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Citrus growers get serious about rail transport options

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Citrus growers in the Senwes (Groblersdal and Marble Hall) region have tuned into the benefits of rail transport and are taking advantage of rail opportunities to the Port of Durban.

That's according to Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) logistics development manager Mitchell.

Brooke who believes the region is best placed to take advantage of these rail opportunities.

"The majority of fruit railed to Durban comes from this region," Brooke said after a visit to the region last week with CGA CEO Justin Chadwick.

"The pioneers in stuffing containers at cold stores in the growing region, and then railing directly into the stack in Durban come from this region. With the forecast growth there will be added incentives to use rail in the future," he said.

The visit delivered several interesting insights into developments in the region.

According to Chadwick, precision farming is becoming the norm on some farms. "The ability to use technology to maximise efficiency on farms is being adopted by

progressive growers, and the results are starting to show. Technology innovations allow growers to mine an immense amount of data, giving them exception reports and information for informed decision making.”

As in the Eastern Cape, he said there had been considerable capital investment in orchards, netting, packhouses and infrastructure, with the packhouses using cutting edge technology in sorting machinery. “It is amazing to see fruit of all sizes and colour entering the packhouse, and ending up in uniform packing stations for specific markets.”

He said it was a relief to see the Loskop dam at over 95% full. Canals from the dam channel water to the orchards.

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