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Thursday 21st April 2022, 10:06 GMT

Durban port is fully operational

South African citrus exporters may escape major flood disruption if port returns to normal this week



Image: PhillipN

The South African government has announced that operations at the vast Indian Ocean port of Durban are now fully operational, following flash floods in KwaZulu-Natal that caused major disruption.

Public enterprises minister Pravin Gordhan announced today (21 April) that the backlog in container movement would be cleared within five to six days.

Gordhan told reporters that fuel supply to the rest of the country had been fully restored and progress was being made to decrease the backlog until roads leading to the port were fully repaired.

"The port of Durban is functional," Gordhan confirmed. "Ships that are bringing in imports are being serviced

and the vessels that are taking up exports – including food items or fruit – are also being serviced because of the impact on the repaired main road.

"We did have an issue where some 8,000 to 9,000 containers had accumulated, either because staff could not reach the harbour area, or trucks could not reach the harbour area."

He pledged to ensure that the container backlog was cleared "within the next five to six days".

Operations came to a halt last week when floods damaged railway lines and roads leading to the port, forcing the backlog of containers waiting to offload from ships anchored off the coast and pick up goods at the harbour.

The flooding has left over

480 people dead, some 8,000 houses damaged and 40,000 people without shelter.

During the past few weeks the South African citrus industry stated at various times that the main export season will only get going at the end of April.

If reports of progress in mopping up after the flood are correct, it seems that the industry may have missed most of the disruption.

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