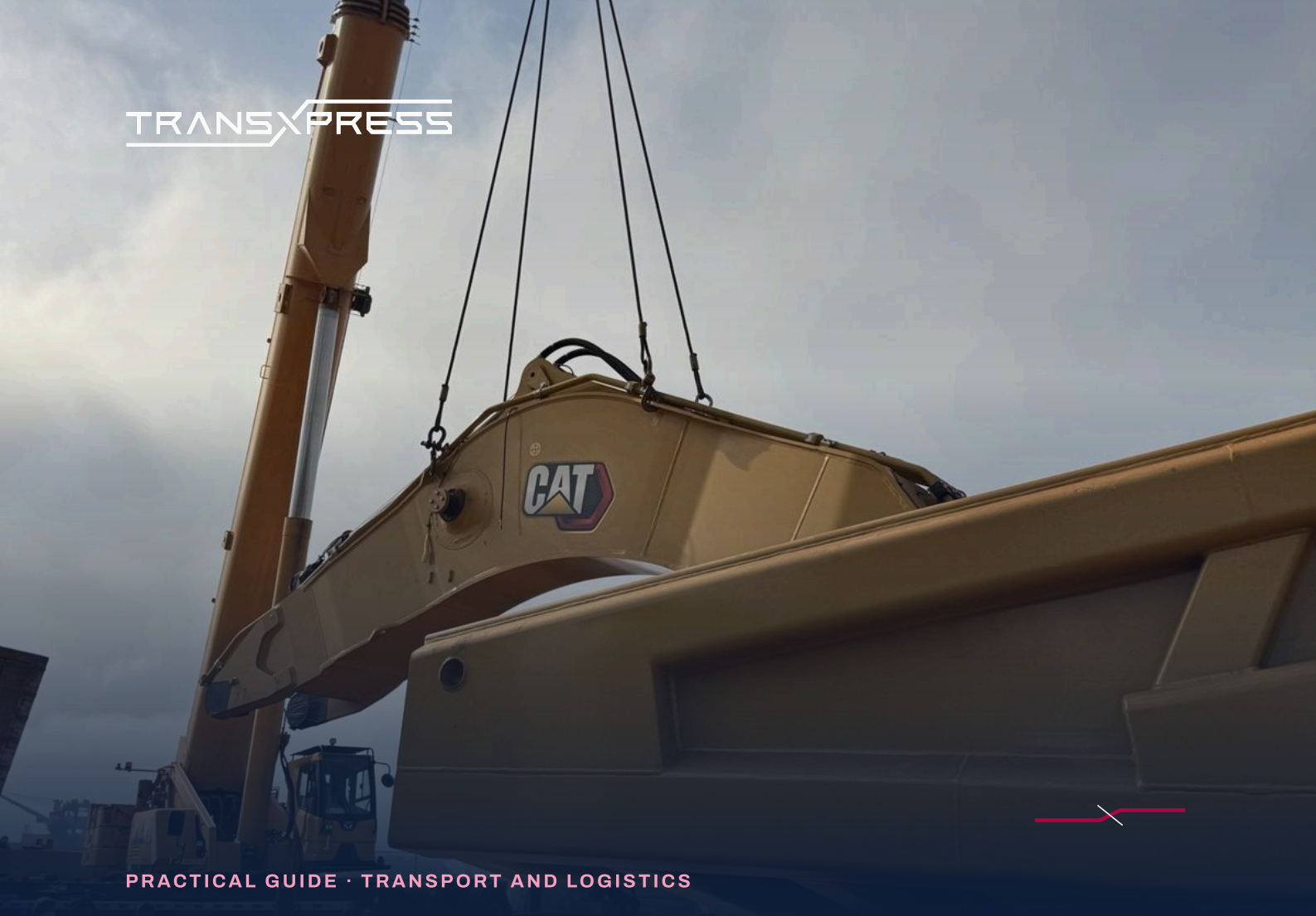


PRACTICAL GUIDE · TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

AI and logistics in West Africa: what can be automated, what stays human

Many logistics providers now say they "use artificial intelligence". In an import chain in West Africa, from the port of Conakry to the corridors towards Mali or Sierra Leone, some tasks suit it very well and others not at all. Here is a practical view, so you know what to expect and what to ask.

TRANSXPRESS SARL · Conakry, Guinea October 2026 edition transxpress.co/en/guides/intelligence-artificielle-logistique-afrique-ouest/

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01 What artificial intelligence already does well

In West African logistics, artificial intelligence is mostly useful for handling documents and data: reading a bill of lading or an invoice, comparing information across documents, tracking deadlines, preparing calculations and drafting answers. These are repetitive tasks where an error costs days at the port.

- Reading documents: extracting weights, container numbers, values and descriptions from PDFs or legible scans.
- Consistency checks: flagging a weight or value difference between the B/L, the invoice and the declaration.
- Deadline tracking: end of free time, empty container return, validity of an authorisation.
- Calculations: demurrage, storage, currency conversion, duty estimates from the tariff.
- Communication: answers to common questions, in several languages, at any hour.

02 Tracking a shipment: what is possible

Vessel positions are public through the automatic identification system (AIS), and shipping lines publish container movements. A tool can therefore follow a vessel's expected arrival and warn when free time is running out. On the road, tracking depends on the trucks' equipment: without a GPS tracker on board, no AI can locate a convoy.

> Be wary of "real-time AI tracking" if the provider cannot say where the positions come from. A reliable position comes from a tracker, a shipping line or a call to the driver, not from an estimate.

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03 The limits in West Africa

- Paper documents, stamps and signatures: many documents exist on paper first; a poor scan is misread.
- Human procedures: physical inspections, checks and dealings with the authorities happen on site.
- Customs declaration: it is lodged by a licensed customs broker, who is responsible for it.
- Roads and the rainy season: the state of a road section or bridge changes fast and is not always known online.
- Connectivity: on some routes and sites, data does not flow back continuously.

04 The risk of error and human checking

An AI tool can be confidently wrong: misread a figure, mix up two documents, invent missing information. In logistics, a wrong weight or tariff code is paid for in port days, penalties or reassessments.

- Amounts should be calculated by a program from the documents, not "estimated" by the tool.
- Any difference between two documents should be shown to a person, not silently corrected.
- Decisions and commitments to the client stay human.

05 Questions to ask a provider that says it uses AI

1. What does the tool do exactly, and at which step of the file?
2. Who checks what it produces, and before what?
3. Where does tracking data come from: tracker, shipping line, driver?
4. Where do my documents go, and are they used for other clients?
5. What happens when the tool is wrong: who is responsible?

06 Our approach at TransXpress

We use artificial intelligence where it is reliable: reading and comparing the documents in your files, recalculating duties and charges by program, rebuilding a file's timeline and answering your questions faster. Our agents lodge the declarations, follow the convoys and make the decisions. Nothing goes to a client without approval from our management.

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? Frequently asked questions

Can AI track a truck on the road?

Only if the truck carries a GPS tracker or the carrier shares its position. Without a position source, no tool can locate a convoy.

Can AI replace a customs broker?

No. The declaration is lodged by a licensed customs broker, who is responsible for it. AI helps prepare and check the file.

How can I tell whether a provider really uses AI?

Ask what the tool does, at which step, who checks the result and where tracking data comes from. A precise answer is a good sign.

General information guide written by TransXpress. Customs rules and procedures change: every file is checked against the documents and the regulations in force. This guide is neither a quotation nor a commitment.

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