

Workflow: Logistics

Toolkit 5.4

Packed Pallet Management

target audience

Packhouse, and logistics managers.

what it is

The final process before loading fruit is the proper palletising and management of the flow from packing line onto pallets and to transport. This toolkit deals with the management of packed pallets and half pallets as well as best practice for loading onto trucks and into containers. (For packing best practice per se, see [Toolkit 4.8 – Packing Practices](#)).

why it is important

The final process of managing and moving packed pallets can be subject to bottlenecks, space constraints, and workflow problems. Therefore, it is important to establish an efficient process that also ensures that final inspections run smoothly.

success factors

The key success factors are:

- **Standard operation procedures** – Ensure that you have a SOPs for every process related to managing and moving pallets and half pallets, which also includes SOPs for forklift drivers.
- **Space, batching, storage** – Ensure that you have a designated space for pallets, including:
 - Adequate space for finalised, inspected pallets, preferably batched in accordance with the variety, loading schedule and the target market.
 - A space for rejected pallets, where they can easily and safely be repacked and corrected.
 - A designated space for half pallets.
- **Correct labelling** – Ensure that pallets are labelled correctly.
- **Half pallet management** – Key success factors include:
 - Half pallets should be rotated according to the first in, first out principles, controlled and filled up as soon as possible.

- All half pallets should be taken to the correct storage area, and ideally half pallets should be stored in the cold rooms.
- Ensure that when the specific variety is packed again that half pallets are filled up first.
- The Outbound Supervisor should continually monitor half pallets to ensure fresh high-quality fruit is packed.
- **Managing rejections** – Rejections are placed in a designated area, the reason for the rejection is defined clearly and corrected, and then inspected again.
- **Scheduling by age** – Ensure that you have a scheduling and tracking process where the dwell time of the ready pallets is kept to the minimum, i.e., pallets completed earliest are the earliest to be loaded.
- **Loading schedule** – Space for completed pallets is often limited when the packhouse is working at maximum capacity. Therefore, the scheduling of incoming transport and the loading schedule is critical. Ensure that you have clear metrics and tracking in this regard and make use of visual communication.
- **Loading on trucks** – Key success factors include:
 - 5S of the fleet.
 - Proper use of dunnage bags.
 - Securing pallets properly.
 - Securing the curtains on the truck trailers properly.
 - A scheduled loading sequence according the last-in-first-out principle and the routing plan.
- **Loading containers** – See [Toolkit 5.7 – Cold Chain and Shipping at Required Temperatures](#).
- **Truck routing** – Ensure that the truck routing and planning is optimised to prevent or at least minimise delays on route and at ports.
- **Health and Safety** – Ensure that health and safety measures are especially sharp for an activity that is inherently dangerous because of the weight and movement of the pallets.
- **Feedback, problem solving, and continuous improvement** – Ensure that you receive detailed feedback (data and information) of any problems related to the handling or management of pallets and undertake structured problem solving to address the root causes, which may very well rest with your packing and palletising processes and not with the transport and shipping providers. Feedback would include instances of:
 - Collapsed pallets.
 - Temperature problems during transit.
 - High instances of diseased fruit upon arrival.
 - Ventilation problems during transit.
 - Problems with old or poorly maintained containers.

execution steps

See success factors above.

assessment questions

Please Note: There is no minimum / maximum number of questions you can add.

1.	Do you have standard operating for all aspects of managing completed and half pallets?
2.	Do you have designated areas for completed, rejected, and half pallets?
3.	Do always comply to the labelling requirements on pallets?
4.	Do you have an efficient system for managing half-pallets, including reducing the number of half pallets?
5.	Do you have an efficient system for managing rejected pallets, including reducing the number rejected pallets?
6.	Does your batching of completed pallets promote efficient loading?
7.	Do you work in close collaboration with your transport provider to ensure best practice when loading, transporting, and unloading pallets?
8.	Is your container loading process and timing up to standard?
9.	Do you maintain health and safety protocols in pallet and loading area, i.e., a zero-incident rate?
10.	Do you receive and analyse data and feedback from your logistics service providers, export agents, and clients to identify root causes related to poor pallet management or other, and address behavioural or systemic problems in this regard?