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AgTC and TSA unite to address concerns over box weight checks

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by Nora Zhou

The goal is to keep cargo moving through US ports without further delays, says AgTC executive director Peter Friedmann

Shippers fear Solas changes could cause significant disruption to supply chain

MEMBERS of the Agriculture Transportation Coalition and the Transpacific Stabilization Agreement have formed a working committee to address fears that verification of container weights could cause disruption.

Under amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea Convention, starting July 1 next year shippers and non-vessel owning common carriers must supply a verified total container weight, including contents, to the vessel master and terminal operator as a condition for loading on board a ship.

There was great concern that these requirements could result in significant disruption to the supply chain, delaying the movement of containers through terminals and onto ships, AgTC executive director Peter Friedmann told Lloyd's List.

"The documentation, certification and advance submission requirements could result in containers missing cargo cutoffs, necessitating that they be rolled to subsequent sailings. This will create increased congestion and delay at marine terminals which are already straining to recover from the [US] west coast port crisis and the challenges of larger ships."

He added that collaboration between cargo holders and lines is essential as new procedures are designed and implemented in the coming months.

"The goal is to keep cargo moving through our US ports without causing further delays or congestion. We have much to do in a very tight time frame," Mr Friedmann said.

The working committee acts as a platform for members to discuss timing, feasibility and documentation requirements.

It currently has 25 AgTC member shippers and truckers, eight ocean carriers and three software providers.

TSA executive administrator Brian Conrad said in a statement: "Our ocean carrier members look forward to addressing the concerns from the shipper community to come up with a system that works for all parties.

"Each carrier will implement their own protocol independently of one another, but the committee provides an exceptional forum to hear from US shippers before the rule goes into effect."

The working committee said it was looking to have other participants drawn from the supply chain, such as terminal operators and port authorities.

"The working committee is still in its early stages in terms of specific recommendations provided, but the baseline for communication and information sharing between the shipping community and ocean carriers is encouraging," Mr Friedmann said.

The International Maritime Organization's Solas convention ensures that ships flagged by signatory states adhere to minimum safety standards in construction, equipment and operation.

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