

SEA FREIGHT

Cape exporters holding their breath amid stormy weather

11 Jul 2024 - by Jeanne van der Merwe



Source: SABC

The severe storms over Cape Town this past week have slowed port activity, but exporters remain optimistic that equipment upgrades done in the past year will reduce hours lost to stormy weather.

The Cape Town harbour is crucial for the agriculture export industries in the Western and Northern Cape.

“The port has been operating intermittently, but there hasn’t been damage to equipment, which is a good thing,” said Terry Gale, chairman of Exporters Western Cape, an industry body representing exporters.

“For now the main concern is that there has been quite a lot of flooding in Citrusdal, and whether this will have an impact on the citrus harvest,” he said.

Gale said three vessels have been waiting alongside the Cape Town port terminal for quite a few days, as port operations can only continue intermittently.

An indication of the weather impact is that on July 7, when the first of the current series of cold fronts hit the Cape, there was no work in the terminal. On the previous

day, the harbour handled 3026 TEU, he said.

Nonetheless, Cape Town's main terminal has also experienced equipment challenges, with only six of the nine ship-to-shore gantries operational and 22 of the 30 rubber tyred gantries working.

Gale said new hydraulic units installed to prevent berthed ships from hitting the quayside have improved productivity and have probably helped operations continue somewhat.

He said the north-westerly winds associated with winter storms in Cape Town do not have as adverse an effect on port operations as the summer's south-easterly winds, which coincide with peak activities in the harbour.

Nonetheless, with another cold front approaching, interruptions to activity in the port are likely to continue into next week.

The shipping line Maersk issued a warning at the beginning of the week that vessel movement and operations would be impacted by strong winds, high waves and heavy rains, and that delays were expected.

Sign up to our mailing list and get daily news headlines and weekly features directly to your inbox free.

Subscribe to receive print copies of Freight News Features to your door.

