



Port of Durban hit by floods

Weather event may cause disruptions to citrus exports as season ramps up

South African transport authorities are working against the clock to get export operations back on track at the Port of Durban. Flooding last week saw the closure of the port.

Freight logistics observers remain unsure how long disruptions to fruit export activities will last.

South Africa's Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) is assessing the situation and will respond fully when the position is clear.

The CGA pointed out that the new season will not start in earnest before the end of the month. It is clearly hoping that all will be back on track by the time major export operations start.

So far this season, early lemons have been shipped from the port. Preparations had been made for the first sterri grapefruit shipments.

Justin Chadwick, chief executive of the CGA, did not expand on the problems in notes to growers, but advised them to get in touch with the CGA offices if they needed operations updates.

"While we advised growers at the CGA roadshows to expect the unexpected in 2022 – I did not foresee that to include seeing containers drifting down the National Highway (N2)," said Chadwick. "This week, Durban received over 500mm of rain over a four-day period and the impact has been devastating."

"Apart from highways becoming rivers, many homes were washed away, lives were lost and infrastructure damaged. For exporters through Durban Port the biggest concern is that Bayhead Road – the feeder road to Durban Container Terminals – has had half the lanes washed away; and the integrity of the rest of the road is questionable."

Logistics service providers said the Maersk depot at the port is in a bad state, as are the Kings Rest facilities.

Durban Container Port is operating but there is no access for reefers.

"MSC cannot access the depot via Bayhead, so they are applying for a permit to do carrier haulage through the residential area in Bluff, one of the Durban suburbs, so they cannot do much until they have permission," said one observer.

"It is reported that Durban diesel supply is depleting because generators are used and the supply trucks cannot access the refinery. The port is operating at 70 per cent but it is not helping that we cannot load containers ex Durban."

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