

Potential industry crisis with transport of High Cube containers

The South African fruit industry and other road users transporting 12m ISO Hi Cube containers in South Africa are currently faced with a potentially economically crippling and disastrous situation if the South African Department of Transport follows through with their intention to reinforce Regulation 224 (b) of the National Road Traffic Act 1996 upon the expiry of the current moratorium on this legislation from 1 January 2019.

This legislation stipulates that the maximum legal height for vehicles without abnormal permits in South Africa is 4.3 m, however when 12 m ISO Hi Cube containers are transported on 1.6 m deck height trailers, the overall height is approximately 4.5 m, which is just 20 cm over the legislated limit.

At the start of 2018, the current Minister of Transport Minister Blade Nzimande took a hard line on this legislation and announced that once the moratorium period had expired, the current regulation will remain in place. If the legislation is strictly enforced, there will be chaos within the entire national logistical sector, including the fruit industry, which currently transports more than 90% of fruit for export to port by road. A lack of sufficient capacity to transport the approximately 3 million tons of containerised fresh fruit in more than 150 000 Hi Cube containers annually will have a massive negative impact on South Africa's agricultural sector and could severely affect export volumes.

The majority (more than 80%) of South African trailers currently transporting containers are flat deck trailers with a solid deck and the trailer height is usually 1.6m. Aligned with this, most fixed loading facilities are also standardised to load trailers of this height and the cost and inconvenience of amending this would be massive. For road transport to comply with the legislation in question, the only possibility would be for the transport service providers to drop the height of trailers by using "skeletal" trailers which have no deck. These are much less popular than standard trailers as without a deck they can only be used for transporting containers. Taking into account the massive volumes of Hi Cube container transport and the extensive cost involved for transport companies to convert their fleets to this type of trailer, it is not practically or financially possible for the transport industry to make this change in the remaining few months before 1 January 2019.

The origin of the current situation dates back to the introduction of Hi Cube containers more than two decades ago, which are around 30 cm taller than standard containers. The reasoning behind the introduction of the problematic legislation in 1996 was to restrict container trucks to 4.3 m as government was concerned that Hi

Cube container trucks are too high to negotiate bridges on secondary routes and that they were considered to be unstable.

Subsequent to interventions and serious logistical disruptions between 2009 and 2011, in 2011 the Minister of Transport at the time placed a moratorium on the implementation of this legislation for seven years. According to a recent response from the Department of Transport, this period of reprieve was granted to allow operators to procure and ensure that they comply with the provisions of the Act, although it is unclear that this stipulation had been successfully communicated to the transport industry at the time the moratorium was granted. During the moratorium period, there were ongoing negotiations between the transport industry and government to resolve this issue and road transport continued mostly on standard flat deck trailers. In this time there were more than 8 million Hi Cube incident free container movements on South African roads and no bridge collisions.

"Due to the foreseeable economic impact on import/export-reliant industries, Transnet, the maritime sector and the South African economy at large, it is critical that a cordial solution is sought to rectify the present circumstance," says Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) logistics development manager Mitchell Brooke.

There are currently several urgent, high level negotiations underway between the affected industries, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Transport to mitigate this difficult situation.

FSA (Fruit SA) CEO Dr Konanani Liphadzi has directed a document to the DTI (Department Trade and Industry) very clearly spelling out the impact to the economy and employment situation that will be direct fall out to this current regulation. Fruit South Africa has proposed an extension of the moratorium on barring high cube containers from the roads. Fruit South Africa's position on the matter is that the present moratorium be extended for a further three years to assess the necessity of enforcing the regulation given the track record of safe transport to date. If agreement is reached that the regulation can be amended, this would also provide sufficient time for an amendment of regulation 224a.

LOUISE BRODIE

High cube container on standard South African trailer.



If this is not successful, the additional time could greatly assist trailer manufacturers and transporters to roll out compliant trailer fleets.

Over the past two decades the trend in global transport of goods has moved increasingly towards Hi Cube containers and is now predominantly undertaken in this container format. Several of South Africa's neighbouring countries have increased their height limits to 4.6 m and their goods moving through South Africa to

South African ports will also be affected by this legislation and could be forced to export through Namibia and Mozambique which would deny South African ports of considerable revenue.

The height of Hi Cube containers on a standard deck trailer is 4.5 m only 20 cm higher than the current maximum permitted height. This is also the same height as a standard double-decker bus or a car carrier, both of which vehicle types have received exemptions to height regulations.

fruit journal
DIE JOERNAAL VIR DIE VRUGTEBEDRYF IN SUID-AFRIKA



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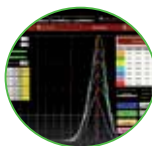


Internal measurements
Internal Browning Defect Detection



INSIGHT 2T

Citrus, Apple, Melon

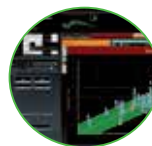


Internal measurements
Sugar rate - Brix Index



INSIGHT 2R

Avocado, Mango, Kiwi, Tomato

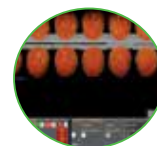


Internal measurements
Brix Index, Dry matter, Internal colour



SSD2 - SOFTNESSCAN

Stone fruits, Kiwi, Fig, Persimmon, Mango



Internal measurements
Soft Fruits and Spots Detection

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