

# CGA pressures president Ramaphosa

Association says urgent intervention is needed to fix South African ports ahead of 2022 export season

With the start of the South African citrus export season only two months away and against the background of continued problems in the country's ports, the South African Citrus industry has increased pressure on the government to urgently intervene.

The Citrus Growers Association (CGA) called on President Ramaphosa to provide an update on the government's short-term plan to address the immediate challenges in his state of the nation address.

The CGA asked for an urgent update on progress at the ports, which it said posed a serious threat to the upcoming citrus export season.

The association called for an immediate intervention at the Durban and Cape Town ports to ensure citrus reached key markets on time in 2022.

"In this regard, we urgently call on government to prioritise providing sufficient funds to Transnet in this year's budget to invest in critical equipment and personnel to ensure an immediate improvement in performance and productivity at the ports container terminals; particularly Durban Pier 1, Durban Pier 2 and Cape Town Container Terminals," the CGA said.

"It is critical that vessels move to and from the ports to global markets with constancy, regularity and reliably in 2022 – an essential part of the success in supplying fruit to receivers and maximising industry returns."

Transnet and logistics partners should also plan and execute the receiving and despatching of trucks at the terminals with absolute precision to ensure the truck throughput is maximised so there is minimal downtime of this limited resource, the CGA outlined.

"Currently, the truck booking system at the terminals is not proving to be beneficial in facilitating the efficient and effective movement of reefer containers, full and empty, through the terminals."

Reefer capacity was mostly oversubscribed at the Durban and Coega ports, which limited the ability to export citrus during the 2021 season.

"It is crucial that all stakeholders deliberate on the most optimal reefer capacity at each container terminal aligned to export forecasts for each region in 2022," the association continued.

"These steps must be prioritised and realised as a matter of urgency in the months to come, not only to avoid a repeat of 2021 but also to prevent shipping lines increasingly bypassing South African ports, which not only robs growers of the opportunity to access all markets but also puts the entire economy at risk."

Whether the CGA intervention will have any effect remains to be seen. In a country with record unemployment, the negative effects of Covid-19, ineffective government and rampant corruption, it is questionable whether Ramaphosa will be able to deal with pressure that is descending from all sides on his government.

Grape and stonefruit growers have suffered from the same problems so far this season and nothing has been done about it.

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