



POTENTIAL HIGH CUBE BAN TO CAUSE CHAOS IN EXPORTS

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The Chamber has warned of potential chaos on the roads and damage to vital export fruit industries if the Department of Transport enforces its ban on the use of High Cube containers on standard trailers in January next year.

When the shipping containers, which conform to international standards, are loaded onto normal trailers they exceed the maximum height permitted on South Africa's roads by 30 centimetres. The Department wants to see all standard trailers replaced with special low-bed trailers.

In a letter to the Department we've said "the original concern with the containers was that because they were higher than the old ones there could be a problem with unstable loads, especially in cross winds. However, these containers have been in use for more than seven years and we are unaware of any incidents or accidents involving unstable loads in the new containers. It would therefore seem that there is no justification for the original fears."

The second problem was the high cost of the conversion to low- bed trailers. The cost per trailer is estimated at about R300 000. Many of the companies which transport the containers of export fruit are small businesses run by the previously disadvantaged and operate just two or three trucks. They simply cannot afford the conversion costs and recovering them from an agricultural industry that has just experienced the worst drought in more than 100 years will not be possible.

In addition, packing sheds and loading facilities have been designed for standard trailers and converting them to serve low-bed trailers is another high cost that drought-stricken farmers cannot afford.

It's not practically possible to convert all the trailers in the remaining few months before implementation date.

If the regulation is strictly enforced there will be chaos on our roads with queues of trucks several kilometres long.



CAPE CHAMBER

OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

We would also point out the high cube containers on standard trailers are perfectly legal in our neighbouring countries and if their trucks are stopped at our borders we could have international incidents and relations between South Africa and its neighbouring countries could be soured.

The result could be that neighbouring countries would choose to export through Namibia and Mozambique, denying our ports much needed revenue.

The solution to the problem is to grant an exemption to the height regulations for high cube containers in exactly the same way as exemptions have already been granted for car carriers and double decker buses. These vehicles are even higher/taller than the high cube containers on standard trailers. This would be a “no cost” solution for all.

The Chamber strongly believes that the safety of high cube containers on standard trailers has been demonstrated over the last seven years and there was no reason why they should not be granted an exemption from the maximum height regulations.

Janine Myburgh

President of the Cape Chamber

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