Module 37
Road Transport Overview

Presenter: Lynette Grobler

Introduction

Citrus are produced in all of South Africa’s nine provinces. In most cases this means that fruit must be transported for thousands of kilometres before it even reaches the harbour from where it will be loaded onto ships and exported.

Citrus fruit are transported to the harbour either by rail or by road. When transporting citrus fruit by road, there are a number of different factors that must be taken into account to ensure the safe transport of your fruit.

Transport is a very important link in the supply chain, and if not monitored well, it can lead to substantial financial losses. Firstly, the grower will contract a transport company to transport his products.

Citrus growers have different transport needs. The different trucks that can be used to transport citrus are:

- Refrigerated trucks
- Tautliners (trucks with curtains)
- Flatbeds

The type of product determines which type of truck is used. For fruit in open-top display cartons we suggest using tautliners, as the fruit will be damaged if the drivers walk on the cartons. Fruit in telescopic cartons can be loaded onto flatbeds and covered with tarpaulins.

Transport Companies

A transporter is contracted, and his trucks must comply with the various standards. It must either be a 34 or a 36 ton truck. Sometimes tri-axle trucks are used for fruit delivered to Maputo. For soft citrus we use refrigerated (reefer) trucks.

Before a producer contracts a trucking company there are certain legal requirements and documentation that must be in place.
**FBO Code**

All transporters must register with the Department of Agriculture. They receive a FBO (Food Business Operator) code, which has to do with food safety.

DAFF requires information of up to ten previous loads transported by a vehicle to control contamination.

**Truck Permits and Licences**

Every truck must have a port permit so that it can enter the harbour and offload.

Every truck must be roadworthy, the driver must have a licence, and every truck must comply with the industry standards.

The trailer must be flat, so that pallets can be loaded onto it safely, without damaging the pallet base.

**Loading of Trucks**

When the load has been inspected and approved by the PPECB, the producer contacts the transporter to send a truck. Pallets are placed together to make up a load, depending on the fruit type.

Usually you can load between 32 and 34 pallets of open-top display cartons, and 28 pallets of telescopic cartons when using standard pallets. The number of pallets is decreased pro rata according to the pallet weight.

**Weighing of Cartons**

Packhouses must weigh their various cartons, every count and type of packaging. The weight of the same fruit size can vary, even if packed in the same type of carton.

We want to avoid overloading. En route to Durban there are many weighbridges, and even if a truck is slightly overloaded, by for example 80kg, pallets will be offloaded and stored at the side of the road until another truck collects the pallets.

In this situation everybody loses money and fruit quality is negatively affected. So it is important to know the weight of each count and pallet.
**Truck Usage**

The type of truck used for transporting fruit, depends on the type of fruit loaded. We use refrigerated (reefer) trucks when loading fruit that has already been pre-cooled. Refrigerated trucks must be certified by the PPECB and must be able to monitor the airflow and provide a print out of the temperature afterwards. A maximum temperature fluctuation of 2°C is permitted. It is important to remember that a refrigerated truck is there to maintain the fruit temperature and not to bring the temperature down.

We have trucks with curtains on the side, mostly used for open-top cartons, and then flatbed super link vehicles.

**Overloading**

Every truck trailer has a disc indicating its maximum legal carrying mass. There are two overload scenarios. The truck can be overloaded totally, exceeding 56 tons, which is the legal weight limit for truck and freight combined.

The load weight can also be spread incorrectly over the axles. The idea is to place the load in the middle of the trailer across the axles and not towards the front or the back. If the cargo is loaded incorrectly on the axles, it can be shifted at the weighbridge, but you will incur a fine. But if the load weighs more than 34 tons, pallets must be removed.

Currently there is a 2% weight tolerance on our roads, but it also depends on the province that you are in. This tolerance is however not there to be abused – it is only a precaution.

**Transportation Process**

**Documentation**

Once the truck is loaded, the driver gets a consignment note at the office. He must ensure that the number of loaded pallets on the truck agrees with the consignment note. He must also check the delivery address. The address on the consignment note is often that of the export agent, which can be totally different from the receiver’s address where the load must be delivered.

He must make sure that he has all his documents and that he is ready to depart.
Load Inspection

After travelling about 100 kilometres the driver should stop and inspect the load, checking that all the straps securing the load are tight, that the load is properly covered, and that there are no tears in the tarpaulin, where water can get in and wet the cartons.

Reporting

If, en route to the harbour, the driver finds that there is a problem with the load, that the load has shifted or pallets have toppled over, or if he is detained at a weighbridge, or have any other problem, he should contact his depot immediately. The depot must contact the packhouse and report the problem so that corrective action can be taken.

Insurance

Every load must be insured with goods-in-transit insurance. Should the truck be involved in an accident and the whole load or part of the load is lost, the money can be recovered for the product.

Offloading

When the truck reaches the delivery point, the driver takes the consignment note to the office and presents it to the person that handles intake.

They check the number of pallets on the truck against the numbers on the consignment note. If all is in order, the fruit is offloaded. Any shortages are noted and written down, and the consignment note is handed back to the driver. This is his proof of delivery and is given to his depot to invoice the grower for payment.
Conclusion

It is important to use service providers that know your product and industry, that know the rules and regulations that are applicable to the packhouse, that can maintain the correct standards up to the delivery point, and that are able to make the right decision at the right time.

**active learning**

Watch the DVD clips, read through the learning material and do workplace research to gather the knowledge and information to complete the assignments below.

**Activity 37.1 – Mind Map**

Do research by speaking to your logistics manager and local transport companies about the different trucks that are used for transporting export citrus. Hold a group discussion around the costs involved in using the different modes of transport. Record the details of your discussions on a mind map in your workbook.

**Activity 37.2 – Case Study**

A flatbed truck is used to transport high-cube pallets of A15C cartons to the harbour. As the truck pulls away from a weighbridge after being stopped, half the pallets on the truck topple over and all the cartons and fruit on those pallets are damaged and has to be destroyed.

The insurance company refuses to pay for this loss as they say the transport company was negligent in securing the load. The transport company blames the packhouse for loading unstable pallets.

- How should the load have been secured?
- What questions will you ask of whom to determine who is culpable in this case?
- **Assume that the packhouse was at fault:** What critical control point(s) in the packhouse should be addressed in terms of critical limits, monitoring activities and corrective actions to prevent a recurrence of such an incident?
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Activity 37.2 – Case Study

Consider the case study below and answer the questions based on it.

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