

MEDIA RELEASE

SWISSPORT "FLOWER CORRIDOR" FACILITATES TRANSIT OF 9,000 TONS OF FRESH ROSES FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day is approaching and the global demand for fresh roses is at its peak. Over 9,000 tons of love blossoms travel safely through Swissport's industry-leading Flower Corridor, from the fields of the Kenyan highlands to Europe. The advanced logistics process also takes sustainability to the next level. Extended shelf life and reduced waste improve the position of Kenyan growers compared to flowers from less sustainable greenhouses in Europe, benefiting both consumers and the planet.

In the world of flower exports, where time sensitivity and freshness are non-negotiable, Swissport takes center stage as a key player in the complex door-to-door logistics. Every week, 400 to 500 tons of cargo, 85 percent of which is fresh flowers, pass through Swissport's expansive 10,400-square-meter cargo center in Nairobi, Kenya. This volume increases by 50-55 percent in the run-up to Valentine's Day. The facility, which is certified by IATA's CEIV Fresh, meticulously ensures the safe handling of general cargo, perishables, and temperature-sensitive goods, with a particular focus on flowers - a major export from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA).

"Every year Swissport successfully handles millions of fresh-cut flowers between January and February, aligning with peak demand during the Valentine's Day season, which begins in late January," explains Edwin Musungu, Head of Cargo Services at Swissport Nairobi. "For the current year, we anticipate to handle approximately 9,000 tons of flowers, a slight decrease from previous years attributed to aircraft capacity constraints, with carriers prioritizing the lucrative Chinese market due to the overlap with the Lunar New Year in 2024."

Central to addressing this logistical challenge is Swissport's Flower Corridor initiative, a cold-chain innovation that has transformed the handling of fresh-cut flowers connecting Nairobi with key locations in Europe such as Liege, Brussels, and Amsterdam, as well as markets in the Middle East and the Far East. Swissport's modern air cargo centers allow the speedy handling of perishables in a temperature-controlled environment.

The innovative Flower Corridor seamlessly connects farmers, airlines, and forwarders, and it not only symbolizes efficiency but also a commitment to environmental responsibility. Contrary to what many think, roses from Kenya have a smaller environmental impact than those grown in Europe, even when the carbon footprint of air transport is considered. The climate in Africa is optimal for cultivating flowers, whereas recreating this environment in Europe often results in a significant carbon footprint. According to a study (Treeze, 2018)

commissioned by Swiss retail group Migros-Genossenschaftsbund, greenhouse gas emissions from fairtrade roses produced in Kenya were found to be four to six times lower, compared to roses grown in European greenhouses, with 6.5 times less energy required (air transport included). Major carriers, including Etihad Airways, Turkish Airlines, British Airways, the airlines of the Lufthansa Group, China Southern, and Egypt Air, place trust in Swissport's innovative process and competence. Together, they create a collaborative ecosystem aimed at extending the shelf life of delicate flowers by approximately seven days and significantly reducing waste.

"Since the Flower Corridor was launched, Swissport has been working on perfecting the cold chain solution to provide high-quality services that protect the integrity of fragile flowers and maximize returns for customers," said Dirk Goovaerts, CEO Swissport CEMEA and Global Cargo Chair. "We're excited about the future of air cargo handling in Kenya and are working with local cargo communities as we continue to enhance our solutions."

The flowers journey at Swissport begins with the delivery truck docking at the hermetically sealed gateway, which connects to the temperature-controlled perishables center. After immediate unloading, flowers undergo temperature screening to ensure the cold chain's integrity. In the center, flowers are assembled into Unit Load Devices (ULDs) based on carrier bookings, with optional vacuum cooling before transport to the cold room for aircraft loading. The facility boasts a cutting-edge 110 pallet interconnected cold room, which spans 750 square meters and provides seamless access from landside to airside. A two-pallet main deck vacuum cooler with the power to cool down two main deck pallets from 24°C to a crisp 2°C in 22 minutes completes the state-of-the-art perishables center. Installed in January 2023, it ensures the freshness of perishables just before departure by maintaining low temperatures in the warehouse. The integrated infrastructure enhances the efficiency of the logistics process and also allows major agents to utilize the cooler for delayed or offloaded shipments.

"It's not just about shortening handling times; it's about mitigating the risk of temperature impact on sensitive cargo," says Edwin Musungu. "The primary objective is to ensure that every single rose arrives at its destination as fresh as the moment it was harvested, creating consumer happiness and improving the carbon footprint."

In 2023, Swissport International AG provided best-in-class airport ground services for some 232 million airline passengers (2022: 186 million) and handled roughly 4.7 million tons of air freight (2022: 4.8 million) at 115 air cargo centers worldwide. Several of its warehouses have been certified for pharmaceutical logistics by IATA's CEIV Pharma and by the British MHRA. At the end of December 2023, the world's leader in airport ground services and air cargo handling, with currently around 60,000 employees, was active at 286 airports in 44 countries on six continents.

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