Factors facilitating intermodal transport of perishable goods - transport purchasers viewpoint

Thor-Erik Sandberg Hanssen¹*, Terje Andreas Mathisen¹

¹ Bodø Graduate School of Business, University of Nordland, NO-8049, Norway

Abstract

The aim of this article is to identify factors that facilitate increased use of intermodal transport for perishable products based on a survey of firms exporting fresh fish from Norway to Continental Europe. The experiences in the Norwegian aquaculture industry indicate that intermodal transport solutions must be expanded and that the long haul by rail must run all the way to a central hub in Europe. This can only be achieved with a balanced flow of goods and if processors coordinate transport to deliver sufficiently large volumes to fill trains at an acceptable frequency.

Keywords: Intermodal transport; Rail; Fresh fish; Perishable goods; Export; European regions.

1. Introduction

The promotion and development of intermodal transport solutions, defined as the movement of goods in a single loading unit or vehicle that successively uses two or more modes of transport without handling the goods themselves in changing modes (UN/ECE, 2001, p. 17), is considered by the European Commission (2009) to be an important contribution to achieving a sustainable European transport sector.

The main advantage of intermodal transport solutions is their comparatively low external costs. It has been estimated that the total external cost of an intermodal train per tonne-km, including the cost of accidents, air pollution, greenhouse gases and noise, is only 28% of the external cost of a general freight truck (Forkenbrock, 2001). If focusing purely on greenhouse gases it is estimated, using transport between Basel and Rotterdam as an example, that CO₂ emissions from transport by waterways are four times higher and by lorry eight times higher compared to that of rail (UIC, 2008). Naturally, the results of any comparative study of the external costs of transport solutions will be affected by the types of external effects taken into consideration.

* Corresponding author: Thor-Erik Sandberg Hanssen (thh@uin.no)