

OPTIMISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AIRFREIGHT IN NIGERIA.  
AIRLINE OPERATORS PERSPECTIVE

PRESENTED BY

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AT THE

SENSITIZATION SEMINAR ON AIRFREIGHT IN NIGERIA  
ORGANISED BY NIGERIAN SHIPPERS COUNCIL

VENUE: PRESIDENTIAL HOTEL PORT HARCOURT  
DATE: Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> august 2006

## Abstract

Airfreight, being an aviation function, is expected to be a time definite service, however the slow response from the shippers, handling agents, inadequate infrastructure and obsolete operational equipment, tends to overrule this principle.

In the recent past, statistics has shown that, the shipper could not provide packages adequate for air transportation. Thus, most shipments are delivered in a very poor condition thereby creating serious problems for its handling and transportation.

These problems escalated with the introduction of rules and regulations by International Air transport Association (IATA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regarding standard of packaging and procedures.

More emphases are placed on the transportation of Dangerous goods, Live Animals, Perishables etc. These category of items requires delicate packaging and handling as it relates to airfreight especially, Dangerous Goods which are capable of posing a significant risk to health, safety and property.

Strict regulations for its transportation by air becomes necessary because it is almost impossible to take corrective action in flight if any incident or accident occurs. This paper tends to focus on technological innovation for achieving an efficient opportunities for airfreight in Nigeria. It will also examine the conventional shipping techniques and the modern shipping techniques in various areas of aviation shipping and handling operations in Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Freight, which falls within the context of transport, refers to the movement of goods from one point to another. If this could be proved correct, "The I will conclude that transport is the main artery through which the economy of any nation flows". Transport development is one of the indispensable catalyst for activating the tempo of economic, social, political and strategic development in any nation. This means that the development of an efficient flexible and dynamic transport is very vital for

meaningful social and economic growth. Since transport enhances the productive use of human and material resources, it contributes significantly to the value and utility of goods and services by moving them promptly where they are needed.

Airfreight with a view of receiving and delivering stated on a very small scale where almost all aspects of cargo shipping were treated manually. Today, shippers, forwarders are embracing the new technological development in airfreight industry which is the case globally.

Traditionally, it was argued that shipping exerts strong positive influence on the economic development, consequently, an increase in airfreight could be directly related to improved transport. At this point, I will like to focus on modern shipping techniques in aviation industry. May we refer modern shipping techniques as the determination of the criteria to be used for measuring effectiveness in the shipping process in order to achieve growth and sustainable quality. Shipping techniques accomplishes these goals by proving users with pertinent information upon which the expected desire are focused. This is derived by utilizing diverse skills of a mixed (academic and experience) tools and techniques which are appropriate for the shipping and handling process. The critical point in all is the purpose. The end goal and criterion by which it must be judged is to achieve an optimum result.

As earlier discussed, shipping which was performed manually, accounted for the slow development of the sector, however, with technological innovation in the aviation shipping industry, consolidation and containerization were introduced. This system facilitated the process of Thru Unit, Mixed Load and Build-up Units by Forwarders. Further more, it contributed immensely in the following areas:

1. Reduced the shipping and handling times
2. It optimizes the use of space and reduces the turn-around time in the transport chain
3. It ensures that freight are delivered to the consignee on a clean receipt
4. Damages to other cargo, personnel and the handling equipment has been minimized. Time, labour and utilization

of the warehouse space were adequately maintained appropriately.

### e-Booking in aviation industry

The management information system provides shippers, forwarders at all levels with information needed to guide their airfreight business. Though it is capital intensive to acquire and install an appropriate computer system, it provides the shippers with the required tools for planning, track and trace of their freight throughout the globe. The shippers and forwarders have the opportunity to use this technology to access the position of their airfreight via the respective airline website.

### Training and Seminars to shippers

The success of training or seminars is dependent on the skill and ability of shippers knowledge on aviation cargo process including safety, efficiency especially as it affects our ecologically friendly environment. It is crucial to qualify for this task and to treat the airfreight with care without harming the environment which may be liable to national or international laws and regulations. Training enables the shippers not only to perform their airfreight duties properly, but also to recognize the importance of quality products, packaging and the pricing of the exported goods. Each shipper should be trained according to the class of airfreight involved. E.g. those involved in the handling of dangerous goods, Live animals, Perishables, Valuables etc. must undergo training or seminars relevant to their area of airfreight. In order to maintain the IATA and ICAO standard, this training should be reviewed periodically.

### Shippers responsibility

The shipper or his authorized agent is responsible for the following:

- Must give the actual airport destination of his freight during booking
- Must give correct and complete names of the shipper and consignee.

- Give correct description of goods. This description should conform with statement contained in such accompanying documents as shipper's export declaration, commercial or consular invoice and import licenses.
- Should obtain all necessary documents and correct shipper's certification.
- Must comply with the national, international, carrier and IATA regulations as applicable.
- Responsible for the provision of adequate packaging material that conforms with IATA standard packaging
- Responsible for the marks and numbers as it appears on the packaging
- Before preparing a live animal for freight, the shipper must obtain full information well in advance concerning export/import, transit permits, veterinary health certificates, quarantine transshipment requirements or prohibition restrictions, which may also include the provision of food for the animal. The shipper should obtain the current version of this regulation because they are subject to regular changes.

## Study Area

A look at the aviation airfreight industry in Nigeria, with particular reference to Murtala Mohammed Airport, Ikeja, Port Harcourt International Airport, Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja and Kano International Airport. The need to optimizing opportunities for airfreight in these airports necessitates efficient shipping and handling techniques. There is the need to provide aviation handling techniques that will facilitate effective handling and shipping operations on those airports. There is also the need to standardize the operation of airfreight handling techniques in the aviation industry to meet the required international standard by enacting regulations governing the operations of shipping and handling. Considering airfreight as a time definite service and to optimize the opportunities in order to perform effectively for exponential growth and expansion, the following conditions are recommended:

- § Adequate Infrastructure
- § Functional Operations equipment

- § Standardized packaging for shipping
- § To streamline the documentations process and government agencies
- § Modern communication system
- § Valid training for shippers and handling personnel especially for the handling of Dangerous Goods and Live Animals,
- § Effective Export Promotion and shippers council.
- § Safety Surveillance System
- § How to measure, analyze and improve the system.

The placement of adequate airfreight handling infrastructure is capital intensive, therefore the presence of obsolete equipment plays a dangerous role in modern airfreight handling techniques. Modern infrastructures like freight terminals with automatic stacking and sorting positions, reliable cool storage facility, strong room for valuables and vulnerable goods, a perishable center, adequate storage area for dangerous goods, Tunnels for truck loading and discharge, fixed stacking dollies, shelter area for waiting shipments, gas driven forklifts, tractors, mobile dollies, electronic scales, etc. These facilities if functional, will optimize opportunities for freight in Nigeria. The government should come to the aid of the present handling companies who may be facing financial difficulties in obtaining the required equipment for effective operations.

Nigeria is a potential market for agricultural products. Commodities like fruits and vegetables, yam, cassava, live ornamental fish, day old chicks, seafood etc. can be exported in large quantity to countries where they are required.

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council is expected to guide farmers to engage in the production of such commodities to which they possess a comparative advantage. These products will boost the airfreight industry in Nigeria and invariably list Nigeria as an export country for such products.

To balance the provision of technological freight handling and the shipping demand in Nigeria, an tense export drive is mandatory. It is pertinent to note that, the higher the demand for aviation freight, there is

the tendency for a higher supply. Demand and supply determines the price in a totally competitive environment. Nigeria should not be solely dependent on the export of oil to the industrialized nation. The exportation of agricultural products should be encouraged in order to supplement our income earnings. The Nigerian Export Promotion Council should play a leading role by acting as a link between the shippers and government. They should research and prioritize on viable commodities that could be exported in order to optimize airfreight in aviation industry.

Let us critically study the farming and the exportation of live ornamental fish which is demanded globally.

**Live Ornamental Fish:** This animal is living in water and breathes with gills. They are very sensitive to temperature changes and light. The transport of this animal must be handled very efficiently since various factors can complicate their transportation (temperature, oxygen supply, cleanliness of the water), the transport time **MUST** be completed within 48 hours after acceptance. It must always be considered that incorrect handling or delays can result to sever mortality.

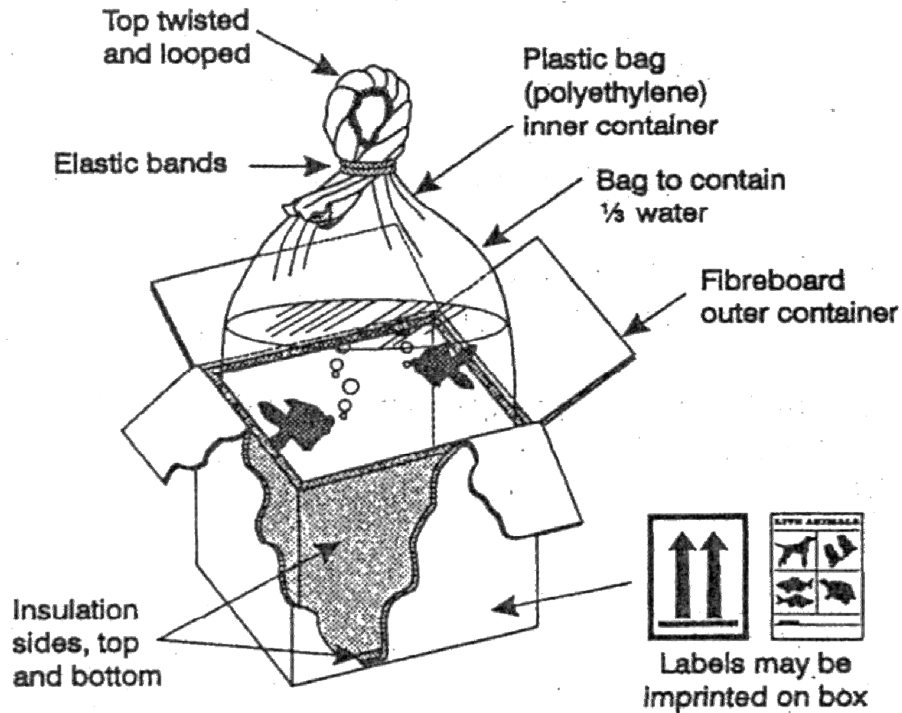
There are various kinds of Live Fish:-

**The Cartilaginous Fish:** The mouth of this species is always on the underside and it lacks a floating ability. This is why it sinks to the bottom if they are not active. The skin is not covered with scales, but with minute tubercles. Some of this species produces poison and should be handled as such.

**The Bony Fish:** the mouth opening are located in the front of the head and the skin is covered with scales. These animals have a floating ability which allows them to remain on top of water always.

**Salt Water Fish:** These kind of fish can withstand temperature changes during transportation. These animals are packed in an inner plastic bags containing water and oxygen. (The inner bag must be filled with water of approximately 1/3 of its capacity, the remaining 2/3 must be filled with oxygen) The oxygen are rated to endure the total flight duration. The boxes are properly marked with the handling labels, such as "Live animal

label, Up-right label, and the air-waybill label. In addition, the complete name and address of shipper and consignee is mandatory for easy contact.



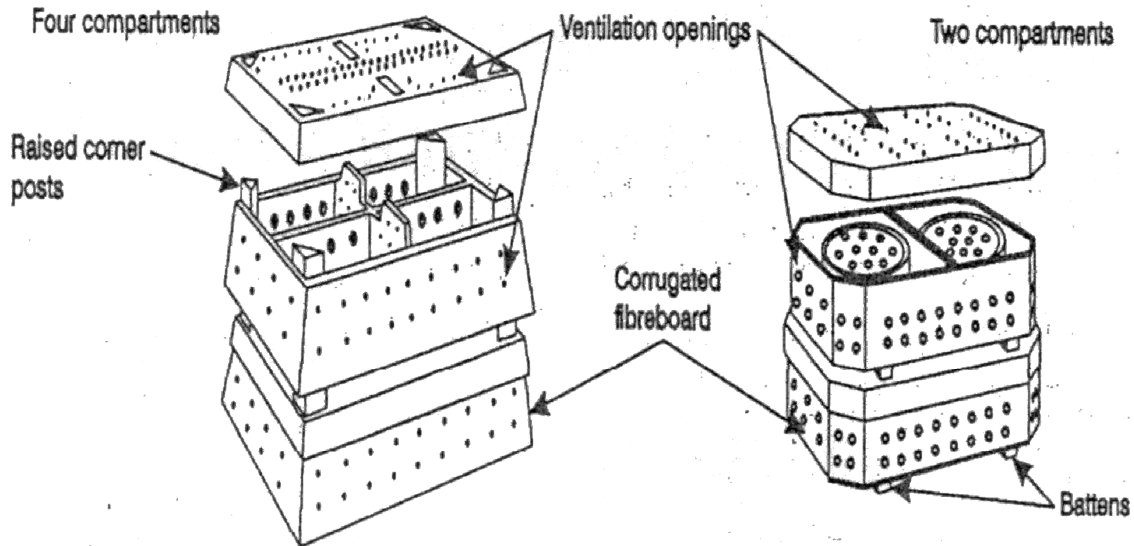
## DAY OLD CHICKS

The packages below are for Day Old Chicks. This corrugated fiberboard, rigid plastics, non-toxic plastic, fiber glass and synthetics.

The single wall corrugated fiberboard containers must be divided into two or four compartments. The inner height of the container must not be less than 10cm (4 ins). The floor must be solid and leak-proof, which the top must be solid with ventilation holes not exceeding 1cm in diameter. The ventilation opening must also be present in all four sides and the subdivision of the container in order to enhance free air circulation therein. These containers must be strong enough to withstand stacking with the use of battens, which also helps air circulation between the boxes. The container must be capable of being stacked to the height that may be experienced during air transportation without collapsing or deforming.

The stack of boxes must not be tied down too tightly onto the pallet or to the upper outer sides will get damaged./ The boxes are constructed to carry between 50 – 100 chicks.

## EXAMPLES OF FIBERBOARD BOXES



Live animals labels or tag is not required, but "This way up" labels must be used in accordance with the IATA Live Animal Regulation. Since the consignments of live chicks are normally scheduled to arrive at destination within 72-hours period after hatching, during which no feeding or watering is required, consignment which might arrive at destination later than the specified period must not be accepted. These boxes used for the transportation of Day old chicks must be capable of being stacked to the height that may be experienced during air transportation without collapsing or deforming. The stack boxes must not be tied down too tightly onto the pellets to avoid the upper outer sides being damaged.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined opportunities for airfreight in aviation industry and discussed the area of optimizing such opportunities in order to support and enhance growth and expansion of aviation cargo. The various area of technological innovation in airfreight cargo handling operations were examined and the problems posed by the use of high technology freight handling techniques and packaging were also discussed with a view to prove sustainability and growth. Nigerian Shippers Council and the Ex[port Promotion Council are expected to prioritize the introduction of applications which ensures that shippers process improvement remains consistent with their overall strategy and also ensure that process bottlenecks are eliminated at the shipping points.

Thank you very much and God Bless you.  
S. UKPAI.