

Could Saldanha trump Cape Town?

22 Nov 2024 - by Jeanne van der Merwe



An aerial map of the Saldanha Bay and port area.

3 Comments

Delays in the Port of Cape Town relating to weather, equipment breakdowns and traffic congestion have led to calls for downgrading the port and instead expanding the Port of Saldanha Bay to become the eminent port in South Africa.

The idea has even been floated by Thomas Eskesen, founder of Eskesen Advisory, an advisor to the local fruit industry and a number of cold chain companies and investors.

“Do you really want a port in downtown Cape Town?” he asked last year at the 10th International Table Grape Symposium held in Cape Town. “Maybe move it to Saldanha Bay and get the traffic away from the city. You have the most beautiful waterfront in the world – should the port be there? Cape Town will also always have a lot of wind, which brings challenges,” he was quoted as saying.

While Cape Town loses approximately 1 200 operational hours annually due to strong winds and performs suboptimally due to continued equipment breakdowns, Saldanha’s multipurpose terminal recorded an annual cargo handling volume increase of 6.2%, according to the *Business Outlook on Logistics in Cape Town and the Western Cape* report,

jointly compiled by the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (Saaff) and Wesgro.

In addition, it is the largest and deepest natural port in the Southern Hemisphere, capable of accommodating vessels with a draught of up to 21.5 m, compared to a maximum of 14.5 m in Cape Town.

But Saaff head of research and development, Dr Jacob van Rensburg, says the province cannot afford a significant upgrade of Saldanha at Cape Town's expense.

"Currently, the Port of Saldanha Bay is almost exclusively focused on iron ore exports, with some 92% of goods handled at the port being exactly that. This does not mean there is not significant room for growth – quite the contrary.

"On the other hand, the Port of Cape Town handles roughly 19% of the containerised goods and only about 3% of the bulk goods in the country. Therefore, the current focus of the respective ports is quite divergent.

"However, the collective focus for trade, transport, and logistics in South Africa is quite convergent, as we have a very high freight demand, accompanied by a growth story which is hungry to break out of its shackles if the logistics network can facilitate the trade demand."

Van Rensburg says to solve the province's logistical requirements "we need a synchromodal and synchroport solution to satisfy this demand".

"Consequently, we do not see a massive development in Saldanha at the expense of Cape Town. Rather, a growth story for both. The potential for Saldanha to diversify and ship a broader range of goods is there. The focus should not be on Cape Town to decrease, but rather to improve efficiency and throughput on its current volumes. Cape Town is a mature, multi-focused (let's not forget the booming passenger terminal) port. Saldanha could be the same."

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Leon

4 days ago

Maybe for once the EC can "teach" the WC something... here we have both NCT & PECT which compliment each other, as wind from the different directions, affect the respective ports in different ways, so a two-port "system" works well, BUT only if all systems are operational with full operational capacity available to service industry. The location within the bay also adds to this as the currents/weather patterns do differ at each terminal location. I fully agree that the facilities at both Cape Town & Saldanha needs to be upgraded in order to compliment each other.

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Reply

**Albatross Nest Luxury Accom**

→ Leon 18 hours ago

What blows my mind is the fact that they want to spend R21 billion to "move the ocean back" to enlarge the VA

It takes money to make money!! Use this money to Move all of it to Saldanha ..the infrastrucure is already in place. This will definitely bring much needed jobs to poor area. IT IS TIME...LETS DO IT!!!! Saldanha is hungry for development!!

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Reply



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Alfred → Albatross Nest Luxury Accom 18 hours ago

This shouldn't really be a debatable issue but rather seems like a no brainer and a big win for everyone if done. At this stage discussions should be on when and how to do it. Saldanha is the solution to the multiple challenges and limitations in the Cape Town Port. Additionally, the deeper drafts may actually attract the bigger vessels to our shores. The benefits has ripple effects in the broader logistics industry in South Africa. The two terminals will actually compliment each other.

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