

The lawyers of commodity trading

Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)

Commodity trading has given rise in Geneva to a legal specialism. The law firms of the centre have built teams devoted to international sales contracts, trade finance, security over goods, transport, sanctions, compliance and arbitration, which advise trading houses, banks and insurers and appear before arbitral tribunals and state courts.¹ This specialism draws on Swiss law, the English law of sale and charterparty contracts, the international conventions on the sale of goods and on carriage, the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce and the laws of the producing countries. It requires the languages that Part J has described.

The criminal cases of the 2010s and 2020s, traced in Part H, added a further dimension: the criminal defence of companies and their executives, internal investigations, negotiations with Swiss and foreign prosecuting authorities, and the design of compliance programmes. Geneva's trading lawyers have thus moved from the contract to the courtroom. Their experience constitutes a component of the cluster that competing centres have not yet built up. It draws to Geneva litigation and advisory work concerning flows organised elsewhere and contributes to the legal centre described in Part F.

1 Notes

1. The Legal 500, ranking “Banking and finance: Geneva” (my.legal500.fr): Lenz & Staehelin and Schellenberg Wittmer in the first tier; Bär & Karrer, FBT, HFW, MLL Legal, Pestalozzi and Walder Wyss in the second; HFW is singled out for its knowledge of commodity trading and structured finance (Olivier Bazin, Jason Marett), Eversheds Sutherland for trade finance; HFW, page “Geneva” (hfw.com): an office of some twenty lawyers devoted to the international sale of goods, shipping, trade finance, sanctions and compliance. ↩

For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.

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