

Specialized reefer vessels crucial to the past South African citrus season, says shipping agent

“The Reefer Alliance serviced South African citrus with great success during this past season,” says Charles Gantz, MD of Anlin Shipping and South African representative of the Reefer Alliance and Seatrade.

Their EU business grew by 40%, whilst exports to Russia increased by 25%. He notes that they would like to explore a more regular service to the UK, along with the current Lisbon-Rotterdam-St Petersburg route they run.

Their South Africa-USA business doubled this past year. Seatrade shipped 65% of South Africa’s citrus for the US: twelve vessels containing 49,500 pallets – and not a single steri failure among them, Charles points out.



Cargo reefer mv Emerald towed into Cape Town harbour

He accounts their growth in part to the inefficiencies of the Cape Town Container Terminal the past season. D-Berth at the FPT private terminal, where they load their conventional vessels, removes them from the vagaries of the Cape Town Container Terminal.

They were able to maintain schedule integrity this past season to a much larger degree than many other shipping lines. Apart from the specialized reefer mode of loading, the fact that they manage circulation of their own containers is a huge advantage.

Container availability & Covid-19

"I'm not 100% sure what new challenges will await us for the next season, but I am not convinced that Cape Town harbour is past its problems. Covid-19 might just still come with another curve ball."

He continues that table grape producers observing the past citrus season and its challenges, must have asked themselves whether a repeat of the past season at the container load terminals was possible.

"If there is a concern that it could happen again, I would very much like to think that there will be some deciduous producers and exporters who would think of spreading their eggs over more baskets."

"From what we read in reports, it seems that containers are becoming an issue in the Far East. I would advise the exporters of grapes and stonefruit to keep an eye on container stocks and to keep an eye on the loading terminals."



Photos supplied by Anlin Shipping

Their physical location within Table Bay is less exposed to the infamous southeastern wind that at some point of almost every season bedevils the loading of table grapes at the container terminal.

There has been little personal contact with clients for much of this year, but it's a vital part of their business, and so Charles has been on the road since mid-September visiting exporters and citrus farmers in the Eastern and Western Cape. He says their clients are satisfied and is set to continue next year in the same vein.

They also shipped some avocados in containers to Russia this season, not a lot, but there's no reason not to do it to the EU as well, he says.

"Apple and pear exporters got a taste of shipping breakbulk this season and we'll be doing it again next season."



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