



Preflight Checklist

for Shipping Your Quality Hawaii Agricultural Product

Are your customers getting the very best product that you can produce? Are you doing everything possible to prepare your product for the rigors and uncertainties of air, sea, and road travel? For your company to be successful, your customers must be happy with your product. This is true for all enterprises, from papaya to protea to guppy growers, from cookie manufacturers to tuna fishers. This preflight checklist is not a survey; it is a business tool covering the shipping of products from beginning to end, including some critically important pre-shipment considerations. If you use this tool, it will help you to increase your potential to provide the best quality product to your customers and avoid costly delays. This checklist also can give you an idea of which areas your company is doing well in and which areas need improvement. If completing it reveals to you opportunities for improvement (i.e., when you check a "no" box), see the suggested resources on page 4. These resources can lead you to information and ideas about improving your company. The website Hawaii's Agricultural Gateway (www.hawaiiag.org) is a source of information updates.

Before you go into or expand a business . . .

Y N NA

- Do you have a written business plan that demonstrates a thorough knowledge of your industry, including the products you plan to produce and market?
- Have you located resource people, organizations, and agencies to help you with your business (these could include the USDA; Hawaii Depts. of Agriculture and Business, Economic Development and Tourism; College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources—UH Manoa and its Extension Service; Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation, and the Hawaii Small Business Development Center Network, among others)?
- Have you joined and are you an active contributor to trade associations that can assist and support your efforts in marketing and transporting your product?
- Are you fully aware of potential financial resources (e.g., farm credit association, credit unions and banks, government loan and grant programs, etc.)?

Your business beyond Hawaii

(see USDA Foreign Ag. Service, www.fas.usda.gov/)

Y N NA

- Is your product successfully sold in the Hawaii market (not a necessity, but if so it is useful information)?
- Does your company have or is it preparing a written export marketing plan with defined goals and strategies?
- Does your company have the financial resources to actively support the promotion and marketing of your product outside of Hawaii?
- Does your company have sufficient production capacity to handle expanded sales and larger markets?
- Is your company committed to developing export markets and willing and able to dedicate staff, time, and resources to the process?
- Is your company committed to providing the highest level of service to distant buyers?
- Does your company have adequate knowledge in modifying product packaging and ingredients to meet foreign import regulations, food safety standards (see www.oda.state.or.us/lab_services/esc.html), and cultural preferences?
- Does your company have adequate knowledge in shipping its products to new markets, such as identifying and selecting freight forwarders/carriers, packaging in containers, temperature management, and freight costs?
- Does your company have adequate knowledge of export payment mechanisms, such as developing and negotiating letters of credit?
- Have you worked with a shipper to send a trial shipment to the desired destination?

Well in advance of producing or harvesting a product . . .

Y N NA

- Is there documented and sufficient demand for your products that will enable you to sell at a profit?
- Are you keeping track of your production and sales plans with a calendar?
- Do you have a plan to deal with seasonal fluctuations in your ability to supply?
- Have you investigated the best ways to sell your product?
- Do you know who your competitors are and how your company and its products are different from theirs?

- Do you know who your final consumers are and how they will use your product?
- Do you know how much it will cost you to produce/harvest your product?
- Do you know what your "break-even" price is?
- Do you know how much it will cost you to market your product, including shipping?
- Have you considered load-consolidation of compatible products, within your product line or with a colleague, as a way to reduce your shipping costs?
- Have you prepared educational, sales, and labeling materials, in the appropriate languages, for your products?
- Have you determined the source and cost of packaging materials designed to protect your product from extreme heat or cold (e.g., winterpack)?

Just before producing or harvesting a product . . .

- Y N NA**
- Is your product STILL in demand by a buyer who will purchase it at a price that is profitable to you? If not, what will you do?
 - Do you know all you need to know about the buyers you are selling to, e.g., business reputation?
 - Are you aware of all the terms and conditions of sale (payment terms, loss allowance, insurance, etc.) necessary to complete the transaction?
 - Are you aware of all regulations (customs, quarantine, duties, labeling, accepted additives and ingredients, etc.) necessary to gain entry to a destination?
 - Have you contacted your freight forwarder/airline to tell them that you will need X amount of space, type of space (e.g., chilled), when, and to where, and noted any special handling requirements?

Harvesting and postharvest handling

- Y N NA**
- Is the product harvested in a manner that reduces the time between harvest and shipping?
 - Is the product harvested in a way that keeps physical damage to a minimum?
 - While harvesting is the product stacked in a way that minimizes bruising, compression, and heat damage?
 - Is the product cooled of "field heat" and/or chilled or put on ice as soon as possible?
 - Is the product washed in a legal and effective cleaning solution?
 - Is the product treated by the best postharvest treatment for extended shelf-life and elimination of pests?
 - Does the product assortment (sorted/sized) meet buyer specifications?

Packaging materials and packing

- Y N NA**
- Are you shipping products of only the best quality?
 - Is the product healthy, clean, dry, or firm enough to pack?
 - Have you investigated the best ways to pack and package individual products so that they level the load, reduce movement, and are space-efficient?
 - Is the product packed in the most economical way so as to reduce shipping costs to a minimum?
 - Does the product need to be individually wrapped before it is put into a larger package?
 - Is your packaging material recyclable, biodegradable, reusable, or returnable—and labeled as such—and is it kept to a minimum?
 - Does the packaging allow for appropriate movement of gases and moisture to and from the product?
 - Are you making sure that there is no product or cross-product contamination from natural gases or contamination from fluids containing bacteria?
 - Do your packages meet the carrier's shipping specifications and all hazardous-materials shipping requirements?
 - Do the boxes/containers meet buyer specifications?
 - Have you compared the costs of palletizing, "cookie-sheeting," and containerizing your shipment?
 - Have you determined if an environmentally controlled container is needed to ensure highest-quality arrival conditions (warmth in winter, cool/cold in summer) to your market?
 - Some cargo services supply environmentally controlled containers for your use at little or no charge; do you know who these providers are?
 - Have you researched the exact interior dimensions of the cargo container to know if it will accommodate your packages?
 - Are the boxes/containers labeled properly and attractively, and do they have a UPC stripe?
 - Does your box have an illustration showing the best way to arrange and stack it on a pallet?

Does the outside packaging include the following information?

- Y N NA**
- Commodity name, grade, maturity, size, number of pieces
 - Shipper's mark
 - Country of origin (e.g., USA)
 - Weight marking (pounds or kilograms)
 - Number of packages and dimensions of cases
 - Handling marks (international pictorial symbols)

- Cautionary markings, such as "This Side Up" or "Use No Hooks" or "Live" (in English and the language of the country of destination)
- Port of entry
- Labels for hazardous materials (universal symbols used by the International Maritime Organization)
- Does each carton indicate its contents, or do your original shipping documents contain a detailed packing list?
- Does your package indicate your company name, product, and contact information (telephone, fax, e-mail, website)?

Does the shipment paperwork contain complete information on:

- Seller (including emergency contact)
- Receiver (including emergency contact)
- Product
- Handling requirements
- Do your labels and packaging emphasize the quality and allure of Hawaii products?
- Do the cartons have information on handling needs, e.g., desired temperature and humidity, and number of packages that can be safely stacked?
- Has the product been inspected by quarantine authorities?
- Is the quarantine certification attached as described by law, and will the certification stamps be easily accessible by the people opening the container at the destination?
- Is your product insured against any possible accident or hazard?

About the forwarder/shipper/consolidator/carrier . . .

- Y N NA
- Have you researched your choice of service provider with the Better Business Bureau or other reliable agency?
 - Have you visited the service providers' facilities to view their cold-storage, parking, loading, shading, tarmac, equipment, and facilities?
 - Are pick-up services available from your business to the airport?
 - Does your service provider have experience handling your product?
 - Does your service provider have experience in the market you want to ship to?
 - Do you have a contingency plan if your product is delayed or not shipped?
 - Does your service provider have an 800 phone number, website, or other method where you can track your shipment at any hour?

- Does your service provider label its cargo containers to indicate perishability or other handling needs so that their employees know how to handle your product appropriately?
- Does your service provider know the exact environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, oxygen, humidity) your products need during transit and holding?
- Does your service provider pack your product so that temperature is maintained and product movement is reduced to a minimum throughout the entire trip?

Reservations of cargo space: working with your service provider, be prepared to answer the following, as possible:

- Y N NA
- Airport or terminal of destination
 - Pieces, weight, volume, dimensions
 - Preferred routing
 - Flight numbers and dates
 - Commodity description
 - Packaging details, especially in the case of a "wet" cargo shipment
 - Delivery date and arrival time at the carrier's door
 - Dry or wet ice
 - Prepaid or collect
 - Insurance
 - Declared value for customs
 - Declared value for carriage
 - Special loading, handling, storage instructions
 - Known/unknown shipper requirements (FAA security check on the person owning the goods)

Does your service provider handle the following paperwork?

- Y N NA
- Commercial invoice
 - Bill of lading
 - Consular invoice
 - Certificate of origin
 - Inspection certification
 - Dock receipt and warehouse receipt
 - Destination control statement
 - Insurance certificate
 - Shipper's export declaration
 - Export packing list
 - Ingredients analysis list
 - Does your service provider confirm the space through to its final destination?

- If the cargo will move on "Standby-Space Available Basis," will your service provider arrange proper storage?
- Have you checked on weather conditions in the target market prior to shipment (adverse weather could delay shipments and adversely affect product quality)?
- Are you aware of the night, weekend, and holiday delivery schedules of service providers (some are closed on major holidays)?
- Have you contacted your buyer to make sure they are ready for your shipment?

Shipment arrival and pickup

- Y N NA
- Do pick-up persons know how to "clear" your product, and have the proper permits, equipment and training to handle your shipment safely?
 - Can your product be unpacked quickly and neatly by the receiver?
 - Have you researched door-to-door delivery services from airports to buyer, if your products or buyers require them?

Post-shipment follow-up

- Y N NA
- Did you contact your buyer after the shipment arrived to ask them about how they liked your product's:
 - Y N NA
 - Quality/condition
 - Packaging
 - Labeling
 - Variety
 - Timeliness
 - Size and maturity
 - Educational materials
 - Necessary paperwork
 - Did you ask your buyer how the two of you can sell more of your products?

Continuous business improvement

- Y N NA
- Do you have a program in place to take action on constructive feedback from your buyer?
 - Do you follow current events, industry trends, and consumer needs as they change to make better business decisions?
 - Have you taken any steps to improve your business in the last few weeks?

Suggested resources

Hawaii-specific

Hawaii Agricultural Gateway: www.hawaiiag.org
Hawaii's Farmer, Chef, Wholesaler Source Book. Hawaii Dept. of Agriculture. 1996. Call 808-973-9595
This Hawaii Product Went to Market, The Basics of Produce, Floral, Seafood, Livestock, and Processed-Product Businesses in Hawaii. CTAHR-UHM. 1996. Call 808-956-7046.

Trade publications

Air Cargo Guide, Regulations Governing the Air Cargo Industry. Official Aviation Guide. Information about shipping worldwide. Semiannual. Call 800-342-5624.
The Air Cargo Tariff. International Airline Publications. Information about shipping worldwide. Six times yearly. Call 213-776-1611.
The Packer Sourcebook. A must-have for packaging, handling, transportation, value-added, HACCP. Annual. Call 800-255-5113.

USDA information products (call 202-690-1304)

www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/tmdsea.htm
www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/facilagx.html
A Business of Details; Exporting High Value U.S. Agricultural Products (video and publication). 1997.
A Guide for Livestock Exporters. 1997.
Agricultural Export Transportation Handbook #700. 1997.
Directory of Freight Forwarders Serving Agricultural Shippers. 1996.
Every Link in the Chain (livestock transport video). 1997.
Tropical Products Transport Handbook #668. 1989.

U.S. Department of Commerce

A Basic Guide to Exporting. 1996. World Trade Press. Call 800-833-8586.

Developed and reviewed by . . .

The Air Cargo Educational and Training Committee and the following individuals: James R. Hollyer, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources—UH Manoa (CTAHR)
 Richard Nelson, Pulelehua Orchids
 John Halloran, Kelvin Sewake, Daniel Paquin, Gordon Cleveland, and Robert Paull, CTAHR
 Cristina Olive and Lyle Wong, Hawaii Dept. of Agriculture
 Kathy Lyons and David Matsumoto, Japan Airlines
 Brian Suzuki, Hawaii Air Cargo
 Bob Raley, Hawaii Florist and Shipper's Association
 John Sprague, Sea Grant Extension Program, UH Manoa
 John Sakaguchi, Wilson Okamoto & Associates, Inc.
 John Thatcher, Airlines Committee of Hawaii
 Lynette Kawaoka, Barry Fukunaga, Morris Tamanaha, and Steve Takashima, Hawaii Dept. of Transportation—Airports Division

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