

Citrus industry action helps normalise port congestion

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Justin Chadwick, CEO of the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA).

While the Port of Durban is slowly recovering from the crippling cyberattack that paralysed operations and brought the port system to its knees, Transnet is continuing to hold regular virtual meetings with all stakeholders to monitor the situation and keep all apprised of the latest situation.

The normalisation has only been possible through the cooperation of all stakeholders – and in the case of the citrus industry, a deliberate policy to decrease the volume of citrus exports arriving at the port played a significant role.

With cold stores blocked out, the movement of containers and cargo in and out of the port constrained, and reefer plug-in points in short supply, a call went out to growers in the north to consider a temporary hold on harvesting, packing and transporting fruit to Durban from August 6-12.

“One does not just turn the “sausage machine” off – there was still considerable fruit to be moved,” said Citrus Growers’ Association CEO Justin Chadwick.

“Hence the trucks carried on arriving into this week – but from the figures obtained by CGA’s Faisal Asmal of trucks en route to Durban, and those already in Durban, growers clearly heeded the call. This allowed the cold stores to load out, and the port environment to normalise.”

A similar call was made to Eastern Cape growers as the ports in that region also faced congestion issues.

“This voluntary action from growers illustrates how united the industry is in facing joint challenges – and industry taking the responsibility without needing regulation or enforcement.”

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