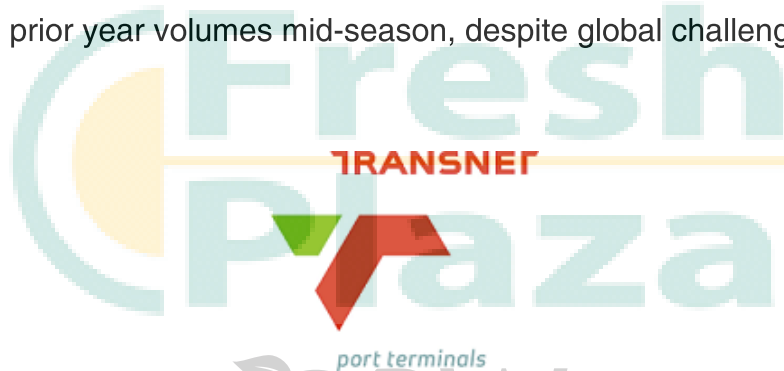




South African citrus exports up 7% mid-season despite global industry challenges

South African citrus exports are 7% higher across all terminals combined when compared to prior year volumes mid-season, despite global challenges facing the industry.



Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) has handled over 77 376 forty foot equivalent units (FEU) in the first half of the season across its container terminals in Durban, Ngqura and Gqeberha. Actual citrus export volumes were 36% higher than the prior year at the Port Elizabeth Container Terminal; 13.1% higher at the Durban Container Terminal Pier 1; 6.1% higher at the Durban Container Terminal Pier 2; and 2.3% higher at the Ngqura Container Terminal. The Cape Town Container Terminal which plays a supporting role during this season, also recorded a 6% increase in refrigerated container volumes which include citrus exports.

According to TPT General Manager: Commercial and Planning Michelle van Buren Schele, "Our citrus readiness plans have focused on employee resourcing, maximum stack capacity, industry compliance with the truck appointment system and increased terminal plug points for refrigerated containers." She added that while the proposal of railing refrigerated containers was still sitting with logistics service providers for consideration, a mass rail evacuation system would contribute considerably to truck traffic but – was heavily reliant on industry uptake.

The recent enforcement of the European Union's new protectionist regulations in citrus imports from Southern Africa remains a major challenge. This combined with increased shipping rates, input costs and the late production of lemons and grapefruit, posed many uncertainties for the industry. As such, the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) has since revised its annual volumes down from 170.5 million to 165.9 million cartons for the year 2022.

Meanwhile, in continuing efforts to improve terminal stack fluidity, the Durban Container Terminals (DCT) have updated the current free import storage procedure. While cargo owners will still have 78 hours of free import storage, the start of the free storage period will begin from the date actual the container is offloaded from the vessel and placed in the stacking area to be collected. Previously, the free 78 hours commenced only after all containers on a vessel had been offloaded. Van Buren Schele said, "It's important to keep the yard fluid as it benefits both the customer and improves container handling efficiencies at the terminal".

South Africa's peak citrus season is between April and September annually, where both Durban and the Eastern Cape move export volumes to over 100 countries mainly within the European Union (EU), Far East, and United States of America (USA).

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Publication date: Thu 11 Aug 2022