

Cape Town's busiest specialised reefer deciduous fruit season in almost 20 years

“In November and December, we had two vessels for the pre-Christmas fruit, and thereafter we had planned to offer a biweekly specialised reefer vessel (SRV) service to Europe and the UK, from week 2 to around week 12 from Cape Town. That biweekly service became a weekly service and already as from week 3, we are introducing a second vessel per week up until week 6 to assist the industry to ship the maximum available cargo,” says Charles Gantz, managing director of Anlin Shipping, South African agent for Seatrade and Cool Carriers.

There are also biweekly sailings to St Petersburg, running separately until the citrus season when, at times, vessels are loaded with cargo for both Rotterdam and St Petersburg, depending on available volumes.

Currently they have a vessel almost continuously loading from Cape Town to Dover and Rotterdam where the market, given the Red Sea and Panama Canal constraints holding back South Africa's competitors, is empty.

Anlin Shipping has a dedicated quay at FPT, a privately-run terminal in the port of Cape Town, dedicated for European and Russian trade.

“For that, we as an industry must be extremely grateful,” Gantz comments.

“During the citrus season we're equally busy from Cape Town but the last time we were this busy with grapes and stonefruit was 17 years ago, in 2007.”



The Pacific Mermaid, a refrigerated vessel in the Seatrade fleet

Five years ago, deciduous fruit shipped conventionally from Cape Town had dropped to a round zero: now, he says, they easily shift 9,500 pallets a week. He reckons that accounts for 35% to 45% of fruit shipped from Cape Town.

Moreover, there's not much of a price difference between SRV (breakbulk) and container shipping anymore, he adds, should one do the total honest sum, considering the hidden cost resulting from inefficiencies within the cost chain and logistics.

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