Port terminals prepare for 2026 South Africa citrus exports

Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) has firmed up its readiness plans for South Africa's 2026 citrus fruit exports, following a successful season last year that recorded a 22% increase in volumes.

Integrated planning with industry over the past few weeks has focused on refrigerated container demand forecasting, stack management and capacity, provisions for late or early arrivals, berthing, stowage, and storage. Annually, TPT's container terminals across KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Eastern Cape (EC), and Western Cape (WC) handle oranges, mandarins, lemons, clementines, limes, and grapefruit destined for over 100 markets from April to September.

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"We have engaged strategically with all shipping lines to ensure that routes to major markets are well balanced across the terminals for adequate connectivity across citrus producers," said Michelle van Buren Schele, General Manager for

Commercial and Planning at TPT.

All terminals will continue to operate around the clock, offering a 24-hour service across four employee shifts. "In the event the terminals encounter delays due to weather or operational challenges, there will be immediate communication, and stacks will be extended, where possible," said van Buren Schele.

Engagement with industry is ongoing, with planned weekly logistics engagements to monitor performance and respond to operational requirements. The finalisation of vessel loading plans within two hours of berthing will be key, as well as the reporting of any faulty refrigerated containers at least four hours before vessel departure.

TPT has invested R9 billion across its terminals in the last three years, with container terminals receiving rubber-tyred gantry cranes, rail-mounted gantry cranes, haulers, mobile harbour cranes, reach stackers, and ship-to-shore cranes.

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With citrus fruit exports growing year on year, South Africa maintains its position as the second largest global supplier after Spain, with industry plans exploring new markets for further growth.

"Our priority this season is to ensure that we deliver predictable operations, improved planning, and an enhanced customer experience," said van Buren Schele.

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