

May 2020

Re: Urgent Call to action for retailers across the globe

Dear Sirs

I am writing to you as President of the Duty Free World Council (DFWC) in relation to the response to the COVID-19 crisis.

As you are only too aware, this pandemic has had a devastating effect on travel across the globe and as the world's transport routes have shut down, duty free sales have declined precipitously, placing enormous pressure on the whole duty free and travel retail sector.

As we see a decline in the spread of the virus in some regions, governments across the world are now considering how aviation will operate in the COVID-19 recovery period, with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) coordinating global standards in parallel. However, many individual governments will either develop their own approach or add additional measures to these standards.

In some countries we are seeing a refusal by governments to allow non-essential retail – including duty free and travel retail. We have also seen proposals such as the withdrawal of self-service in shops by customers or the introduction of strict one-bag rules.

In-flight retail is also under serious threat. We need to do what we can to protect it. In-flight is a significant revenue source for the airlines and a significant source of additional revenue for air crew.

These are all measures that could significantly damage our business as long as COVID-19 measures need to remain in place. ICAO guidance (ICAO has no rights of enforcement) goes a long way in shaping the thinking behind policy.

Experience across the world has demonstrated that we urgently need to engage with both our airport partners and national aviation safety authorities to ensure that solutions that will be applied are viable from both a safety and commercial perspective.

As such, and as a matter of urgency, DFWC has already started this process and submitted a position paper (attached) to ICAO, supported by the regional associations who have written to the ICAO regional representatives. This paper is a sound basis upon which to initially engage, but obviously measures will need to be tailored according to each jurisdiction. This is where we request that you step in, as an organisation with intimate knowledge of the situation in your country, and close to your airport authority.

Both the DFWC and the regional associations have worked tirelessly over the last few weeks to reach decision makers at global, regional and national level.

Now we are calling for you to engage through your country general managers with your airport partners and, where appropriate, national aviation safety regulators on the issues outlined above to ensure that travel retail and duty free is both considered and included without burdensome restrictions in any recovery plan that will be implemented by national governments in the coming weeks and months.

By way of an example, ETRC, working with ACI Europe, have successfully lobbied the EU who are recommending that airport retail opens up as traffic comes back – the EU Guidelines¹ for airports should be promoted as a way forward. The main clauses can be found at the end of this letter. This is something that can be applied to duty free and travel retail elsewhere around the globe.

We appreciate that this is a big ask at a time when you have many issues to deal with, but unless we make a constructive case for our businesses to open in a feasible trading environment, we face a longer delay to re-opening, or having unpalatable restrictions placed on us.

We remain at your full disposal should you have any questions. Please contact Gerard Murray (gerard.murray@dfworldcouncil.com)

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Branquinho
President
Duty Free World Council

SEE BELOW FOR KEY EASA GUIDANCE CLAUSES

¹ https://www.easa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/dfu/EASA-ECDC_COVID-19_Operational%20guidelines%20for%20management%20of%20passengers_final.pdf

Key EASA guidance clauses

- The reopening of non-essential airport services should respect local provisions on similar services outside of the airport and respect the physical distancing conventions in place in other parts of the airport. Where such services are not open, the free provision of water should be made available.
- Passengers should be advised by airport operators to make use of airport facilities and services in line with national provisions on similar services outside of the airport. Services where the preventive measures mentioned in these guidelines cannot be implemented should not be made available (e.g. smoking areas, playgrounds).
- Aeroplane operators, in coordination with the airport operators, should put in place measures to assist passengers in using self-check-in procedures and to minimise the amount of hand luggage taken into the cabin, in order to expedite the boarding and disembarking procedure and to reduce the movements and potential contamination in the cabin. Operators should promote the carriage of luggage in the cargo compartments by implementing incentive policies. In doing so, operators should remind passengers to not carry lithium batteries (in equipment or stand-alone) in their checked luggage.
- Aeroplane operators should reduce on-board service to the minimum necessary to ensure comfort and wellbeing standards for passengers and limit the contact between crew members and passengers, giving proper consideration to the duration of the flight. Among these measures the following should be considered:
 - No duty free or other non-essential product sales on board
 - Reduced food and drink service
 - Preference for pre-packaged and sealed food and drink products, such as canned drinks
 - Wherever possible, payment procedures involving touch or contact, such as cash payments, should be avoided to mitigate transmission between crew members and passengers.