

By [QIMA](#)

Actively monitoring the processes and critical points within the cold chain of food and perishable products is a way to protect the quality of your business and your customers' health and avoid losses that can stem from any logistic process.

Let's start by analyzing what we mean by "process" when we refer to the food cold chain.

The cold chain comprises the necessary steps within a logistics process to maintain the temperature of the product within acceptable ranges, ensuring the good condition of the product and minimizing or preventing it from losing its condition over time.

In the case of fresh products, we talk about "delaying" the process of loss of condition, which can be measured and evaluated at any point in the chain through indicators such as smell, texture, flavor, color, among others.

Our expert, Sebastián Scheggia, tells how the fresh food import and export industry must comply with the processes in the cold chain and the impact of adequate quality control for the assurance of the product's life in today's logistics.

Every day better connectivity options are sought out to optimize and make freight transport more profitable. The optimization of routes and the use of different operators go hand in hand with the execution of strict quality controls. However, there are multiple factors that go against these controls and processes, with the human factor being the most complex. At some important logistics sites worldwide, it is difficult to find the right staff to secure seasonal coverage and even cover the natural turnover of people in each business.

This complexity added to the various daily priority changes (commercial, operational, etc.), generates vulnerability in the assurance of quality in each process by not being able to generate one hundred percent control mechanisms. Process automation has helped decrease dependency on the human factor though it remains critical.

In this sense, we can see that maintaining quality management standards doesn't guarantee the continuity of the cold chain process without the appropriate personnel.

One of the proven ways to secure the cold chain is through exhaustive quality control. This can be done through evaluations of the cargo's state at certain points in the cold chain,

giving a complete view of the origin-destination process, as long as the process is implemented correctly at critical points of transport.

The inspection process is not limited to verifying that the fruit is softer or keeping a record of photos during the process, it is also about detecting time and alerting the appropriate area of problems to be able to take action before these become a major issue or complaint.

Early detection of condition loss events is a critical factor in the perishable cargo transportation process. Understanding that this process helps to reduce the percentage of losses and complaints leads us to question the decision to invest in trained technical personnel for this operation, which translates into a significant reduction in the error margins. This protects the company from complaints and substantially increases business satisfaction.

Recommendations for companies whose responsibility is to ensure correct cold chain management:

- Investment in expert and specialized personnel, such as quality control inspectors who guarantee continuous and uninterrupted process supervision.
- Place this team at critical points where cargo is exposed to vulnerabilities, for example, when the facility's conditions and equipment do not meet the transfer requirements, such as cargo handling outside of controlled temperatures, exposure to sun or congestion among other things; or that the processes' safety protocols could significantly influence the loss of product quality.
- Clearly define with the client the points where responsibility for the product is transferred. Many times, as there are multiple operators, the protocol checks are not clear when transferring the load.

Additionally, there are external factors that could influence the cold chain to which attention should be paid, such as:

- Customs processes
- Phytosanitary processes

It is proven that taking these actions results in savings for the business which translates into a significant reduction in complaints. The process is done correctly and the steps are completed, showing that human talent will always be key to the effectiveness of these processes.

In summary, the main factors that influence correct import or export processes for the proper handling of fruits, vegetables or perishables, even when there is an adequate control or monitoring in place, could be affected if there is a shortage of personnel or the workers are not up to date with the necessary training.

According to the criteria of our expert, Sebastián Scheggia, the key to proper management is based on detecting critical points in the supply chain, the early reporting of warnings, trying to mitigate any loss or complaint. All in all, he recommends investing in qualified experts who serve as a filter to rigorously carry out the procedure of the quality control process.