

AIR TRANSPORT OF PERISHABLE GOODS

Air transport of perishable goods involves the shipment of commodities that are susceptible to deterioration over a short period. Perishable goods include items such as fresh produce, flowers, seafood, and pharmaceuticals that have a limited shelf life. Given the urgency and the delicate nature of these goods, air transport is often the preferred method, but it comes with specific requirements to ensure the quality and safety of the cargo.

To safeguard their freshness during air transport, various measures are taken throughout the entire process.

Firstly, proper packaging is crucial in maintaining the quality of perishable goods. Specialized containers and packaging materials are used to protect these items from temperature fluctuations and physical damage. Additionally, temperature-controlled environments are maintained throughout the journey to prevent spoilage. This includes refrigerated storage areas at airports and onboard cooling systems in aircraft.

Here's a detailed look at the key aspects:

1. **Specialized Packaging.** Perishables require packaging that can protect them from external environmental conditions, physical damage, and maintain their freshness. This often includes insulated packaging, gel packs, dry ice, or even liquid nitrogen for some cargo types. Packaging should also allow for proper ventilation if required, e.g., for fresh produce.

2. **Temperature Control.** Many perishables need strict temperature maintenance. Airlines offer specialized services like cold storage facilities at terminals and temperature-controlled cargo holds. Active containers or passive containers with cooling elements can be used based on the nature of the goods.

3. **Quick Handling.** Perishable goods require fast loading and unloading to minimize the time they're exposed to non-optimal conditions. Prioritization during handling processes, direct transfers, or even specialized services like "cool dollies" to maintain cold chain during tarmac transfers can be part of the process.

4. **Special Documentation and Permits.** Depending on the nature and destination, perishable shipments might require specific documentation related to health, safety, or agricultural concerns. This could include phytosanitary certificates, health certificates, CITES permits for endangered plant species, and more.

5. **Risk and Insurance.** Given the sensitive nature of perishables, there's a higher risk associated with transportation. Insurance premiums might be higher

due to the risks of spoilage, and there's often a need for specialized insurance products tailored for perishables.

6. **Cost Implications.** Because of specialized requirements like packaging, handling, and storage, the cost of transporting perishables can be higher than regular cargo.

7. **Tracking and Monitoring.** Many shippers and consignees want real-time monitoring of their perishable shipments. Some solutions offer temperature logging and GPS tracking to ensure the cargo is being handled properly throughout its journey.

8. **Regulations and Compliance.** Different countries have specific regulations about importing perishables, particularly food and plants, to prevent the introduction of pests, diseases, or non-native species. It's crucial to be aware of these to prevent shipment rejections or delays.

9. **Short Shelf-Life Considerations.** For goods with extremely short shelf-lives, planning and coordination become even more critical. Every hour counts, and any delay can result in significant financial loss.

If considering air transport for perishable goods, it's advisable to work with freight forwarders or airlines that have a demonstrated expertise in this area. Proper planning, understanding of the requirements, and timely execution are essential to the successful air transport of perishable goods.

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