

Citrus exports on track with FEU rail freight delivery

Yesterday - by Staff reporter



Reefer cargo getting loaded at the Port of Durban.

South Africa's citrus season got into full swing with the arrival of one of the longest trains for offloading at the Port of Durban's Container Terminal Pier 2 this week.

Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) said in a statement on Wednesday that the train, which arrived from Limpopo laden with 48 forty-foot containers of citrus fruits for export, has already been offloaded using rail-mounted gantry cranes. The cranes fed the containers onto haulers and they were placed in the reefer yard from where they will be moved for loading when the appropriate vessels call at the port.

Durban Terminals managing executive Earle Peters, said the citrus season had officially kicked off at the port.

"We have officially began the season in Durban, with every intention of making our customers competitive. The Bela Bela train promotes cargo movement from road to rail, a crucial component in supporting logistics and terminal operations," Peters said.

Limpopo is the largest contributor to South Africa's citrus industry, accounting for more than 40% of total citrus fruit production and area planted, followed by the

Eastern Cape (25%), and Western Cape (15%). Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and North West also contribute to the sector's total production volumes.

The citrus industry has forecast a 15% increase in citrus exports this year.

TPT has assured the industry of its commitment to make the season a success.

"In Durban, three terminals have been resourced to prepare for the season. To improve the reliability and efficiency of its services, the Durban Container Terminal Pier 1 has 1 440 plug points with back-up power. The Durban Container Terminal Pier 2 has a total of 2 424 plug points, while the Durban Multi Purpose Terminal has 277 plug points," TPT said.

In Gqeberha, the Ngqura Container Terminal has 1 652 plug points, while the Port Elizabeth Container Terminal has 932.

TPT said the Port Elizabeth Container Terminal also received one of its largest vessels at the weekend, as trucks arrived with the province's citrus fruit exports.

Citrus Growers Association (CGA) chief executive officer Justin Chadwick, said the association valued Transnet's responsiveness and willingness to engage with the citrus industry at all levels.

"We have seen TPT remain resolute during crises before, from the July 2021 unrest to the Durban floods. The special initiatives undertaken by TPT to work towards a smooth citrus season is appreciated. Handling an increased export citrus crop this year will however be challenging, given that Transnet is still executing its turnaround plan and dealing with multiple equipment breakdowns," Chadwick said.

He added that the association's leadership is excited about finding solutions to the current challenges and working with container terminals throughout the country.

"Such partnerships remain an important objective, where Transnet and the private sector can work together to improve port efficiency and thereby secure the 140 000 jobs that the export citrus sustains," he said.

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