

# FOCUS A GUIDE TO CAREERS

## Commodity trading: a business with many faces

Geneva is an international commodity trading hub. But the industry and its employment opportunities are still little known among the general public.



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A widespread cliché regarding traders is that they work in front of screens, a phone stuck to each ear. It is rarely acknowledged that traders are only one of the links in a long chain, and that many people with different profiles work around them. Without teamwork, nothing would be possible. Moving cargo from a producing country to a consuming one requires the participation of

several experts to minimise the operational and financial risks at each stage of the voyage of the goods. Recently, these tasks have become more complex and specialised, making it very difficult to learn on the job, as was commonly the case up to the early 2000s.

GLOBALISATION has led many companies to open offices abroad, offering attractive career opportunities to young people. Before occupying any position in this industry, a strong basic education is required, as well as proficiency in English, the language par excellence of commodity trading.

The commodity trading sector constantly seeks new talent with specific profiles. However, it is often difficult to enter it, as is the case for many industries. Several well known educational programmes enable companies to save precious training time, and allow participants to discover new career paths.

In the aftermath of the financial crisis, new international regulations have been implemented and new positions created within commodity trading houses to ensure compliance. It is not always easy to comply with 70 different

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regulators, especially when some of them set conflicting rules. Sustainability is another topic of growing importance to the industry as the actors become increasingly aware of their social and environmental impact. IT systems expand, not only to help manage business risks, but also to support human resources departments as they respond to complex globalised business issues. Companies employ people not only capable of using these powerful IT tools, but also able to design them.

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The graphics below indicate key positions in a trading house, providing a view of what a wide range of career opportunities is on offer. Other professions exist and still more will emerge as the commodity trading industry constantly adapts to its evolving environment. ■

