eventually equipped with a top-lift container handler. These moments in the port's history underscore a long-standing pattern: a reactive, rather than a proactive, approach to modernization.

Today, the port faces a new set of challenges, primarily stemming from the inadequacy of its existing infrastructure. Nearly everything imported and exported is now containerized, and once again, we find ourselves unprepared. The available space is simply not sufficient to handle the large volume of containers, let alone the bulk and break-bulk cargo that also continues to move through the facility. This is a problem compounded by the recent boom in construction, driven by both government and

private sector projects, which has increased the demand on port services exponentially.

We are now experiencing a situation where warehouses are frequently at capacity. While there is a need for all stakeholders and service providers to improve service delivery, a significant issue lies in the operational efficiency. The time it takes to ship a container from Miami to Grenada can be less than the time it takes for that same shipment to be cleared from the port. This bottleneck not only disrupts supply chain management and inventory control but also increases the ultimate cost of doing business for everyone.

For decades, we have heard talk of port expansion and the need for a new facility. There has been recent speculation about such a project, but its realization would require a massive investment of hundreds of millions of dollars and a waiting period of ten to fifteen years.

Yet, a potential solution lies right next door: the large playing field adjoining the port. This space could, for a much smaller investment, adequately solve the port's spatial problems for many years to come. The necessary steps are clear: relocate some of the existing warehouses and structures, upgrade the cargo handling equipment to include two shore cranes or gantries, and, most importantly, foster a collective change in the mindset of all port workers and stakeholders. This shift in attitude is essential to facilitate the trade that is so vital to our nation's economy. The history of our port is a testament to our resilience, but the future demands a forward-thinking and collaborative approach to overcome its present challenges.

by Mr Valentino Sawney



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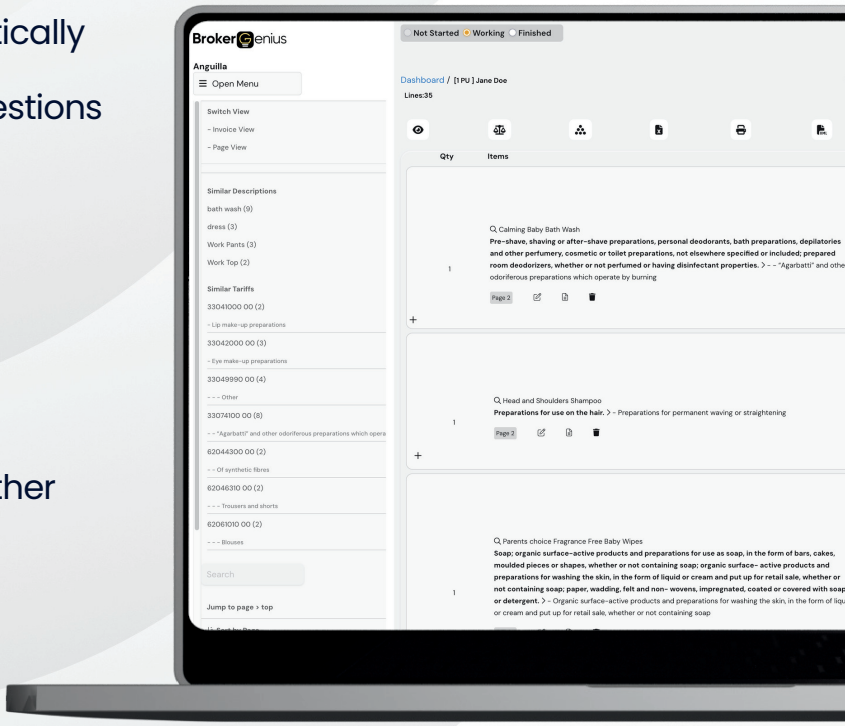
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Special Article

Caribbean Customs Brokers Grapple With Mounting Trade Challenges

Caribbean customs brokers, who ensure goods move legally and efficiently across borders, are grappling with rising challenges that threaten regional trade. From congested ports and outdated systems to high freight costs, the pressures underscore the urgent need for reform.

In Barbados, severe congestion at Bridgetown Port has left containers and vehicles piling up, delaying exports for weeks. Brokers warn that shipping lines are bypassing the island, risking valuable foreign exchange losses. While off-site storage has been proposed, the situation highlights wider regional bottlenecks (Barbados Today, Feb. 2025).

In Jamaica, recurring breakdowns of the ASYCUDA World customs platform force brokers to restart paperwork, creating long delays and raising costs for importers and exporters (Jamaica Gleaner, June 2018). Trinidad and Tobago faces similar issues, with freight stuck in airport bond facilities due to system malfunctions and administrative delays, adding storage fees and squeezing margins (Newsday, Sept. 2023).

These issues reflect broader trends. Maritime connectivity in Latin America and the Caribbean has dropped nine per cent over the last decade, raising freight costs, which now account for up to 26% of GDP—nearly triple the OECD average (UN Caribbean, 2024; Caribbean Journal, 2015). Fragmented regulations across CARICOM further complicate trade, despite efforts to harmonize processes through the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) (International Trade Centre, 2024).

Despite these hurdles, brokers remain resilient. Many argue that investment in infrastructure, improved digital systems, and stronger regional cooperation could transform obstacles into opportunities. As one industry leader notes, "Customs brokerage is not just about paperwork—it's about keeping trade alive." For the Caribbean, the message is clear: modernizing trade systems is essential to remain competitive.



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