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Citrus exports diverted to Eastern Cape ports to avoid CT delays

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The citrus industry has taken decisive action to ensure continuity of supply to key export markets in light of delays at the Port of Cape Town which has been operating at 50% capacity due to high numbers of staff affected by Covid-19.

“Exports of citrus are continuing from Cape Town with a main focus on services to Europe, UK, Med, Russia and North America,” said Citrus Growers’ Association (CGA) logistics development manager Mitchell Brooke.

“However, due to delayed berthing, shipments are being delayed.”

Containerised exports are therefore being trucked in high volumes from the Western Cape to PE and Ngqura.

“The main European continental services provided by MSC and the SAECS VSA provided by Maersk, Safmarine, DAL, ONE Line and Hamburg Sud, are omitting Cape Town at this time with Cape Town being serviced by these lines with alternative services.”

Transnet is in the process of gearing the Cape Town container terminal to reach 100% operating capacity which should be achieved quite soon, according to Brooke, with the

main backlog of vessels hopefully being cleared over a short period of time.

“Many vessels are bypassing Cape Town so the vessel backlog is only six at this time,” he added.

“At this stage vessels calling at Durban, PE and Ngqura terminals are working productively without any berthing delays.”

The conventional breakbulk service provided by the Reefer Alliance (Seatrade and Baltic Shipping) has been operating without any delays and a vessel a week is calling at Durban, PE and Cape Town for shipments to Europe and Russia.

“Similarly, conventional breakbulk shipments to Japan and China continue unobstructed from Durban and to the USA from Cape Town. We have a much more optimistic outlook that supply of citrus from South Africa will continue unobstructed and with relative consistency as production enters the peak season.”

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