

How many companies, how many jobs?

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The number of trading companies established in Switzerland and in Geneva varies according to the sources and the definitions used. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs states that Switzerland has more than 900 commodity trading companies, employing 10,000 people, most of them established in the regions of Geneva, Zug and Lugano.¹ The Federal Council, when it instructed the Federal Statistical Office to measure the sector in 2023, referred to around 400 companies with at least three staff.² The umbrella association Suissenégoce, for its part, speaks of some 35,000 jobs in Switzerland, including related activities.³ In 2016 the association put the number of companies at 520 and the number of employees at 20,000 to 30,000, with 6,000 to 8,000 direct jobs in Geneva.⁴

These discrepancies are a matter of definition. Commodity trading in the narrow sense, meaning the companies that buy and sell commodities on their own account, involves only a few hundred companies and some ten thousand jobs. Commodity trading in the broad sense, including the financing banks, the inspection companies, chartering, insurance, law and the other services, represents several tens of thousands of jobs. The official statistics, whose results Chapter V will analyse, adopted an intermediate definition.

Source	Companies	Jobs
FDFA (2023)	more than 900 in Switzerland	10,000
Federal Council (2023 mandate)	around 400 with at least three staff	—
STSA (2016)	520	20,000 to 30,000, of which 6,000 to 8,000 direct jobs in Geneva
Suissenégoce (2020s)	—	around 35,000 including related activities

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Caution. The figures for the number of trading companies and their jobs vary by a factor of three according to the definitions adopted. Any use of these data must specify the scope: commodity trading in the narrow sense, or the cluster including services.

1 Notes

1. Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Presence Switzerland, “Négoce de matières premières”, aboutswitzerland.eda.admin.ch (accessed September 2026). ↩
2. Notes based on the Federal Council’s press release of November 2023 on the mandate given to the FSO, accessed September 2026; to be cross-checked against the text of the press release. ↩
3. Notes based on Suisssenégoce publications accessed September 2026; figure to be cross-checked. ↩
4. Le Temps, 22 November 2016, quoting Stéphane Graber, then Secretary General of the STSA. ↩

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