

Cool Chain Association

Attention to detail leads to success

The Cool Chain Association held its fourth annual general meeting at Paris Vatry airport (France) from 23-25 May. The main topics on the agenda were the latest trends in the retail sector and the effects they have on logistics, as well as the development of standards (CCQI cool chain quality indicators) for all links in the supply chain.

Climatic change, social responsibility, environmental costs, the carbon footprint and food miles are all major buzz words today, although such terms still arouse a feeling of otherworldliness in many experts in the transport and logistics industry. Nevertheless, CO₂ production in the transport chain is already a cutting-edge subject in the retail trade in both the English-speaking world and the bio sector – if only as a way to stay one step ahead of competitors. The attempt to reduce CO₂ emissions is leading to new shopping habits and to shippers transferring cargo from the air to the sea. Forwarders will need to adapt to this new practice, explained Tony Wright from Exelsius Cool Chain Management Consulting. Most of the attendees of this year's session of the Cool Chain Association (CCA) in Paris Vatry (France) agreed with what he said. Companies in other countries will follow this trend too. During the discussion, Wright outlined some of the difficulties that new habits could cause. Farmers in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America depend

on the income generated by the export of their produce. In addition, greenhouse production in Europe is by no means environment-friendly either.

CCQI retail stores and ULD

The development of additional standards for the supply chain proved to be a far stormier activity. The German classification society Germanische Lloyd (GL, Hamburg) has been contracted by CCA and asked by the French retail chain Carrefour, the world's second largest food trader after Walmart, to work out a standard for the retail trade called CCQI retail stores. This new standard will complement the existing CCQI for airfreight, airports and the forwarding industry. The fact that such a standard exists has already raised the quality level in the cool chain. Around 70 firms have been certified to date, said Bernhard Ständer, a GL managing director. An initial draft for all types of outlets – from small butcheries and corner shops to superstores – was presented and discussed at the meeting. The draft is to be revised and adopted this year.

Furthermore, a new standard for ULD services was presented at the meeting. Manufacturers and operators can apply to GL for certification. This CCQI encompasses product quality, customer support, operating instructions, technical maintenance, hygiene and staff training. Ständer declared that the industry needs more training and not more equipment. When something does not function it is frequently due to operating processes. A standard for production – such as refrigerating the goods before shipping, for example, – is still lacking.

Jean Pierre Emond from Florida University (USA) led a rather heated debate on how to define the interfaces in the cool chain where the consignment temperature should be measured. The opinions of airlines, forwarders and shippers were light years apart with regard to what can be done and what should be done.

When outlining CCA's aims, its chairman Robert Arendal said that the lobby group will launch a campaign to attract new members, particularly in Asia and Latin America, in coming months. The association had exactly 50 paying members in May.

We aim to add value

The targets of the association, which is still in its infancy, need to be more clearly defined. CCA primarily regards itself as a mouthpiece for the perishables industry at present. However, many companies do not consider this a sufficient reason to become a member of the group. In addition, CCA has concentrated very markedly on airfreight so far, despite the fact that much greater quantities of perishables are carried by ship and truck. Huge problems can crop up with the latter modes of transport, just as in the airfreight sector. Furthermore, the association was requested to give some attention to pharmaceutical and high-tech products which fall into the perishables category.

Arendal stated that CCA will, in any case, target a closer collaboration with the aviation association Iata and the Cargo2000 lobby group. The first step was taken at a Iata conference in Mexico in March this year. Moreover, CCA and Cargo2000's quality benchmarks for airport-to-airport and door-to-door transport services are to be harmonised.

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Photo: Vatry airport

Paris Vatry (France) airport sponsored CAA's annual general meeting this year.