

## **“Bigger demand than estimated led to organised chaos for enough specialised reefer vessels space from South Africa”**

"Organised chaos" is the best way to describe shipping of the products during the past 2023/24 deciduous fruit season from South Africa. Anlin Shipping has seen a dramatic increase in specialized reefer vessels, mainly from FPT, the privately operated terminal at the Port of Cape Town. "While some producers and exporters approached us early, the volumes estimated was lower than the eventual big demand that was realised. It was organised chaos," says Charles Gantz, managing director of Anlin Shipping, which is the agent for the Reefer Alliance, representing the specialised reefer owners, Cool Carriers and Seatrade.



Gantz says they had ships departing weekly for Europe, the UK and bi-weekly to Russia. "We had 12 ships in total going to mainly Europe and the UK, since week 48 to week 9. We did not know exactly how much product was coming. We shipped 70, 000 pallets to Europe and the UK. That's table grapes, stone fruit apples and pears, with 85% grapes, 12% stone fruit and 3% apples and pears. We also sent three full ships to Russia, that's 18,000 pallets."

He says the initial estimates, which they rely on to ensure enough ships are available, provided by producers and exporters, was much less than the big demand during the season. "We did not see the bigger volumes coming. FPT did not see it coming either. If we knew the demand would be so

much bigger, we would've been more prepared. We could have done 15,000 additional pallets, we could have added three to four more ships. However, the infrastructure simply could not keep up. The cold stores, trucking companies and other facilities just could not cope with the higher than estimated volumes," explains Gantz.

He says they are happy to have serviced the demand of clients in the end. "From week 2 to 9 FPT had no time and space to rest, we had ship movements the whole time at that terminal."

### **Citrus shipments started**

"We started two weeks ago (in week 14) with our weekly citrus shipments from to Russia. Initially these vessels will call Durban then Cape Town where they pick up citrus, pome and exotics. Starting this week we're adding Europe and the UK. We will add Coega as load port as from wk20, through a private set-up that is managed outside of Transnet, with cold stores that are close by. Our vessels will call Durban, Coega, Cape Town to the UK, one port in the EU namely Rotterdam and then on to St. Petersburg in Russia. Around the end of week 19 we could see two vessels per week to about weeks 33 and 34."



### **Moving South African citrus to US**

Anlin Shipping are about to start to ship the early citrus from South Africa to the US market. "We are the only specialised reefer operator involved in shipping from South Africa to the US. The program for us should start about week 20 and run up till week 37/38."

### **Panama Canal and Red Sea delays**

Gantz says the Panama Canal and Red Sea does not affect them directly here on the southernmost tip of Africa. "Where the delays have an impact is that it takes a lot of ships out of

the system for between 10–12 days out of the normal schedule. The moment that happens you have to add more ships to maintain a normal schedule. Our ships were positioned well. Those delays did not hurt us so much. The Red Sea will not really affect us, but it affects the markets. Suddenly, Egypt has to go to Europe with their grapes. India could not reach Europe. It helped the South African grapes and stone fruits in Europe to have an emptier market. There are positives and negatives to these delays. Our trade lanes to Russia and Europe are not affected."

He says with the big growth in South Africa's citrus production a market like Russia is needed, with a reliable shipping service able to get the fruit to that market in time. "South Africa has such a big growth in citrus, you need Russia, other markets are just not able to absorb that large volume."

Gantz advice to the South African fruit industry, with next season in mind, is for them to not underestimate volumes. "Talk to us early, plan and commit and you will be looked after. With us you know when your fruit will be in the market, we might be out by a day or two at most, but still in your time period for products to reach your customers overseas."

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Publication date: Thu 25 Apr 2024

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