



# KEEPING IT FRESH



**News from the FPEF – 25 March 2026**

## *Dear FPEF Members,*

We are still in the process of fully quantifying the cost of the past deciduous season, and the picture that is emerging is sobering. Logistics inefficiencies at a critical time once again eroded value across the chain - from growers to exporters - with missed sailings, increased costs, quality issues and reputational damage in key markets. While there were pockets of improvement, the season reinforced a hard reality: operational instability at our ports continues to undermine the competitiveness of South African fresh produce at the very moment we should be consolidating and growing market share.

Compounding this, the escalating conflict in Iran has introduced a new layer of uncertainty into already fragile global supply chains. Disruptions in key maritime routes, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, have constrained shipping capacity, increased costs, and created volatility in both logistics and market demand. The knock-on effects - from higher fuel prices to reduced buying power in affected markets - are already being felt, and the situation remains fluid.

For our industry, this is a stark reminder that resilience is no longer optional; it must be built deliberately into how we operate, diversify routes, and engage with global partners in an increasingly uncertain environment.



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**Re-drafting of Export Agent Rules**

We want to thank all the members who attended and participated in the four events held over the past two months to finalise the new export agent rules. The public participation process has now been concluded and the Department of Agriculture and APAC are finalising the reports that the Minister requires to gazette the rules. The officials confirmed that the Minister is eager to conclude this matter and we hope that it will be finalised in the next month.

Although the process was costly and time consuming, we are grateful for the hard work of the APAC board committee and the assistance from Luzanne Brink at Cluver Markotter, to draft a set of rules that is practical, implementable and fair and represents the issues affecting the export industry. The fact that we were able to draft the rules in conjunction with APAC has paved the way for future collaborations, especially while we now focus our attention to the new Agricultural Produce Agent Act that APAC and the DoA are drafting.

**Unregistered Export Agents**

As you know all entities acting as export agents as defined by the Agricultural Produce Agents Act, 12 of 1992, are required to register as such with APAC. The FPEF has continuously requested APAC to act against unregistered export agents who are actively exporting fresh produce in contravention of the Act’s requirements. We are happy to report that the Registrar is taking action against such exporters, and we request that our members report any exporters that they suspect are not registered to us or APAC in order that the appropriate steps are taken against them. APAC has a complete list of registered agents on their website and we urge members to check the status of any person acting as an agent prior to engaging with them.

**TRANSFORMATION: JOHANNES BRAND**

**Transformation – FPEF Graduate Placement Programme**

The 2026 FPEF graduate placement programme is off to a good start. So far this year, eight graduates have been placed at FPEF member companies.

Through the programme high-calibre black graduates are placed taking up diverse roles across commercial, logistics, post-harvest technical, and data science functions. As the appointed service provider, Agrijob manages recruitment for the programme and provides a consistently high level of service. To support successful placements, the FPEF covers the recruitment fees and contributes R6 250 per month towards each graduate’s salary for the first twelve months of employment.

Agrijob have many high-calibre graduates

available on their books and if you would like to find out more or appoint a graduate through the programme please contact Johannes Brand at [johannes@fpef.co.za](mailto:johannes@fpef.co.za) | 071 688 1888.



### **Citrus Marketing Forum**

The recent FPEF: Citrus Exporters Forum (CEF) provided insight into early market indicators which was presented at the Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF). The CMF was held at the Protea Hotel, Stellenbosch and was the first in-person CMF in many years.

Key outcomes discussed at the CMF:

- For exports, follow the “quality first principle” - Adhere strictly to market-specific quality requirements to prolong season length and maintain trust with buyers.
- Discipline exporting – Strongly consider processing and other alternative options (when feasible) and protect class-1 exports
- Agility and Ad-hoc Adjustments- Be prepared for ad-hoc strategy adjustments due to geopolitical risks, supply chain disruptions and competitor activity (trade diversion) given the recent conflict situation in the Middle East.
- The initial seasonal citrus estimates was presented with the mandarin projections withheld until more information is available to provide an accurate estimate.
- The next CMF will take place 24 April (and on the last Friday each month).
- The long-term citrus estimate model was revised following an alternative approach incorporating more detail to the model. Pack outs percentages remain a key component and so do the impact of netting used during production. The need to eliminate significant fluctuations over time is as important. Volumes must be closely monitored on a weekly basis with significant deviations to ensure a productive season.

### **Industry wide dispensation:**

Given the uncertainty of the recent conflict in the Middle East, the FPEF, in partnership with DoA, was able to obtain an industry wide dispensation for fresh fruit. Initially, permission was granted by the Executive Officer: Agricultural Product Standards in terms of section 4(4) of the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990), to all Producers and Exporters of fresh fruits, to export mangos, citrus fruit, table grapes, pome fruit and stone fruits to specific markets impacted by the Middle East conflict. Subsequently, exports of pomegranate and prickly pears was added to the list supporting diversion on impacted consignments. For more information, please contact the FPEF.



### **Port of Cape Town**

Efforts to address the ongoing challenges at the Cape Town Container Terminal remain a key priority. Agbiz is progressing with its PAIA application as part of a broader process to build a credible evidence base to take the matter forward, while the FPEF continues to engage constructively with Transnet Port Terminals and other stakeholders at both operational and strategic levels. These engagements are focused not only on stabilising current performance but, importantly, on driving the systemic changes required to improve reliability, transparency, and accountability over the longer term.

### **Logistics Board Committee**

We would like to thank the members who participated in the recent Logistics Board Committee Workgroup meeting where policy and operational matters were discussed and pain points listed. The outcomes from this workshop will drive our strategy and focus and we have already started implementing some of them.

### **Pre-season visit to the Eastern Cape**

FPEF joined CGA in a pre-season meeting with Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) Eastern Cape Regional Executive and Terminal managers last week.

Discussions centred around collaboration and communication with a few items to be noted;

- Additional plug capacity is planned for the season at both NCT (350) and PECT (120 plugs) which would be 7 generators in total. The NCT reefer stack is far from the quay side and the generators will be placed closer to the vessels. The added benefit is that truck moves will be spread over a larger area and allow for improved fluidity.
- The 12 new straddle carriers for PECT will arrive in June and then be commissioned and likely have limited impact on the season.
- In previous seasons, transshipment reefers stayed in the terminals for prolonged periods of time, thereby reducing plug capacity. TPT advised that storage costs for transshipment reefers will increase after 7 days but there is no limitation on volume.
- NCT is currently using Moormaster (magnetic fenders) to keep vessels stable along side. TNPA requested that terminal management start removing the 15 magnetic fenders from the quay wall, starting at the end of April and expect to finish by October. The terminal will engage shipping lines as not to disrupt vessel operations. The Moormaster will be replaced by shore tensioners.
- Deal party rail volumes increased from 450FEU in 2024, to 1500FEU in 2025 and this will increase further this year.
- Terminals are carrying out maintenance plans, at PECT the second Ship to Shore (STS) crane refurbishment will commence towards end April. The NCT Ship to Shore crane refurbishment will not start this year but likely early next year as the project is in the award stage. CGA will keep track of daily equipment availability and publish the stats on their WhatsApp group.
- Terminal management is concerned over the value chain in the Eastern Cape and the PPECB project can assist with visibility and Mitchell Brooke suggested a workgroup to find improvements.

## **Port of Valencia and Spanish citrus matters**

FPEF participated in a discussion with CGA regarding the continued risks for citrus to Spain. The industry remains aligned on the sensitive and evolving dynamics surrounding direct shipments of citrus into Spain, particularly through the Port of Valencia.

While Spain remains an important and strategically relevant market with clear long-term potential, current operational and regulatory conditions continue to present elevated and, at times, unpredictable risks for South African exporters. Recent engagements and industry insights reinforce the need for a cautious and coordinated approach, especially given the broader implications for market access and the potential to inadvertently trigger negative regulatory or political responses .

In this context, and in line with the understanding reached between CGA and FPEF, members are encouraged to carefully consider their routing strategies for the current season, specifically relating to the Port of Valencia. Alternative entry points into Europe that provide more stable and predictable handling environments should be prioritised where possible, with Spain still accessible via established secondary distribution channels. This approach allows us to continue servicing the Spanish market while mitigating unnecessary exposure and protecting the broader industry's interests during a particularly sensitive period.



*Port of Valencia*

Until next time,

***Piet***



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