

Survey Quality Inspection of Fruits and Vegetables: Goals, Stages, Reasons, Benefits

The niche of agriculture product trade is extremely dynamic. Production technologies evolve to exceed consumers' expectations. At the same time, we are seeing new trends when the main attention is paid to product quality. This is where quality inspection of fresh fruits and vegetables is necessary.



It is to ensure the integrity and cleanliness of the cargo on every stage of the supply chain. The main goal here is to guarantee that products will reach their destination meeting established quality parameters and standards. This is where surveyor services may come in handy.

What Do Surveyors Do?

The main idea of surveyor inspection for fruits and vegetables is to track the product quality on every stage of the supply chain. From the phase of pre-shipping to export in the port of destination, surveyors used advanced equipment and techniques to check not just the products throughout the entire transportation process but also storage facilities, warehouses, etc.

Inspectors act independently to deliver objective assessment in reference to:

- Fruits and vegetables;
- Storage units;
- Storing conditions (moisture, temperature, foreign matters, etc.);
- Pest infestations.

As a result, surveyors generate detailed reports to highlight the result of the inspection. While the industry develops rapidly, specialists require more advanced and up-to-date instruments. So, the fundamental surveyor tools may include different kinds of calibrators, penetrometers,

refractometers, and other professional equipment. This is all to ensure product quality as well as identify the reasons for product spoilage.



Surveyor Inspection Types

When we speak of surveyor inspection of fruits and vegetables, we consider different inspection types that can be divided into two major groups: general quality control and inspection with the buyer's quality control department representative.



Essential Quality Control factors to Consider

Let me clarify how things work here. First of all, we need to figure out, who actually needs surveyor inspection services.

Example:

We have a seller/exporter on the one side and a buyer/importer on the other side. Both parties make an agreement on product supplies. The agreement contains all the crucial points a buyer is expecting to get. Those points may include price, product quality, and other criteria exporter must meet.

A seller is sure he or she has a product that meets all the requirements indicated in the agreement. So, a seller prepares the products for further shipping. At this point, everything looks pretty clear.

However, there are some issues we need to clarify before moving on:

1. Fruits and vegetables belong to the category of perishable goods. Besides, we need to take into account the fact that some products can be harvested or packed improperly. Employees may counteract with some technical processes, fruits and vegetables may be damaged during the shipment or harvesting, which inevitably results in products' poor quality (mold or rot). As a result, we have the cargo that does not meet the buyer's requirements.
2. Problems may arise during transportation, custom check or quality inspection as well. The products are being unloaded and loaded several times in a row, which may also be to the detriment of fruits and vegetable quality especially under low temperatures. When the custom check is finally over, the cargo is not good enough for the buyer.
3. Transportation may take up to several weeks or even months. Cargo ships can be arrested and reloaded for different reasons. Sometimes transportation delays are due to the bad weather conditions.



The main stumbling block here is that most of these and other factors are impossible to predict. For this reason, a buyer can be surprised to see the products of lower quality he or she expected when they finally arrive.

This is where surveyor inspection services may turn out to be the ultimate solution. The baseline functions include cargo inspection to detect and eliminate all possible violations. Inspectors use sensors and special equipment to measure, the level of temperature, transportation time, and other crucial parameters.

Survey Quality Inspection Process



Now, let me show you how the inspection process looks like from the inside. First of all, a surveyor must define criteria used to proceed with quality control. All products are supposed to meet «UNECE FFV» international quality standards. Besides, every federal retail chain has its self-established criteria for quality assurance of fruits and vegetables.

In other words, a surveyor must understand who the buyer is and what the requirements are. If a surveyor completes the inspection for the Perekrestok supermarket chain, the results will be quite different from what we usually have when considering international standards. They will never accept products that refer to the “second category” considering it as inappropriate.

If you ask me, I would say that quality control from the exporter is vital. It is necessary for every separate container with fruits and vegetables. It does not matter if a seller never had problems with product quality before. Surveyor inspection is the baseline process that guarantees products' quality and the ability to meet required standards established by the buyer.

We must also realize that federal retailers and importers have their own tasks and goals they need to follow. On the other hand, we should take the slightest chance to stop the cargo and make the most of surveyor inspection services especially if the storage facilities do not meet established standards in terms of temperature and other parameters.

Example:

When it is a season for mandarins, the demand is extremely huge. Retailer chains are planning to order a specific amount of containers. But once the season has come to an end, the demand is getting lower and lower while sellers' containers are no longer of great interest for the end buyer.

To avoid extra costs for the cargo they do not need, retailers establish stricter requirements for their quality control managers to make them inspect fruits more thoroughly and find the slightest hint on low quality.

I have years of experience in this field and can truly consider myself an expert. So, as an expert, I should say that any product can be rejected no matter how good it looks like. The task becomes

even easier with seasonal fruits and vegetables when the demand drops down. As a rule, exporters have nothing to do but to follow the rules while quality control managers will do their best to support their own percentage.

Final Thought



To my mind, the only solution to this problem is to agree on all the issues with retailers and buyers “on the shore” until the cargo has not been sent. Such an approach will let you save money and time not mentioning minimized stressful situations.

Make sure you provide clear instructions when competing for the prior inspection while your expert must be 100% aware of how to protect your products when interacting with quality control managers. The main mission is to ensure a clear picture of both parties. We try to make the process transparent for buyers and sellers as possible. It lets them observe possible product defects and make a mutual decision on how to classify them considering both a manager and inspector are well aware of international standards.

It appears that some quality control managers do not have the foggiest idea of how to classify a particular defect. Our mission is to make them decide in our favor. It helps to minimize costs and reduce the risk of product rejection. As a result, you will have your fruits and vegetables rated with minimum or zero claims.

What would you choose: spending \$200 on surveyor services or lose thousands of dollars due to quality claims and cargo reloads? My goal is to prevent you from endless paperwork as well as save time and money.

Every small thing matters here: the way you talk to seller’s experts and quality control managers. It is very important to get on well with all the inspection participants and turn the final result in your favor. When managers are able to find a common language with inspectors, they sometimes do not even notice small defects or pretend they did not notice them.

I always speak to the customer especially when some difficulties take place. I send photos with damaged or spoiled products online, describe the problems that may occur during the inspection,

offer different ways to resolve the issue as fast as possible without the detriment to the product quality. The main idea is to provide instant feedback.

When the inspection is completed, I sign the agreement with quality control managers to highlight the results.

Note: if you disagree with the control manager on any issue, make sure you have the official disagreement act with all the reasons and explanations described there in detail.

Our customers are already aware of all the possible problems before they get the official report. At the same time, we are obliged to indicate all the detected defects in the official statement although we still provide exporters with recommendations on how to improve the situation and prevent it in the future.

