Transport of perishable foodstuffs (ATP)
Objectives-key provisions-benefits

Christopher Smith
UNECE Transport Division

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The Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage, adopted in 1970

Preamble: objectives

improve conditions of preservation of quality of perishable foodstuffs during carriage, particularly in international trade and promote the expansion of trade in perishable foodstuffs.

Unwritten objectives: Protecting food safety and preventing threats to human health from unsafe food.
ATP Contracting Parties

ATP 48 Contracting Parties.
Albania, Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan. Most recent Turkey.
Outside UNECE region, Morocco and Tunisia
ATP Contracting Parties

Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage (ATP), of 1 September 1970
The ATP is open to all UN Member States. Expressions of interest from as far afield as Japan, South Korea and China. There is potential for new parties in the Middle East and in the Gulf States.
ATP for international transport

ATP applies if the point at which the goods are loaded and unloaded are in two different States and the point at which they are unloaded is situated in the territory of a Contracting Party.

ATP applies even if the State where the goods are loaded is not a Contracting Party.

For example for a refrigerated consignment shipped from Tunisia to Algeria, ATP would apply even though Algeria is not a Contracting Party.
ATP for international transport

This means that countries exporting perishable foodstuffs to ATP contracting parties are expected to apply the high standards in the ATP.
Use of ATP for domestic transport

For example France, Italy and Slovakia

Most recently the Russian Federation where both ATP is used for domestic road transport from April 2013.
What transport equipment is covered?

Road vehicles, railway wagons and (for sea journeys under 150km) sea containers.

ATP would cover a consignment from Morocco to France across the straits of Gibraltar but not from Tunisia to Italy.

Does not cover air transport.
Sea crossings

For sea journeys longer than 150 km, each leg is treated separately and is not subject to ATP.

To illustrate the issue, goods from southern part of Germany cross the Baltic Sea on a roll on-roll off ship before being unloaded in the northern part of Finland. More than 3,000 km and it might last more than four days, but because of the present “150 km rule", only national regulations apply. Some countries see this as a loop-hole that needs to be filled.
The ATP contains a non-exclusive list of products and sets the warmest possible temperature of the load. Annex 2 frozen foodstuffs. Ice cream at a temperature of -20°C and frozen fish at -18°C. Annex 3 chilled foodstuffs, cooled but above freezing. Meat products, pasteurized milk at +6°C, red meat at +7°C. Fresh fruit and vegetables unless processed are not covered by ATP.
No definition of perishable foodstuffs in ATP. Some countries, such as Russia, want to expand the scope of ATP to cover fresh fruit and vegetables. Others argue that ATP is about food safety and not about maintaining food quality. Countries, particularly in southern Europe, use ATP equipment to transport fruit and vegetables.

In cold countries, such as Russia, heating may be required to maintain the correct temperature.
What perishables?

Although not foodstuffs, many pharmaceutical products have to be carried under controlled temperatures and one could imagine that in the future ATP could also be applied to these products.
Certification of ATP equipment

All Contracting Parties to the Agreement have to recognize ATP certificates of compliance issued by the competent authorities of other Contracting Parties.

Allows cargoes to cross borders with minimal checking.

Countries not obliged to accept certificates issued by countries that are not ATP Contracting Parties.
Certification plate of compliance

Recognised as equivalent to ATP certificate. Has to be easily checked on the outside of the body.

- ATP APPROVED FOR TRANSPORT OF PERISHABLE FOODSTUFFS
- APPROVAL NUMBER : [GB-LR-456789]*
- EQUIPMENT NUMBER: [AB12C987]*
- ATP MARK : FRC *
- VALID UNTIL : [02-2019]*

* The particulars in square brackets are given by way of example.
Certification of ATP equipment

Main requirements:
Insulating capacity of equipment (lorries, trailers, tankers for liquid foodstuffs, containers, wagons/freight cars, etc.),
Effectiveness of thermal appliances,
Test requirements to check compliance.
Equipment divided into classes according to: means of cooling, refrigerator or a eutectic plate, simple or reinforced insulation, what temperatures transport equipment is suitable for.
Certification of ATP equipment

Common classifications are:
IN (normally insulated equipment)
IR (heavily insulated equipment)
FNA (class A mechanically refrigerated equipment with normal insulation)
FRC (class C mechanically refrigerated equipment with heavy insulation)
Distinguishing marks showing class and expiry date have to appear in upper corners at the front
New ATP equipment is required to undergo a test of its K coefficient, to prove that the heat escape from the inside to the outside of the body meets the values defined by ATP. 0.70 W/m².K for normally insulated equipment and 0.40 W/m².K for heavily insulated equipment.

On the basis of a test report issued by an ATP test station, the competent authority issues a certificate of compliance valid for 6 years.

Countries not obliged to have their own test station. They may use one in another country.
After six years, retesting of the insulating capacity of the body is required and this may be done by a visual inspection of the equipment by experts.

The effectiveness of the thermal appliance is also checked by a so-called “pull-down” test, showing that it can cool the body to the required temperature in a fixed time.

If the results of these tests are satisfactory, the equipment may be kept in service for a further three years, and so on.
Average ageing of insulation is 5% per annum. Some Contracting Parties to ATP insist on K value testing after 6 years. ATP does not allow higher K values for 6 or 9 year old equipment and many countries think it is not realistic for older equipment to meet the same standards as new equipment. Other countries, primarily from warmer southern European countries, while conceding that ageing does occur, argue that those K values have to apply to all equipment and not just to new equipment and that vehicles have to be designed accordingly to allow for ageing.
The ATP does not foresee any enforcement mechanisms or fines for breaching the agreement. It is up to countries to organize the enforcement of the agreement, by highway controls of vehicles, at border crossings, or by inspections at food processing establishments. But they have to report cases of non observance to other countries via the secretariat.
Annual questionnaire sent to ATP countries:
- number of breaches of ATP equipment or documents by both national and foreign vehicles.
- number of ATP certificates issued in past year.

This is accordance with article 6.

Member countries (Ministries of transport, food and agriculture, representatives of ATP testing stations), but also International Institute of Refrigeration, Transfrigoroute International, and associations of insulated body builders.

WP.11 examines proposals for amendments made by countries. Recent amendments include testing requirements for new multi-temperature, multi-compartment equipment.
The comments included in the Handbook provide advice or guidelines on applying the ATP and are not legally binding like the ATP itself.

Intended to provide clarification.

The ATP Handbook can be found on our website.
Guidelines for verification of ATP equipment
Contact

Thank you for your attention
christopher.smith@unece.org
http://www.unece.org/trans
Tel. 00 41 22 917 3298
Fax. 00 41 22 917 0039