

UK Pulses on the high seas

In the last issue of the Pulse Magazine, Nick Saltmarsh of Hodmedod’s looked at getting more British beans into British kitchens, In this issue, Nigel and Vicky Sutton of NS Shipping Ltd describe an equally important part of the pulse supply chain - shipping UK-grown beans to our overseas markets.

One of the key features of a family run business like NS Shipping is our reliance on excellent working relationships and an effective carefully selected supply chain. Building of such relationships particularly with exporters of pulses has been the result of more than 30 years of teamwork.

The popularity of pulses for export has been ever-increasing as they have been part of the staple diet in many overseas countries for centuries. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa, faba beans are used as the basic ingredient of many dishes and indeed act as the main ingredient for the national dish of Egypt.

We are certainly beginning to see more encouragement to use home grown pulses in the UK which will see a rise in popularity particularly since we are all striving for improved health. At the same time, the popularity of UK-grown pulses overseas continues to be evident within our business. During 2015-2017, UK exports handled by NS Shipping were as follows:

	2015-2016	2016-2017
DESTINATIONS	NO OF TEUS (20FT CONTAINERS)	
UK to Egypt & East Mediterranean	1211	1656
UK to Port Sudan & Middle East	823	875
UK to Asia	209	305

Excellent supply chains are a key ingredient of successful exporting. The relationships we share with the exporters are equal to that we share with the shipping lines and indeed all within our supply chain. As with any industry, price is a driving force - but there is so much more to ensuring a seamless process.

Current difficult market conditions within the industry are proving a challenge for all. The recent collapse of one of the major shipping lines has had an influence on changes within the industry. Services have been suspended or reduced resulting in unprecedented increase in rates.

This is where we believe our relationships with all parties within our supply chain are crucial. Having flexibility to adapt to UK conditions such as we have seen in recent months; large increases in rates, equipment shortages and space problems means we can find the very best option and provide solutions.

There are a lot of factors in addition to those discussed to consider prior to the container being successfully loaded on board a vessel. Time sensitive deliveries, adherence to new SOLAS regulations (VGM), customs clearance and accurate documentation. Only with an excellent knowledge of market conditions and potential impacts on the global shipping industry can we meet all of these requirements.

As noted, pulse exports are often time sensitive. Deadlines for arrival of containers have to be considered. Vessels and routes have to be carefully selected. Timing is especially vital during peak seasons when loading schedules are full and containers are loaded every 45 minutes

from dawn to dusk. Additional factors can also impact on loading schedules such as breakdowns, rejected containers and bad weather. Delays during loading can result in containers missing deadlines for delivery of container to quay resulting in short-shipment.

Following the introduction of SOLAS regulations, each container weight has to be accurately entered directly onto the port website in order to successfully access the quay. Any inaccuracies can also result in short-shipment. There are some factors that are unavoidable - however, in an effort to reduce delays, we have implemented systems such as direct contact with drivers, VGM checking system and container tracking as being aware of problems provides an opportunity to find solutions.

Currently we are maintaining close contact with all of our suppliers in order to gauge the changes to the market closely and enable us to provide the most efficient and cost effective solutions for the new season. With new shipping line alliances and introduction of new routes due to begin midsummer we are hopeful that the market will begin to settle.

We are navigating our way through very interesting and challenging times within the global shipping industry. We are pleased to continue our relationships and work closely with many pulse exporters and seek to develop our relationships further in the years to come. Together we can continue to be prepared to react to market changes and continue to successfully export our home-grown UK pulses.



Nigel Sutton writes: “My career started at 16 years of age when I started my first job as Office Junior in a Shipping Line Office in Liverpool. It was after working my way up - quite literally as I started work in the basement - to a position in Sales that I began to build friendships with the pulse exporters.

Since starting NS Shipping Ltd, the relationships have developed and continue to strengthen year by year.

We became a member of BEPA following years of working closely alongside pulse exporters and shall never forget their support, particularly during the early days of starting our own business back in 2010. The very same people are now an integral part of the business.”