Guidelines for Dual Loading of Containers

1. Introduction

Dual loading of containers is typically a contingency action rather than a standard operation. It is employed when pallets need to be shipped due to age or urgent market demands, but the available pallet quantity at one loading location is insufficient to fill a container.

Previously, alternative shipping methods like port-hole containers (accommodating 10 pallets each) or specialised reefer vessels provided solutions. However, port-hole containers have since been discontinued, and during the deciduous fruit season, space on specialised reefer vessels is extremely limited. Consequently, more than 95% of all deciduous fruit is shipped in 12m integral containers, requiring consignment lots of 20 pallets.

Ideally, an exporter's produce is consolidated at a single location with 20/21 pallets ready when needed. However, this is not always achievable, so the following options address part loads (not in priority order):

a. Combine loads of compatible specifications or protocols (e.g., grapes and nectarines with the same shipping code).
b. Wait for additional pallets to reach full load, considering any age-related constraints
c. Ship excess pallets using specialised reefer vessels (if available).
d. Transfer excess pallets to another loading point or consolidate them from another location.
e. Use a 6m container for a 10-pallet load (although these containers are scarce and costly).
f. Divert excess pallets to the local market.
g. Share a container with another exporter at the same loading location (Co-loading – note that only one notified party is allowed per container).
h. Utilise dual loading, collecting the remaining pallets at a secondary loading point.

Dual loading is generally considered a last-resort solution. When viable alternatives are exhausted and dual loading is selected, certain key aspects must be assessed.

2. Protocols

Export shipping of perishable goods is regulated by the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB), with specific protocols for each product. PPECB monitors the inspection, temperature, and loading of containers.

A PPECB official oversees product inspection and temperature during loading. For dual loads, PPECB mandates that the produce remains at or below the required temperature at both loading points. Additionally, the Time Temperature Tolerance (TTT) for deciduous fruit shipments is 6 hours, divided as follows: 1 hour for loading, 2 hours for transport, and 3 hours for connection to power at the container terminal. The same 6-hour TTT applies for dual loads. If the TTT may be exceeded, a generator unit might be necessary.

Any deviation from these rules requires a T-13 dispensation from PPECB, as well as shipping line approval.

3. PPECB Dual Load Criteria

3.1 Conditions without a Generator Unit:

- **Limit to two loading points per container.**
- **Begin at the furthest load point** (see Section 7 on Load Stability).
- **Distance Restrictions:** Cumulative travel time between points must not exceed 2 hours from the first load completion to harbour entry.
- **Temperature Control:** Product pulp temperature at each load point should not exceed the set point by more than 1°C, except Summer Pears and Apples in bags (D-1.5) where a 2°C tolerance is allowed.
- **Second Load Point Limits:** Part loads added at the second location must comply with specified temperature tolerances.

3.2 Conditions with a Generator Unit:

- **Maximum of two loading points per container.**
- If travel time is likely to exceed 2 hours, a generator unit must be attached.
- **Temperature Tolerance Standards:** Regular product temperature tolerances apply throughout the loading process.

3.3 PPECB Charges

PPECB levies charges for dual loads and rates can be found at the following link: Levies Archives - PPECB

3.4 General

For detailed PPECB temperature regime codes, consult the SCHEDULE 1/HP22 document on their website (Carrying temperature regimes of perishable produce for sea export official PPECB instructions).

4. Cold Treatment Consignments

Dual loading is not allowed for consignments destined for cold treatment markets due to the high risk of warming beyond acceptable tolerances.

5. Scheduling

Careful planning of loading times is crucial, particularly for the second loading point, where prioritized loading should be arranged. Notify the second loading point once the vehicle leaves the first location, and ensure the driver checks in immediately upon arrival.

6. Documentation

Ensure that all documentation is accurate and processed promptly to avoid delays that could compromise TTT.

7. Load Stability

Dual loads inherently involve fewer than 20 pallets at the first load point, which can lead to shifting during transit. To minimize risk:

a. Instruct drivers to exercise caution.
b. Ensure tight stowage of pallets to reduce movement.
c. Position the last two pallets to prevent toppling.
d. Use load bars if available.
e. Plan routes carefully, taking any inclines into account.

Transporters typically do not accept liability for damages during dual load transit. Notify exporters of this risk, and if damage is found upon arrival at the second load point, complete a deviation report and request PPECB verification.

8. Cost

In addition to PPECB charges, dual loading incurs a transport cost relating to:

a. Distance
b. Time
c. Generator unit (when required)

Haulers often charge a fixed fee, e.g., R800 per additional load point. If additional distance is required, charges are based on the cartage of the furthest point plus 50% of the nearest point's cartage. If moving pallets between points by a flatbed is more economical than dual loading, this should be considered, but keep in mind handling fees and potential temperature rises.

9. General

Containers must not be used to transfer non-export items between cold storage locations.

10. Conclusion

When dual loading is necessary, proper evaluation and adherence to protocol can facilitate a cost-effective process while minimizing quality risks.
