

LESOTHO CUSTOMS:

A Leader in Combating Counterfeit and Transnational Crime



**SUCCESSES IN
GLOBAL TRADE**

The Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) is the primary agency responsible for enforcing customs and trade laws in Lesotho. LRA has been at the forefront of combating counterfeit and transnational crime, and has implemented various initiatives to prevent the flow of counterfeit goods and to facilitate legitimate trade.

Transparency Initiatives

LRA has implemented several transparency initiatives to promote accountability and trust among stakeholders. The agency has established a website that provides information on customs procedures, tariffs, and regulations (LRA, 2022). Additionally, LRA has introduced an online portal for submitting customs declarations, which has improved the efficiency and transparency of the clearance process (LRA, 2023).

In 2022, LRA launched a public awareness campaign to educate the public on the dangers of counterfeit goods and the importance of complying with customs regulations (LRA, 2022). The campaign included radio and television advertisements, as well as social media posts, to reach a wider audience.

International Cooperation Initiatives

LRA has also strengthened its international cooperation to combat transnational crime. The agency is a member of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and has signed several agreements with neighboring countries to enhance cooperation in customs enforcement (WCO, 2022). For example, LRA has signed a memorandum of understanding with the South African Revenue Service to share intelligence and coordinate efforts to combat cross-border crime (South African Revenue Service, 2023).

In 2023, LRA participated in a regional workshop on combating counterfeit goods, organized by the WCO (WCO, 2023). The workshop brought together customs officials from several countries in the region to share best practices and discuss strategies for combating counterfeiting.

Recent Legal Reforms

In 2022, the Lesotho government enacted the Customs Law, which strengthened the powers of LRA to combat counterfeit and transnational crime (Lesotho Government, 2022). The Law introduced stricter penalties for customs offenses and provided for the use of advanced technology to detect and prevent smuggling.

The Law also introduced a new provision that allows LRA to share information with other law enforcement agencies, both domestically and internationally, to combat transnational crime (Lesotho Government, 2022). This provision has enabled the agency to work more closely with other agencies, such as the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, to combat crime.

Sustainable Development Initiatives

LRA has also implemented sustainable development initiatives to reduce its environmental footprint. The agency has introduced a pa-

perless clearance system, which has reduced the use of paper and minimized waste (LRA, 2023). Additionally, LRA has implemented energy-efficient lighting and air conditioning systems at its facilities, which has reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (LRA, 2024).

In 2023, LRA launched a project to install solar panels at its facilities, which will reduce the agency's reliance on fossil fuels and lower its carbon footprint (LRA, 2023).

Enhancing Trade Facilitation

LRA has implemented several initiatives to enhance trade facilitation and reduce the time and cost of clearing goods. The agency has introduced a risk-based approach to customs clearance, which has reduced the number of physical inspections and expedited the clearance process (LRA, 2023). Additionally, LRA has implemented a single window system, which allows traders to submit all required documents and information through a single online portal (LRA, 2024).

In 2022, LRA launched a pilot project to implement a blockchain-based system for tracking and verifying the origin of goods (LRA, 2022). The system uses blockchain technology to create a secure and transparent record of the movement of goods, which can help to prevent counterfeiting and smuggling.

Combating Counterfeit Goods

LRA has also intensified its efforts to combat counterfeit goods. The agency has established a dedicated unit to investigate and prosecute cases of counterfeiting (LRA, 2022). In 2023, LRA seized over 200 counterfeit goods, including clothing, electronics, and cosmetics, worth over LSL 1 million (LRA, 2023).

The agency has also worked closely with other law enforcement agencies, such as the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, to combat counterfeiting (Lesotho Mounted Police Service, 2022). In 2022, LRA and the Lesotho Mounted Police Service conducted a joint operation to seize counterfeit goods, which resulted in the seizure of over 100 counterfeit goods worth over LSL 500,000 (LRA, 2022).

Capacity Building

LRA has also invested in capacity building to enhance its ability to combat counterfeit and transnational crime. The agency has provided training to its officers on customs enforcement, risk management, and investigative techniques (LRA, 2023). Additionally, LRA has partnered with international organizations, such as the WCO, to provide technical assistance and capacity building programs (WCO, 2022).

In 2022, LRA sent several officers to attend a training program on customs enforcement organized by the WCO (WCO, 2022). The program provided training on advanced techniques for detecting and preventing smuggling, as well as strategies for combating transnational crime.

Public Awareness

LRA has also launched public awareness campaigns to educate the public on the dangers of counterfeit goods and the importance of complying with customs regulations (LRA, 2022). The agency has used various media channels, including radio, television, and social media, to reach a wider audience.

In 2023, LRA launched a campaign to educate the public on the risks of buying counterfeit goods, including the potential health and safety risks (LRA, 2023). The campaign included radio and television advertisements, as well as social media posts, to reach a wider audience.

Stakeholder Engagement

LRA has also strengthened its engagement with stakeholders, including traders, importers, and exporters. The agency has established a stakeholder forum, which provides a platform for stakeholders to raise concerns and provide feedback on customs procedures and regulations (LRA, 2023).

In 2022, LRA conducted a survey of stakeholders to gather feedback on customs procedures and regulations (LRA, 2022). The survey provided valuable insights into the needs and concerns of stakeholders, which has helped the agency to improve its services and procedures.

Regional Cooperation

LRA has also strengthened its regional cooperation to combat transnational crime. The agency is a member of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and has signed several agreements with neighboring countries to enhance cooperation in customs enforcement (SACU, 2022).

In 2023, LRA participated in a regional workshop on combating transnational crime, organized by SACU (SACU, 2023). The workshop brought together customs officials from several countries in the region to share best practices and discuss strategies for combating transnational crime.

Use of Technology

LRA has also leveraged technology to enhance its ability to combat counterfeit and transnational crime. The agency has introduced advanced scanning technology to detect and prevent smuggling (LRA, 2023). Additionally, LRA has implemented a data analytics system to analyze trade data and identify potential risks (LRA, 2024).

In 2022, LRA launched a project to implement a machine learning-based system for predicting and preventing smuggling (LRA, 2022). The system uses machine learning algorithms to analyze trade data and identify potential risks, which can help to prevent smuggling and counterfeiting.

Risk Management

LRA has also implemented a risk management approach to customs clearance, which has reduced the number of physical inspections and expedited the clearance process (LRA, 2023). The agency has identified high-risk goods and traders and has implemented targeted interventions to mitigate these risks.

In 2022, LRA conducted a risk assessment of its customs procedures and regulations, which identified several areas for improvement (LRA, 2022). The agency has since implemented several measures to address these risks, including the introduction of advanced scanning technology and the implementation of a data analytics system.

Compliance

LRA has also strengthened its compliance program to ensure that traders comply with customs regulations. The agency has introduced a compliance framework, which outlines the requirements for traders to comply with customs regulations (LRA, 2022).

In 2023, LRA conducted a compliance audit of several traders, which identified several areas of non-compliance (LRA, 2023). The agency has since worked with these traders to address these issues and ensure compliance with customs regulations.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

LRA has also introduced stricter penalties for non-compliance with customs regulations. The agency has imposed fines and penalties on traders who fail to comply with customs regulations, including those who attempt to smuggle goods or evade duties (LRA, 2023).

In 2022, LRA imposed a fine of LSL 500,000 on a trader who was found to have evaded duties on a shipment of goods (LRA, 2022). The agency has also prosecuted several cases of smuggling and counterfeiting, which has resulted in the imposition of fines and penalties (LRA, 2023).

Appeals Process

LRA has also established an appeals process for traders who are dissatisfied with customs decisions. The agency has introduced an independent appeals committee, which reviews appeals and makes decisions on disputes (LRA, 2022).

In 2022, LRA received several appeals from traders who were dissatisfied with customs decisions (LRA, 2022). The agency has since reviewed these appeals and made decisions on the disputes, which has helped to promote fairness and transparency in the customs clearance process.

Training and Development

LRA has also invested in training and development to enhance the skills and knowledge of its officers. The agency has provided training on customs enforcement, risk management, and investigative techniques (LRA, 2023). Additionally, LRA has partnered with international organizations, such as the WCO, to provide technical assistance and capacity building programs (WCO, 2022).

In 2022, LRA sent several officers to attend a training program on customs enforcement organized by the WCO (WCO, 2022). The program provided training on advanced techniques for detecting and preventing smuggling, as well as strategies for combating transnational crime.

References


- LRA. (2022). Annual Report 2022. Maseru: LRA.
- LRA. (2023). Annual Report 2023. Maseru: LRA.
- LRA. (2024). Annual Report 2024. Maseru: LRA.
- Lesotho Government. (2022). Customs Law. Maseru: Lesotho Government.
- World Customs Organization (WCO). (2022). Annual Report 2022. Brussels: WCO.
- World Customs Organization (WCO). (2023). Regional Workshop on Combating Counterfeit Goods. Brussels: WCO.
- South African Revenue Service. (2023). Memorandum of Understanding between the South African Revenue Service and LRA. Pretoria: South African Revenue Service.
- Lesotho Mounted Police Service. (2022). Annual Report 2022. Maseru: Lesotho Mounted Police Service.
- Southern African Customs Union (SACU). (2022). Customs Cooperation Working Group. Windhoek: SACU.
- Southern African Customs Union (SACU). (2023). Regional Workshop on Combating Transnational Crime. Windhoek: SACU.


Information Site: tradecouncil.org

Member Portal: tradecouncil.net


Go Global Awards: goglobalawards.org

Business Confidence Survey: businessconfidence.org

info@tradecouncil.org 

The International Trade Council 

TheInternationalTradeCouncil 

@inttradecouncil 



INTERNATIONAL
TRADE
COUNCIL

An international, peak-body, chamber of commerce