

Comment: South Africa's exporters press on as problems persist

By [Mike Knowles](#) | 5 February 2024

As Eurofruit's Fresh Focus South Africa special reveals, disruption in South African ports has left the country's fresh produce exporters with a mountain to climb

One of the many things I have learned in my two decades covering the fresh produce business is that people in the fruit trade know how to plan ahead.

Everything in this industry requires careful planning. Container ships require weeks of sailing time to reach their destination, so delivery schedules are drawn up far in advance. New varieties don't appear magically overnight; they require decades of R&D, trial and error. Orchards don't bear fruit forever, so replacements must be planted years ahead of the required harvest.

For fruit and veg suppliers, the ability to prepare is, well, second nature.

So it's a shame that certain stakeholders – [the South African government](#), to pluck one example out of the air – are not so agile.

On my visit to the Western Cape last month, it was clear the province's growers and exporters can cope with almost anything you throw at them: water shortages, power cuts, higher crop protection costs, stricter environmental audits, social compliance demand. You name it, they can overcome it.

But the inadequacy of Cape Town's state-run container port facilities seems, to use a logistical term, almost terminal.

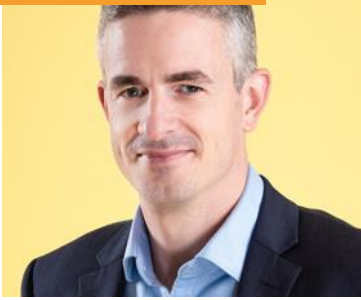
You might argue Transnet could have foreseen problems like gusting winds – a phenomenon that is surely as old as Table Mountain itself – and tailored its operation accordingly instead of sitting on its hands?

Perhaps the adverse energy? After all, it's :

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Fresh Focus South Africa

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**Mike Knowles,
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Over the next week, *Eurofruit* will publish a series of exclusive stories about the South African fresh produce trade. If you want to read more from my visit to the Western Cape and to learn how the province's fruit growers and exporters plan to overcome this and some other very big challenges, then you have two options: either [click here and take out a digital subscription](#) to *Eurofruit*, or head to the Fruitnet stand (Hall 5.2, A-50) at [Fruit Logistica](#) and pick up a copy of our *Fresh Focus South Africa* special, which is part of *Eurofruit's* Fruit Logistica Edition · Part II.

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