



Sustainability Considerations for Perishable Cargo Transportation

The purpose of this document is to provide air cargo stakeholders in the perishable supply chain with basic awareness about sustainability concerns specific to the transport of these goods, as well as the current industry priorities and recommendations.

The air cargo industry is committed to positively impacting people and the planet while contributing to global prosperity. By incorporating sustainability components into their operations and strategy, air cargo stakeholders will contribute to ending poverty and creating a life of dignity and opportunity for all within the boundaries of the planet.

People

Attracting, retaining, and developing diverse talent is a top priority for air cargo and the perishable transport business. The industry must work to ensure staff fulfills their potential in dignity and equality and a healthy environment. Critical areas of work are diversity and inclusion, upskilling & new skills, and capacity building.

Planet

Combating climate change is critical. The industry needs to reduce its impact on the environment with innovative technologies and improved operations and infrastructure. Supporting the reduction of CO₂ and other GHG emissions, electrification of ground support equipment, reduction of packaging and plastics, sustainable, lightweight ULDs & other assets, efficient return logistics, and supply chain decarbonization are key areas of work in this area.

Prosperity

Creating prosperity is at the core of our mission. The industry must strive to keep contributing to the economic, social, and technological progress of individuals and societies by continue enabling the efficient transport of perishable products. Driving efficiency & resiliency in air cargo processes and contributing to economic development & inclusion are key areas of work in this area.

Peace & Partnerships

Enabling transparent governance, standard-setting activities, and inclusive decision-making is critical for industry stakeholders to guarantee that business is conducted fairly and collaboratively. IATA and the industry must work to enable sustainable air cargo through partnerships as collaboration, trust, and mutualized benefits are critical for industry sustainability. Critical areas of work in this area are multi-stakeholder partnerships, digitalization and data sharing, and end-to-end visibility.

The development of long-term strategies and investments to achieve a sustainable industry is key to guaranteeing the future of air cargo. Industry stakeholders must have a sustainability strategy in place, setting their priorities. The document must be part of the overall business strategy and provide a solid framework for deploying resources and investment, setting objectives, engaging stakeholders, and reporting and communicating.

Perishable Cargo and Sustainable Development

In 2015, the United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a “shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.” The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) define global priorities and aspirations for 2030 and seek to mobilize global efforts around a common set of goals and targets.

The 17 goals include objectives directly relevant to air transport, such as SDG 12, which was established to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Equally important is SDG 2, which aims to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

Relevant targets

Target 12.3: halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

Target 2.1: universal access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food at all times of the year.

Perishable Loss in Air Cargo Operations

Almost a third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted annually. This creates a huge economic, social, and environmental impact and exacerbates food insecurity and malnutrition. With 14% of food being lost during the distribution, handling, and storage stages of the farm-to-fork journey, the air cargo industry needs to work together to reduce perishable losses along the supply chain, in line with target 12.3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The air cargo industry can act by:

- Optimizing procedures to reduce mishandling and temperature excursions
- Investing in innovative and sustainable packaging solutions and reducing unnecessary packaging
- Ensuring that quality standards are met (link to training, CEIV, IATA standards)
- Embracing digitalization to foster data sharing along the supply chain and provide responsive air cargo services

Recommendations for the Industry

Air cargo stakeholders should have a sustainability strategy in place, setting their priorities. The document must be part of the overall business strategy and provide a solid framework for deploying resources and investment, setting objectives, engaging stakeholders, and reporting and communicating.

The strategy should contain at least the following aspects:

- A **sustainability commitment and vision & mission** endorsed by leadership and staff and included as an integral part of the corporate culture and values
- A detailed **analysis of local and regional regulations** and timeframes, as well as of **customer demands**.
- A solid **stakeholder engagement & partnership strategy** within the supply chain, the industry, and the local community
- An **assessment** of the most **critical elements and threats** that will affect the organization
- Ambitious and realistic **short, medium, and long-term goals**, and a roadmap in place to achieve them
- **Allocation of resources** to meet the sustainability objectives
- **Meaningful targets and KPIs**
- Consistent **monitoring and reporting** on the company’s sustainability progress
- An internal and external **communications strategy**