



Advanced Duty Optimization:

Leveraging Technology and Policy
for Competitive Advantage

➤ INTRODUCTION

Mastering the complexities of global trade is critical for businesses engaged in international commerce. Its multifaceted aspects emphasize the need for businesses to stay abreast of varying legal and regulatory environments, maximize trade program benefits, and maintain robust supply chain security.

The landscape of global trade is also fraught with challenges, including rapidly changing regulations and the need for efficient supply chain security. These challenges, however, present unique opportunities for businesses to innovate and stand out.

The role of technology in global trade is more crucial than ever. From the transformative power of Big Data Analytics to the efficiency of the Internet of Things (IoT) and the transparency offered by blockchain, technological advancements are redefining the approach to international commerce.

This white paper provides an in-depth look at how integrating cutting-edge technology with comprehensive policy understanding can significantly enhance a company's position in the global market. It investigates how these technologies can significantly improve duty optimization practices when effectively combined with strategic trade policies. Additionally, it focuses on how these technological tools can boost operational efficiency, enhance decision-making, and streamline duty management.

To bring these strategies to life, the white paper includes case studies, such as Ropaar's innovative approach to SAP Global Trade Services (GTS) implementations. These real-world examples showcase the practical benefits of harnessing technology and policy insights for duty optimization, providing valuable lessons for businesses navigating the intricate world of global trade.



THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL TRADE

Managing global trade is complex, particularly given the constantly changing regulations and customs procedures. Businesses involved in international trade must navigate diverse regulations across various countries and keep pace with frequent updates to these rules. Balancing compliance with operational efficiency is a significant challenge in this context.

As businesses expand globally, they encounter various challenges affecting efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and compliance.



Diverse Legal and Regulatory Environments

Companies face a complex array of legal and regulatory environments in global trade. Understanding and staying current with each country's specific trade regulations and policies is vital. This task includes keeping updated with changes in customs procedures, tariffs, and trade agreements.

Adapting to these varying requirements swiftly is essential for maintaining compliance and ensuring operational efficiency in the international business landscape.

Opportunities and Risks in Trade Programs

Special trade programs offer duty and tax savings opportunities, but these benefits vary significantly across countries. Identifying and leveraging these opportunities requires expertise and careful planning. Concurrently, businesses must manage risks associated with international trade. High levels of scrutiny from regulatory bodies mean that non-compliance, even unintentional, can result in severe penalties.

This dual focus on capitalizing on opportunities while mitigating risks is a balancing act that requires strategic foresight and meticulous execution.

Supply Chain Security

Involvement in government security programs, though voluntary, can provide considerable benefits. Programs like the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (CTPAT), Partners in Protection (PIP), and Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) offer advantages such as reduced inspections and priority processing. These benefits enhance operational efficiency and improve a company's reputation in terms of compliance and reliability. However, participation requires adherence to stringent security measures and procedures, demanding additional resources and continuous vigilance.

Customs Value and Transfer Pricing

Aligning transfer pricing with customs valuation is a complex task. It involves ensuring that intercompany pricing policies comply with tax and customs regulations. This alignment is crucial to avoid costly adjustments, fines, or penalties. Companies must conduct comprehensive analyses to maintain this balance, often requiring specialized customs and tax law knowledge.

Bonded Manufacturing Programs

Businesses using bonded manufacturing programs can achieve significant customs duty savings. However, they must also handle increased scrutiny from customs authorities. Especially in North America, where authorities rigorously check Free Trade Agreement claims, businesses must adhere to the specific requirements of these programs. Companies must also be well-versed in the complex rules of these programs and keep detailed records to support their claims.

Export Controls

The regulations governing exports, especially in the United States, add another layer of complexity. Companies must understand and comply with the regulations set by various departments, which control the export of goods based on their nature, destination, and end-use. Doing so requires a comprehensive understanding of the export control regime and often necessitates the implementation of stringent internal controls and processes.

Section 301 Tariffs

Implementing Section 301 tariffs by the United States, primarily during the US-China trade war, has necessitated strategic shifts in trade and supply chain operations and led to significant financial implications. While aimed at tackling issues like intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers, the implemented tariffs have significantly impacted American businesses and consumers, who now face substantial cost increases.

Since their introduction, American companies have paid over \$188.22 billion in tariffs.¹ This figure illustrates the economic weight of these policies on businesses. In 2021, this impact was particularly pronounced, with US consumers paying \$48 billion in Section 301 tariffs for importing goods from China.² This burden directly strains finances, often leading businesses to pass the additional costs onto consumers through increased prices of goods.

These tariffs have compelled companies to reassess their cost structures and supply chain strategies. Mitigating the effects of these tariffs is now a crucial part of international trade planning. It includes exploring alternatives such as diversifying supply sources or restructuring supply chains.

Additionally, the ongoing nature of US-China trade negotiations and policy adjustments remains critical. These negotiations have the potential to significantly influence market access and competitive positioning in the global trade arena, making it essential for businesses to stay informed and adaptable.

STRATEGIES FOR DUTY COST REDUCTION AND COMPLIANCE IN GLOBAL TRADE

In international trade, the efficient management and reduction of duty costs are crucial for enhancing a business's profitability and adherence to compliance.

This section outlines critical strategies for lowering duty expenses within global trade regulations. It emphasizes the vital role of duty drawback, tax-saving programs, the use of Free Trade Zones (FTZs), and the strategic application of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in achieving effective duty cost management.

Tax Savings Programs

Various tax savings programs are available that businesses can leverage to reduce their overall duty and tax liabilities. These programs often vary by country and trade agreements, requiring companies to stay informed about the most beneficial options. Effective use of these programs can result in considerable savings, impacting the bottom line positively.

KEY POINTS

- Awareness of available tax savings programs in different countries.
- Understanding eligibility criteria and application processes.
- Integrating tax savings strategies into overall trade operations.

Duty Drawback

Duty drawback is a refund program where businesses can reclaim duties paid on imported goods that are later exported or destroyed. This process requires meticulous tracking and documentation to ensure compliance and maximize refunds.

Effective management of duty drawback can lead to significant cost recoveries, making it a vital component of duty optimization strategies.

KEY POINTS

- Identification of eligible goods for duty drawback.
- Accurate tracking and documentation of imports and exports.
- Streamlined process for claiming refunds.



DID YOU KNOW?

Duty Drawback is a refund, reduction, or waiver of customs duties assessed or collected upon the importation of an item, which is subsequently exported or destroyed. The US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) governs this program.

Enacted in 2015, the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act (TFTEA) modernized the duty drawback program. It streamlined the process, made it easier for businesses to obtain drawbacks, and expanded the eligibility of products under certain types of drawbacks.

Purpose: The primary goal of duty drawback is to promote exports by refunding duties paid on imported materials used in manufacturing and then exported. It helps make US-made products more competitive in global markets.

Challenges: Navigating the rules and regulations of duty drawbacks can be complex. Companies often use specialized software or consult with customs brokers or other experts to manage their drawback programs.

TYPES OF DUTY DRAWBACK:

- **Manufacturing Drawback:** For products manufactured or produced in the US using imported materials and then exported.
- **Unused Merchandise Drawback:** For imported goods exported without being used in the US.
- **Rejected Merchandise Drawback:** For goods that are imported but found to be defective, damaged, or not following specifications and are then exported or destroyed.

Refund Amount: Typically, up to 99% of the duties, taxes, and certain fees paid on the imported merchandise can be recovered through drawback.

Time Frame for Claims: Drawback claims must generally be filed within three years from the date of exportation or destruction of the goods.

Documentation and Compliance: Claimants must provide comprehensive documentation to prove that the duty-paid imports are linked to the exported or destroyed products. It often involves detailed recordkeeping and tracking systems.

Free Trade Zones (FTZs)

Free Trade Zones offer a unique opportunity for businesses to reduce or eliminate duties on goods stored, processed, or assembled within these zones. Utilizing FTZs can significantly reduce duty costs and improve cash flow. However, managing operations within FTZs requires careful planning and compliance with specific regulations.

KEY POINTS

- Advantages of using FTZs in duty optimization.
- Compliance requirements and operational considerations.
- Strategic planning for integrating FTZ operations into the broader trade strategy.

Strategic Benefits of an FTZ

Source: Thomson Reuters³



Relief from inverted tariffs

You can choose to pay the lower duty rate for a finished good.



Weekly entry savings

Your merchandise processing fee (MPF) will be capped at \$497.99 per week.



Duty exemption

Re-exports, scrap, loss, destruction, and zone-to-zone transfers are duty-free.



Duty deferral

Improve cash flow with deferred duty payments.



Inventory controls

You can better manage your inventory in a controlled FTZ warehouse.



Supply chain responsiveness

Achieve shorter cycle times, increased inventory turn, and better traceability.

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

By reducing or eliminating tariffs on certain goods between member countries, FTAs offer a significant avenue for cost savings. Businesses can use these agreements by aligning their sourcing and distribution strategies with the countries involved in these FTAs.

KEY POINTS

- Identifying relevant FTAs and understanding their specific benefits.
- Aligning sourcing and distribution strategies with FTA provisions.
- Regularly reviewing and adjusting strategies in response to changes in FTAs.

STREAMLINING FTAS WITH TECHNOLOGY



The US engages in FTAs with 20 countries, each offering unique duty savings opportunities depending on the product or service.



Modern global trade solutions software automates FTA recordkeeping, simplifying the complex process and minimizing manual labor.



Data analytics tools enable companies to navigate current and future FTAs effectively, identifying the most beneficial agreements.



Automation helps in real-time tracking of inventory, compliance, duty calculations, and certificate management, leading to a strategic reduction in overall duty spend.

Integrating these components—duty drawback, tax savings programs, FTZs, and FTAs—forms a comprehensive approach to duty optimization. By strategically utilizing these elements, businesses can significantly enhance their profitability and efficiency in the complex landscape of international trade.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN DUTY OPTIMIZATION

Technological advancements significantly impact global trade, especially in duty management. These innovations profoundly affect operational efficiency, decision-making, and the overall success of duty management strategies.

It is crucial to merge these technological solutions with informed policy strategies, as this combination is vital to advancing and enhancing duty optimization practices.



Big Data Analytics

Big Data Analytics is revolutionizing the industry by offering in-depth insights that enhance supply chain efficiency and strategic decision-making. Despite 97% of executives acknowledging its benefits, only 17% have implemented it in their operations.⁴

The impact of this technology is also evident in customs authorities. Their integration into e-filing and single-window systems streamlines data processing, improving efficiency. This improvement is crucial for detecting tax fraud, preventing threats, and conducting security assessments. However, it also requires a delicate balance with privacy and data security concerns.

The use of advanced analytics by customs authorities can lead to more frequent audits, posing challenges for companies that haven't adopted similar analytical tools. This changing landscape highlights the need for businesses to adapt to technological advancements, which present both opportunities and risks in global trade operations.

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)

Artificial Intelligence is becoming central to digital trade facilitation, leveraging modern technology to streamline cross-border goods movement.

The World Trade Organization notes that about 6% of trade cost variance is due to inefficient customs procedures.⁵ With more countries adopting electronic data exchange, AI improves tariff and duty collection and identifies non-compliant goods. It also aids in risk-based targeting by analyzing data to detect patterns.

For instance, Turkey's AI-based Easy Export Platform provides exporters with tailored market recommendations, considering factors like customs duties and regulations, and employs machine learning for objective market analysis.⁶

AI improves tariff and duty collection and identifies non-compliant goods.

Additionally, AI and ML automate tasks like the Harmonized System (H.S.) classification⁷ and analyze large datasets for patterns, enhancing decision-making and operational efficiency in international trade. Recent studies suggest integrating machine learning with knowledge graph embeddings⁸ offers advanced predictive modeling, further innovating global trade analysis.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

Robotic Process Automation is a user-friendly software for automating digital tasks. In RPA, users create “bots” capable of learning and executing rules-based business processes, effectively mimicking and automating repetitive tasks like data entry, document filing, and compliance checks. By automating these tasks, RPA enhances operational efficiency, reduces the likelihood of errors in critical trade documentation, and leads to more streamlined compliance processes.

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Advancements in robotics, AI, and machine learning are leading to increased automation. This wave is enhancing the capabilities of machines in tasks once thought to be solely within the human domain, including those that require cognitive skills. This shift in automation significantly boosts business efficiency by minimizing errors and enhancing quality and speed, often surpassing human performance.

Robots have become a staple in manufacturing sectors, and sophisticated algorithms increasingly play critical roles in major companies like UPS and Amazon. These technologies are achieving superhuman performance levels.

According to scenario modeling, this advancement in automation could potentially lead to an increase in global productivity growth ranging from 0.8 to 1.4% annually⁹, marking a significant leap in operational efficiency.

Internet of Things (IoT)

IoT technology is redefining global trade, with its network of sensors and smart devices streamlining supply chain operations. Its ability to track products enhances shipping and transportation efficiency, significantly reducing trade costs. By 2025, IoT’s impact on the economy will be a staggering \$12.6 trillion.¹⁰

For customs authorities, IoT’s extensive data collection capabilities improve risk management and customs clearance processes. It aids in ensuring the integrity of cargo movement and standardizes processes, boosting port performance by minimizing loading and unloading times and reducing manual procedures.

Pairing IoT with blockchain technology further transforms supply chain management. This combination ensures secure and efficient transactions, reduces delays, and provides real-time shipment data, enhancing the transparency and efficiency of cross-border trade operations.

Main benefits of introducing the Internet of Things



Source: World Trade Organization¹¹

Blockchain

Blockchain technology fundamentally transforms global trade, enhancing transparency and trust in trade processes. It is critical in tracking and digitizing trade, offering customers verifiable records of product journeys, and combating counterfeit goods. This technology is reshaping trade finance by automating tasks such as letters of credit processing, with banks, fintech startups, and I.T. companies pioneering collaborative pilot projects.

The World Economic Forum estimates that blockchain could reduce trade costs in finance and shipping by 15 to 30%.

Despite the potential, adoption faces technical and regulatory challenges. Yet, the impact of blockchain on cost reduction is substantial. The World Economic Forum estimates that blockchain could reduce trade costs in finance and shipping by 15 to 30%, potentially enabling over US\$ 1 trillion in new trade¹² within the next decade.

Customs authorities also look to blockchain for greater efficiency and reliability in risk management, revenue collection, and trade facilitation. It indicates a broader adoption of blockchain technology in commercial sectors and governmental trade operations, signaling a significant shift in global trade processes.



Global Trade Analytics (GTA)

Global Trade Analytics applications provide a comprehensive analysis of international trade data. These tools are instrumental in monitoring trade flows and understanding market dynamics. Businesses can effectively navigate trade barriers, identify market trends, and make informed decisions by profoundly understanding the global trade environment.

Approximately 80% of supply chain data resides with external partners¹³ like suppliers and carriers, often leading to sparse, inadequate, or inconsistent data issues. However, a skilled software provider can ensure comprehensive integration and data quality across your broker/freight forwarder network.

Integrating these advanced technologies with strategic trade policies leads to more effective and efficient duty optimization practices. Businesses leveraging these technological advancements can achieve greater operational efficiency, enhanced compliance, and optimized duty management in the complex world of global trade.

SAP GTS: DRIVING DUTY OPTIMIZATION FOR COMPETITIVE SUCCESS

SAP Global Trade Services (GTS) is a leading solution for businesses looking to enhance their duty optimization strategies. This advanced tool offers a range of functionalities that simplify compliance and provide a strategic advantage in the complex world of global trade.

Let's look at how SAP GTS equips businesses with the necessary tools for effective duty management, supporting their competitive position in the market.

Efficient Compliance Management

The ability of SAP GTS to automate critical aspects of trade compliance is a significant aspect of its functionality. This automation covers essential tasks like product classification and document management, significantly reducing manual labor and the likelihood of errors. Ensuring consistent compliance and accuracy reduces the risk of costly non-compliance penalties.

Advanced Duty Calculation and Management

SAP GTS is particularly effective in facilitating precise and efficient duty calculations. The system adeptly manages the complexities of calculating duty costs, considering various trade agreements and regulatory environments. This feature assists businesses in effectively managing duty expenses, leading to improved financial forecasting and budget accuracy.

Maximizing Free Trade Agreements

Free trade agreements are excellent opportunities for duty savings. SAP GTS streamlines the identification of eligible products and the management of the required documentation. This feature allows businesses to benefit from reduced duty rates in trade agreements, resulting in significant cost savings.

Improved Trade Visibility and Control

With SAP GTS, businesses gain better visibility into their trade activities. This increased oversight is crucial for managing global trade operations, optimizing duty management, and making informed decisions that improve efficiency and profitability.

Proactive Risk Management and Regulatory Compliance

A proactive strategy is crucial to keeping up with the constantly changing landscape of international trade regulations. SAP GTS offers comprehensive risk management and compliance features, enabling businesses to prepare for regulatory changes and avoid potential legal and financial consequences.

Data-Driven Decision Making with Reporting and Analytics

The robust reporting and analytics capabilities of SAP GTS provide businesses with deep insights into their trade data. These insights are vital for adjusting trade strategies, identifying areas for optimization, and maintaining a competitive edge in global trade.

ROPAAR: REVOLUTIONIZING DUTY OPTIMIZATION WITH TAILORED SAP GTS IMPLEMENTATIONS

Ropaar stands out as a leading expert in customizing SAP GTS implementations, helping businesses navigate and excel in the complex world of global trade. This overview focuses on Ropaar's innovative approach to SAP GTS deployment and its role in enabling companies to use technology and policy insights for significant competitive gains in duty optimization.



Customized SAP GTS Solutions

Ropaar is committed to understanding the distinct needs and challenges of each business. Its approach to SAP GTS implementation is far from generic; it's a bespoke strategy tailored to align with its client's specific goals and operational structures. This personalized approach ensures businesses integrate a solution that aligns with their unique trade processes and challenges rather than just installing a generic system.

Enhancing Efficiency and Compliance

Ropaar's deep expertise in SAP GTS helps companies streamline their trade processes for greater efficiency and compliance. By tailoring the SAP GTS platform, Ropaar enables businesses to automate compliance management, handle duty calculations more effectively, and fully utilize free trade agreements. This solution reduces manual labor and the risk of errors and strategically improves the management of duties and taxes.

A Strategic Partnership for a Competitive Advantage

Ropaar is more than just a service provider; it is a strategic ally in pursuing advanced duty optimization. With Ropaar, businesses can harness technology and policy insights, leading to smarter decisions and a stronger competitive stance in the global marketplace.

Empowering Businesses with Cutting-Edge Technology

With Ropaar's bespoke implementation of SAP GTS, companies can unlock access to state-of-the-art technology that demystifies the complexities of global trade. This technology equips businesses with enhanced visibility, effective risk management, and data-driven insights, all essential for maintaining a lead in the fast-evolving trade landscape.

IN ACTION: HOW ROPAAR'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SAP GTS MAKES A DIFFERENCE

This collection of case studies demonstrates the effectiveness of Ropaar's implementations of SAP GTS across diverse industries. These real-world examples underscore how Ropaar's customized duty optimization solutions empower businesses to master the complexities of global trade. Each case study reflects Ropaar's dedication to delivering impactful, client-specific solutions by ensuring compliance, boosting efficiency, and fostering a competitive edge.

Global Food Processing Company Integrates GTS/ TM with USDA FSIS Export certificate System To Streamline Foreign Trade Processes And Improve Compliance

Smithfield Foods collaborated with Ropaar to modernize their foreign trade processes by integrating SAP GTS with SAP Suite on HANA and the USDA FSIS Export Certificate System. Transitioning from a paper-based system, Ropaar implemented an electronic, web services-based solution to handle 50,000 export sales orders annually, enhancing efficiency and accuracy. This new system significantly improved export documentation, reduced port shipment rejections, and complied with USDA electronic system requirements, streamlining Smithfield Foods' trade operations.

Leading Chemical Company Implements SAP GTS In Just 4 Months, Enhancing Its US Export Compliance

AdvanSix, a prominent chemical company, partnered with Ropaar to enhance its US export compliance and streamline its foreign trade processes. The challenge involved supporting its divestiture from Honeywell and rapidly implementing SAP GTS within a strict timeline. Ropaar's TradeBlazers' Approach enabled the completion of this project in just four months, quickly achieving a return on investment. The implementation ensured AdvanSix maintained compliance with regulatory authorities, which is crucial in the chemical industry. This project notably improved AdvanSix's efficiency and compliance in global trade operations.

Leading Sports Goods Company Implements SAP GTS in Record 8 Months, Gains Huge Savings with US Foreign Trade Zones

Dorel Sports partnered with Ropaar to implement SAP GTS solutions, focusing on establishing Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs) across the US and integrating self-filing with the US CBP's ACE system. Accomplished in just eight months, this project marks the first-ever SAP GTS implementation for US FTZ Distribution. The implementation led to significant savings in cash flow, MPF, and brokerage costs, with a one-year ROI. The implementation included EPA and DOT OGA declarations and ACE Monthly statements, substantially enhancing Dorel Sports' global trade efficiency and compliance.

Multinational Conglomerate Corporation Rolls Out ECC/ GTS Solutions To Increase Efficiency And Reduce Foreign Trade Costs

A multinational corporation in sectors like worker safety and healthcare partnered with Ropaar for a Global ECC/GTS rollout, aiming to digitize and streamline their global trade operations. This initiative replaced legacy systems, facilitated self-filing for imports and exports across Europe and Great Britain, and centralized import filings in Germany. Key achievements of the project included \$100M in Free Trade Agreement savings in Europe and eliminating external brokers for in-house filings in Great Britain, greatly enhancing efficiency and reducing trade costs.

> CONCLUSION

It's clear that the intersection of technology and policy plays a crucial role in redefining duty optimization in global trade. The insights and strategies discussed here underscore the importance of a holistic approach to navigating international commerce. For businesses to ensure compliance and be competitive, it's critical to adopt technological advancements and stay up-to-date with global trade policies.

The case studies and examples highlighted throughout this paper, particularly the innovative solutions provided by Ropaar in SAP GTS implementations, demonstrate the tangible benefits of this integrated approach. These real-world applications show that with the right tools and strategies, businesses can effectively manage global trade challenges, turning potential obstacles into opportunities for growth and success. The key takeaway is the transformative power of combining technology with strategic policy understanding, leading to more efficient, compliant, and profitable trade operations.

In summary, this white paper serves as a guide for businesses looking to excel in the dynamic world of international trade. The future of global commerce will undoubtedly be shaped by those who effectively leverage technology and policy insights to optimize their duty management practices. As the global trade landscape evolves, staying ahead will require continuous innovation, adaptability, and a commitment to integrating the latest technological advancements with a deep understanding of trade policies.



ABOUT ROPAAR

Ropaar is an SAP Services Company focused on Global Trade, Transportation, and Logistics. We are an SAP North America Silver Partner committed to solving complex Trade Compliance problems through Superior Domain Expertise, Effective Collaboration, and Cutting Edge Thought Leadership.

We are independent thinkers and innovative problem solvers. Our practitioners have straddled the cusp of SAP technology and trade for over 18 years, helping customers realize the full value of optimized trade, transportation, and logistics operations.

ENDNOTES

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