

Trading and data: satellites, models, platforms

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

Commodity trading is the business of the financial centre in which data has transformed practice most profoundly. The Geneva trading houses use satellite imagery to estimate harvests, stock levels and ship movements, vessel-positioning data to track flows, weather models to anticipate energy demand and econometric models to forecast prices. They employ teams of data scientists whose size rivals that of the trading desks.¹ This analytical capacity has become a decisive competitive advantage, and it partly explains why trading has become concentrated among a handful of large houses able to shoulder the cost.

The automation of operations is advancing more slowly, because physical trading still consists of contracts, documents and counterparties whose digitisation depends on a great many participants. Electronic document platforms, described in Chapter I, contract and logistics management systems, and data exchanges with banks, inspectors and insurers are developing, bringing the gains in security that the frauds of 2020 made desirable. For the Geneva centre, what matters is that these infrastructures are organised with its participation, for otherwise they will be organised in Singapore or London and the Geneva cluster will depend on them.

1 Notes

1. Wikipedia (en), art. “Kayrros”: environmental intelligence company founded in Paris in 2016, which uses satellite imagery (notably from the European Space Agency’s Copernicus satellites) and artificial intelligence to monitor methane and carbon dioxide emissions, carbon sinks and climate risks, as well as fossil-fuel supply chains; its data are used by UNEP’s International Methane Emissions Observatory and by the International Energy Agency; EUR 40 million raised in March 2022 (Bpifrance, BNP Paribas, NewSpace Capital, European Investment Bank), for a total of EUR 72 million since 2016. ↩

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.

Online version: helveticaregister.com/geneva-trading-and-data-satellites-models-platforms