

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Citrus season gains momentum in Eastern Cape

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Source: Fresh Fruit Portal

Despite heavy rains across the country, the Eastern Cape container terminals were handling higher citrus volumes than the previous three years during mid-season, Transnet Port Terminals reported on Thursday.

TPT said that with shipping cycles returning to normal, more shipping lines were now calling the Gqeberha and Ngqura container terminals.

Average year-on-year comparisons showed a 9.2% volume increase in this region, while at the end of June 2023, Durban volumes were marginally lower than those of the same period last year, although this was starting to pick up, TPT said in a statement.

Michelle van Buren Schele, TPT general manager of commercial and planning, said that with the exception of the Eastern Cape, the state-owned entity had noted a slow start to the citrus season in general.

“There are a number of factors at play, including lower crop yields due to weather, as well as the European Union’s cold treatment legislation which combined have reduced export opportunities,” Buren Schele said.

She added that Transnet remained optimistic for a strong, albeit later, finish with three months before the end of the season.

“Volumes are starting to pick up in Durban after delayed production of valencia and mandarin fruits. This will also contribute to peak export flows” she said.

Annually, TPT prioritises refrigerated containers between the April and September months by having dedicated lanes at all terminals and ensuring maximum availability of resources around the clock.

Despite lower volumes in Durban owing to lower production from northern regions, the terminals were still committed to improving efficiency with the robust programmes in place, TPT said.

The citrus season is one of South Africa’s biggest agricultural export seasons as the country ranks among the world’s top suppliers of citrus fruits. During this season, TPT handles vessels destined for more than 100 markets.

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