

Commonwealth of Dominica



Office of the Maritime Administrator

Policy Letter: **01-17 – Requirements for Dominica Reefer Vessels Engaged in Transshipment or Port to Port Transport of Fish Destined for European Ports**

Applicability: **All Shipowners, Operators and Masters of Dominica Flagged Reefer Vessels Engaged in Transshipment or Port to Port Transport of Fish Destined for European Ports**

1. General

This Policy Letter comprises the requirements for reefer vessels that transship fish from EU-listed fishing vessels, carry and land fish intended for human consumption in the European Union.

2. General Requirements

2.1 Basic Requirements for Dominica Reefer Vessels Transshipping or Transporting Fish Destined for European Ports

2.1.1 Transshipped or transported fish destined for European ports must originate and maintain a chain of custody on EU-listed ports, fishing and reefer vessels.

2.1.2 Fish must be frozen before transshipment or loading onboard a vessel at port and must remain in a frozen state until landing. Transshipment or movement of fresh fish, fish to be frozen, fish kept on ice or any fish processing onboard is prohibited on reefer vessels intending to transship fish to the EU.

3. General Hygiene Requirements for all Reefer Vessels Transshipping or Transporting Fish

3.1 General Requirements for Reefer Vessels

3.1.1 Food premises and areas where frozen fish cargo is to be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition.

- 3.1.2 The layout, design, construction, siting and size of food premises and cargo holds are to:
- .1 permit adequate maintenance, cleaning and/or disinfection, avoid or minimize air-borne contamination, and provide adequate working space to allow for the hygienic performance of all operations;
 - .2 be such as to protect against the accumulation of dirt, contact with toxic materials, the shedding of particles into food and the formation of condensation or undesirable mold on surfaces;
 - .3 permit good food hygiene practices, including protection against contamination and, in particular, pest control; and
 - .4 where necessary, provide suitable temperature-controlled handling and storage conditions of sufficient capacity for maintaining frozen fish cargo at appropriate temperatures and designed to allow those temperatures to be monitored and, where necessary, recorded.
- 3.1.3 An adequate number of flush lavatories are to be available and connected to an effective drainage system. Lavatories are not to open directly into rooms in which food is handled or frozen fish cargo is stored.
- 3.1.4 An adequate number of washbasins are to be available, suitably located and designated for cleaning hands. Washbasins for cleaning hands are to be provided with hot and cold running water, materials for cleaning hands and for hygienic drying. Where necessary, the facilities for washing food are to be separate from the hand-washing facility.
- 3.1.5 All areas must have suitable and sufficient means of natural or mechanical ventilation. Mechanical airflow from a contaminated area to a clean area is to be avoided. Ventilation systems are to be so constructed as to enable filters and other parts requiring cleaning or replacement to be readily accessible.
- 3.1.6 Food premises are to have adequate natural and/or artificial lighting.
- 3.1.7 Drainage facilities are to be adequate for the purpose intended. They are to be designed and constructed to avoid the risk of contamination. Where drainage channels are fully or partially open, they are to be so designed as to ensure that waste does not flow from a contaminated area towards or into a clean area, in particular an area where foods likely to present a high risk to the final consumer are handled.
- 3.1.8 Where necessary, adequate changing facilities for personnel are to be provided.
- 3.1.9 Cleaning agents and disinfectants are not to be stored in areas where food is handled or frozen fish cargo is stored.

3.2 Requirements for Transportation of Frozen Fish Cargo

- 3.2.1 Conveyances and/or containers used for transporting frozen fish cargo are to be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition to protect foodstuffs from contamination and are, where necessary, to be designed and constructed to permit adequate cleaning and/or disinfection.
- 3.2.2 Receptacles in vehicles and/or containers are not to be used for transporting anything other than frozen fish cargo where this may result in contamination.
- 3.2.3 Where conveyances and/or containers are used for transporting anything in addition to frozen fish cargo or for transporting different frozen fish cargo at the same time, there is, where necessary, to be effective separation of products.
- 3.2.4 Where conveyances and/or containers have been used for transporting anything other than frozen fish cargo or for transporting different frozen fish cargo, there is to be effective cleaning between loads to avoid the risk of contamination.
- 3.2.5 Frozen fish cargo in conveyances and/or containers is to be so placed and protected as to minimize the risk of contamination.
- 3.2.6 Where necessary, conveyances and/or containers used for transporting frozen fish cargo are to be capable of maintaining frozen fish cargo at appropriate temperatures and allow those temperatures to be monitored.

3.3 Equipment Requirements

- 3.3.1 All articles, fittings and equipment with which food comes into contact are to:
 - .1 be effectively cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected. Cleaning and disinfection are to take place at a frequency sufficient to avoid any risk of contamination;
 - .2 be so constructed, be of such materials and be kept in such good order, repair and condition as to minimize any risk of contamination;
 - .3 with the exception of non-returnable containers and packaging, be so constructed, be of such materials and be kept in such good order, repair and condition as to enable them to be kept clean and, where necessary, to be disinfected; and
 - .4 be installed in such a manner as to allow adequate cleaning of the equipment and the surrounding area.
- 3.3.2 Where necessary, equipment is to be fitted with any appropriate control device to guarantee fulfilment of this Policy Letter's objectives.

3.3.3 Where chemical additives have to be used to prevent corrosion of equipment and containers, they are to be used in accordance with good practice.

3.4 Water Supply Requirements

3.4.1 There is to be an adequate supply of potable water, which is to be used whenever necessary to ensure that frozen fish cargos are not contaminated.

3.4.2 Where non-potable water is used, for example for fire control, steam production, refrigeration, and other similar purposes, it is to circulate in a separate duly identified system. Non-potable water is not to connect with, or allow reflux into, potable water systems.

3.5 Personal Hygiene Requirements

3.5.1 Every person working in a food-handling of frozen fish cargo area is to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and is to wear suitable, clean and, where necessary, protective clothing.

3.5.2 No person suffering from, or being a carrier of a disease likely to be transmitted through food or afflicted, for example, with infected wounds, skin infections, sores or diarrhea is to be permitted to handle food or frozen fish cargo area; or enter any food-handling or frozen fish cargo area in any capacity if there is any likelihood of direct or indirect contamination. Any person so affected and employed that is likely to come into contact with food or frozen fish cargo is to report immediately the illness or symptoms, and if possible their causes, to the vessel's Master.

3.6 Provisions Applicable to Foodstuffs and Frozen Fish Cargo

3.6.1 A reefer vessel is not to accept raw materials or ingredients, if they are known to be, or might reasonably be expected to be, contaminated with parasites, pathogenic microorganisms or toxic, decomposed or foreign substances to such an extent that, even after the operator had hygienically applied normal sorting and/or preparatory or processing procedures, the final product would be unfit for human consumption.

3.6.2 Adequate procedures are to be in place to control pests. Adequate procedures are also to be in place to prevent domestic animals from having access to places where food is prepared, handled or stored and where frozen fish cargo is stored.

3.6.3 Raw materials, ingredients, intermediate products and finished products likely to support the reproduction of pathogenic micro-organisms or the formation of toxins are not to be kept at temperatures that might result in a risk to health. The cold chain is not to be interrupted. However, limited periods outside temperature control are permitted, to accommodate the practicalities of handling during preparation, transport, storage, display and service of food, provided that it does not result in a risk to health.

- 3.6.4 Hazardous and/or inedible substances, including animal feed, are to be adequately labelled and stored in separate and secure containers.
- 3.7 Provisions Applicable to the Wrapping and Packaging of Frozen Fish Cargo
- 3.7.1 Material used for wrapping and packaging are not to be a source of contamination.
- 3.7.2 Wrapping materials are to be stored in such a manner that they are not exposed to a risk of contamination.
- 3.7.3 Wrapping and packaging operations are to be carried out so as to avoid contamination of the products.
- 3.7.4 Wrapping and packaging material re-used for foodstuffs is to be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect.
4. **Structural and Equipment Requirements**
- 4.1 Requirements for Reefer Vessels
- 4.1.1 Vessels must be designed and constructed so as not to cause contamination of the products with bilge-water, sewage, smoke, fuel, oil, grease or other objectionable substances.
- 4.1.2 Surfaces with which fishery products come into contact must be of suitable corrosion-resistant material that is smooth and easy to clean. Surface coatings must be durable and non-toxic.
- 4.1.3 Reefer vessels must also:
- .1 have freezing equipment with sufficient capacity to lower the temperature rapidly so as to achieve a core temperature of not more than -18°C;
 - .2 have refrigeration equipment with sufficient capacity to maintain fishery products in the storage holds at not more than -18°C. Storage holds must be equipped with a temperature-recording device in a place where it can be easily read. The temperature sensor of the reader must be situated in the area where the temperature in the hold is the highest; and
 - .3 holds must be separated from the engine compartments and from the crew quarters by partitions which are sufficient to prevent any contamination of the stored fishery products. Holds and containers used for the storage of fishery products must ensure their preservation under satisfactory conditions of hygiene and, where necessary, ensure that melt water does not remain in contact with the products.

4.2 Hygiene Requirements

- 4.2.1 When in use, the parts of vessels or containers set aside for the storage of fishery products must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition. In particular, they must not be contaminated by fuel, bilge water or other contaminants.
- 4.2.2 As soon as possible after they are taken on board, fishery products must be protected from contamination and from the effects of the sun or any other source of heat.
- 4.2.3 Fishery products must be handled and stored so as to prevent bruising. Handlers may use spiked instruments to move large fish or fish which might injure them, provided that the flesh of the products suffers no damage.

4.3 Storage of Fishery Products

Frozen fishery products must be kept at a temperature of not more than -18°C in all parts of the product; however, whole frozen fish in brine intended for the manufacture of canned food may be kept at a temperature of not more than -9°C. The brine must also not be a source of contamination of the fish.

4.4 Transport of Fishery Products

During transport, fishery products must be maintained at the required temperature. In particular, frozen fishery products, with the exception of frozen fish in brine intended for the manufacture of canned food, must be maintained during transport at an even temperature of not more than -18°C in all parts of the product, possibly with short upward fluctuations of not more than 3°C.

5. **Official Controls of Production and Placing Fishery Products on the Market**

5.1 Inspection and Checks of Landing

- .1 Regular and random Flag State checks on the hygiene conditions of landing and storage and transport conditions;
- .2 Initial and annual Flag State inspections of vessels to check, in particular:
 - a. where appropriate, whether the conditions for approval are still fulfilled;
 - b. whether the fishery products are handled correctly;
 - c. for compliance with hygiene and temperature requirements;
 - d. the cleanliness of vessel's frozen fish cargo areas, other facilities and equipment;
 - e. staff hygiene; and
 - f. assessment of the "own check" system based on HACCP principles.

5.1.1 Initial and annual Flag State inspection and checks:

- .1 can be carried out while the vessel is at sea or when it is in a port in an EU Member State or in a third country;
- .2 will be conducted by a qualified Dominica Maritime Administration Flag State Inspector.

5.2 Approval of Vessels for EU Listing

- .1 After an initial or annual vessel inspection, the Administration will approve a reefer vessel for the activities concerned, if the vessel has demonstrated that it meets the relevant requirements of this Policy Letter, Regulations (EC) No. 852/2004 and (EC) No. 853/2004.
- .2 The Administration may grant conditional approval if minor deficiencies are found in infrastructure and/or equipment requirements. Full approval will be granted, when an inspection carried out within three months of the granting of conditional approval indicate that the vessel meets all requirements. If progress has been made but the vessel still does not meet all of the requirements, the Administration may extend the conditional approval. However, conditional approvals shall not exceed a total of 12 months.
- .3 The Administration will issue an approval number to each vessel granted full and conditional approval.
- .4 If, at any time between inspections, the Administration find serious deficiencies or has to stop a transshipment operation and the Master/Operator is unable to provide an acceptable corrective action report, the approval number will be withdrawn. If the master/Operator is able to provide an acceptable corrective action report, the approval number may be temporarily suspended until conditions for the Approval Number are met.

Any questions can be directed to:

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