

ECONOMY / IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Citrus growers raise concern about Port of Cape Town operations

08 Nov 2023 - by Staff reporter



Source: TNPA

1 Comment

Citrus growers have escalated their concerns about “ongoing inefficiencies” that are hampering exports at the Port of Cape Town (PoCT) to provincial government.

At a recent Cabinet meeting, Premier Alan Winde said he and Mireille Wenger, the MEC for Finance and Economic Opportunities, had met with citrus growers in Ceres, where farmers had raised their concerns and highlighted ongoing inefficiencies at the PoCT.

“Given that 42% of their produce (stone and pome fruit) is exported, amounting to more than R17 billion, these inefficiencies are a significant impediment to the industry’s growth and the economy of the region,” said Winde’s spokesperson, Regan Thaw.

He said the most serious shortcomings at the port included the fact that there had been little to no investment in infrastructure as well as poor maintenance of existing infrastructure and a loss of specialised skills.

“We have an opportunity to grow exports through the port and create more jobs, yet Transnet cannot seem to get its affairs in order, and so critical logistics hubs are suffering from underinvestment. We as the Western Cape government will intensify pressure on national government to prioritise the PoCT,” Winde said.

Winde also reported to Cabinet on a meeting he and Wenger had held with representatives of the Citrus Growers Association (CGA), investment and trade promotion agency Wesgro, and a delegation of US congressional officials in Simondium last week. The US delegation, among them members of the United States House Committee on Ways and Means, had come to South Africa to attend the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) forum, which was held in Johannesburg.

Winde advocated that South Africa remain a beneficiary of Agoa and explained that the Western Cape’s agriculture sector has benefited immensely from the trade preference programme. Exports to the US are growing, thanks largely to the benefits accruing from its membership of AGOA. The agriculture sector currently employs 68 300 people nationally.

The US has consistently been one of the Western Cape’s top five export markets, and the second largest over the past five years.

Wenger presented a report on recent economic developments. These included concern that the efficiency of the Cape Town port’s container terminal had continued to deteriorate due to breakdowns of heavy lifting equipment. She said the terminal was currently operating at less than 40% of its own target.

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Mike Walwyn
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This doesn't change the message, but pome & stone fruit and citrus are 2 very different things

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