Food Items International Air Freight Guidelines

Safe, Compliant Transportation of Food Products

This guide ensures safe, compliant transportation of perishable and shelf-stable food products from India through cold-chain management and destination food safety regulations. Proper handling preserves nutritional value, taste, and regulatory standing.

1. Food Category Classification

1.1 Perishable Foods

Chilled Foods (2-8°C):

- Fresh seafood, dairy, prepared curries
- Transit requirement: 36-60 hours maximum

Frozen Foods (-18°C to -21°C):

- Seafood, meat, ready meals, ice cream
- Transit requirement: Up to 72 hours

Deep Frozen (-29°C):

- Pharmaceutical-grade food preservation
- Rare application for specialty items

1.2 Shelf-Stable Foods

- Spices, pickles, dry goods, snacks
- Ambient temperature transport (15-25°C)
- No special container requirements

2. Temperature-Controlled Logistics

2.1 Equipment Selection

Reefer Containers

For multi-day chilled shipments

Insulated Boxes

For 24-48 hour perishable shipments

Dry Ice/Gel Packs

For small parcels under 10kg

Temperature Data Loggers

Mandatory for all perishable

2.2 Cold Chain Maintenance

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Pre-cool containers 4 hours before loading

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Load chilled items last (LIFO unloading)

03

Minimize door opening during consolidation

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Verify seal integrity before airport delivery

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3. Food Safety Certifications Required

3.1 India Export Requirements

- **APEDA Registration:** For processed/prepared foods
- **EIC Certificate:** For spices and certain commodities
- **Health Certificate:** Issued by authorized vet for meat/seafood
- **Plant Quarantine:** For vegetables/fruits
- **Organic Certificate:** If marketing as organic

GCC Countries:

- Halal certification where required
- Arabic labeling on packaging
- SFDA (Saudi)/GSO standards compliance
- Temperature maintenance proof

3.2 Destination-Specific Requirements

USA (FDA/USDA):

- Prior Notice filing (PN/AIR entry 24h before arrival)
- Fish/seafood HACCP plan
- Meat import permits (45 days advance notice)
- Zero tolerance for certain pathogens

EU/UK:

- Health Certificate from Indian authority
- GMP/HACCP compliance evidence
- Maximum residue limit (MRL) compliance testing
- Traceability from farm to table documentation

Australia/New Zealand:

- AQIS biosecurity approval
- Low-risk food category confirmation
- Approved source facility status
- Import permit pre-approval

4. Packaging & Labeling for Food

4.1 Perishable Packaging

- Vacuum-sealed primary packaging
- Insulated secondary box (foam/corrugated)
- Sealed tertiary carton with vent holes
- Labeling: "PERISHABLE," temperature range, "KEEP COOL"

4.2 Shelf-Stable Packaging

- Tamper-evident sealing
- Clear product description and HS code
- Ingredient list (for processed foods)
- Country of origin prominently displayed
- Destination language labeling as required

5. Export Documentation Trail

5.1 Commercial Invoice for Food

- Detailed product description (including temperature if applicable)
- Unit price breakdown
- Total declared value in USD
- Country of destination
- Consignee business registration details

5.2 Packing List Specifics

- Individual case descriptions
- Net weight per case (excluding ice/dry ice)
- Temperature maintained during transit
- Best-before/expiry date ranges
- Storage instructions at destination

6. Customs Clearance Processes

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6.1 Pre-Departure (India)

- Health certificate issuance (3-5 days)
- Customs filing with food documentation
- Fumigation (if wooden packaging used)
- Customs inspection (random sampling)

6.2 On Arrival (Destination)

- Food authority inspection (FDA, FSANZ, etc.)
- Temperature record verification
- Sample testing for pathogens (if flagged)
- Release for distribution or quarantine

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7. Cost Structure for Food Cargo

- **Food Type Rate/kg Min Shipment Special Charges vary for Perishable, temperature Frozen, deep freeze Shelf-Stable, Health cert, Halal Foods & cert fee (if applicable).**

Cost structures vary based on food type, temperature requirements, and certification needs. Perishable items require temperature-controlled handling, frozen and deep freeze items need specialized equipment, while shelf-stable foods have standard rates. Additional charges apply for health certificates and halal certification fees where applicable.

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8. Risk Management for Food

8.1 Insurance for Perishable

- **Spoilage coverage:** optional
- **Temperature deviation claims:** Temperature log proof required
- **Contamination coverage:** Health authority reports
- **Delay coverage:** Transit time guarantee

8.2 Quality Assurance

- Pre-export sampling and testing
- Packaging integrity inspection
- Temperature log verification
- Post-arrival quality verification recommended