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Kenyan Transporters Oppose Bill That Limits Alcohol Shipments to Daytime Hours

The industry group says the 12-hour window could cut freight capacity by 14.3% to 33.3%, putting Sh6.3 billion to Sh14.6 billion in annual revenue at risk

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Kenyan transporters are pushing back against a proposal that would limit the movement of alcoholic beverages to daytime hours, saying the measure could disrupt freight operations, threaten jobs and raise costs across East Africa’s supply chains.

The Kenya Transporters Association said on Saturday, November 14, that Parliament should review provisions in the Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs Control Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which would restrict alcohol transport to between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The group said it supports efforts to curb illicit alcohol but argued that the proposal would burden legal operators more than criminal networks.

At issue is a transport rule that the association says does not fit how freight moves in Kenya and across the region. Long-haul trucking often runs around the clock to match port schedules, customs clearance times, warehouse access, weighbridge requirements and border crossing windows. A fixed daytime-only rule, the association said, could leave trucks stranded in transit, delay deliveries and increase operating costs.

KTA Chairman Newton Wang’oo said the association backs the government’s stated goal of protecting consumers and fighting illegal alcohol, but he said the draft law would hit compliant transporters without meaningfully stopping smugglers and other unlawful operators.

He said legal cargo should not be slowed by rules that, in the association’s view, are unlikely to deter people already working outside the law. The group said transport restrictions could interrupt supply chains, put jobs at risk and increase the cost of doing business.

According to the association’s preliminary industry analysis, alcohol-related freight supports about 7,500 direct jobs, generates an estimated Sh43.9 billion in annual freight revenue and accounts for the equivalent of 3,000 trucks operating in Kenya and neighboring markets. KTA estimates that the proposed rules could reduce transport capacity by 14.3% to 33.3%, putting between Sh6.3 billion and Sh14.6 billion in annual freight revenue at risk.

Those figures have not been independently verified, but they show the scale of the concerns being raised by the industry. The association said the effects would not stop with transport companies and alcohol distributors. Manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and other businesses that depend on reliable freight services could also face delays and higher logistics expenses.

If that happens, some of those additional costs could be passed on to buyers. For the beverage industry, the rule could potentially make it more expensive to distribute beer, wine and spirits inside Kenya and could complicate shipments moving through the country to landlocked markets in East Africa. Kenya is a key transit route for regional trade, and any new limits on truck movement can affect goods bound for neighboring countries as well as domestic deliveries.

The association also warned that the bill could weaken Kenya’s position as a regional logistics hub. Kenya handles cargo headed to several landlocked countries in the East African Community and the wider Great Lakes region, and transporters said a narrower operating window would make scheduling harder for cross-border freight.

KTA said modern logistics depend on continuous coordination among ports, inland depots, storage facilities and border posts. A truck carrying a lawful consignment may need to move at night to avoid congestion, meet customs timelines or connect with other parts of the supply chain. Transporters said a 12-hour window for alcohol cargo does not reflect those realities.

Beyond the time restriction, the association objected to proposals that could add new licensing requirements for transporters. It said companies already operate under existing cargo and transport compliance rules and that more permits would increase the regulatory burden and add costs without clearly improving enforcement.

The group is asking lawmakers to remove the proposed 6 a.m.-to-6 p.m. transport limit, protect long-distance freight and international transit cargo, and drop what it calls unnecessary extra licensing measures. It also wants transporters protected from liability for offenses committed by third parties when a company has carried out reasonable due diligence.

That point goes to a broader argument made by the industry: that responsibility for tackling illicit alcohol should be shared across the supply chain, including manufacturers, distributors, regulators and law enforcement agencies, rather than falling heavily on truck operators.

Instead of broad movement restrictions, the association said the government should invest in digital traceability systems and intelligence-led enforcement. In its view, those tools would do more to identify suspicious consignments and track products from manufacturers to final destinations than a blanket daytime transport rule.

KTA is also calling for a full economic impact assessment before the measure is enacted, as well as more consultations with transport operators and other industry groups. It said legislation aimed at stopping illicit trade should be designed carefully so that it does not disrupt lawful commerce or undermine sectors that depend on time-sensitive deliveries.

The proposal comes as Kenya continues to grapple with the social and public health damage linked to illicit alcohol. That has created pressure for tougher controls, but transporters say the challenge for lawmakers is to target illegal production and distribution without slowing legitimate trade that supports jobs and regional commerce.