

LOGISTICS / DOMESTIC

Logistics inefficiency stands in the way of citrus export growth

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Citrus Growers' Association CEO Justin Chadwick

Logistics efficiency and market access will determine the growth prospects of citrus exports going forward.

That's the view of Citrus Growers' Association CEO Justin Chadwick who says that in the next three to five years, citrus exports from South Africa will increase from 2 million to 2.5 million tons. "The ability of the logistics infrastructure to cope with the additional 500 000 tons – and the urgency with which market access is addressed will determine whether the extra volume will result in additional jobs, a growing industry and additional investment and foreign exchange earnings."

Durban port, which handles the bulk of southern African citrus, is in dire need of an upgrade, and new equipment is sorely needed, says Chadwick. "In addition, the port operations lag international norms in terms of port efficiency."

The citrus industry has come up with a six-point plan to address the logistics challenges and point one involves improving the efficiency of the port. Other elements include making more use of Maputo port, increasing the volume transported to Durban by rail, increasing capacity of cold stores in the Durban port precinct, as well as

investment in hubs where cargo can be accumulated and railed into the port. IT has also been identified as key to improving efficiencies.

It will however require a joint effort by private and public sector stakeholders – from Transnet and the Department of Transport to cold store owners and shipping lines need to ensure that inadequate logistics does not stymie future growth in the sector, Chadwick.

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