

MINISTER PATEL CAN SAVE CITRUS FROM TRANSNET GO-SLOW

The South African citrus industry calls on Minister Patel to intercede on behalf of our industry, and the jobs it represents, and prevent the industrial action at Transnet’s Port of Ngqura from developing into a deeper economic crisis.

Minister Patel is a friend and ardent supporter of South African citrus. He is proud of our world standing as an exporter, the jobs this has created and the significant development of black citrus farmers across the country.

The situation at the port has now reached crisis proportions.  Citrus export production in the Eastern Cape is at its highest level with production on Late Navels, Clementine’s, Nova’s and Lemons peaking well above average at this time. And yet, as a consequence of delays on vessels calling in to the port, containers of citrus are unable to be packed which means citrus consignments now have to be trucked to Durban and Cape Town for export. The extra costs and delays notwithstanding, these ports are, in turn, under mounting pressure and it is our real concern that the South African shipping system is in danger of imploding.

The world citrus market is a competitive place where quality, reliability and reputation are paramount. Together with government, our industry has worked tirelessly for years to achieve a position of prominence and respect worldwide. But we need to guard it fiercely and developments like these pose a real and imminent threat.

Whilst Minister Patel is a supporter of our industry and jobs, he also has a lifetime of experience in the labour movement. We believe he can help find a way through this issue and we call on him to help resolve this matter in Cabinet with urgent speed.

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