



KEEPING IT FRESH

fpef
fresh produce
EXPORTERS' FORUM
SOUTH AFRICA

News from the FPEF – 14 May 2025

Dear FPEF Members,

As you know, the trading environment is becoming increasingly complex and challenging. While the FPEF cannot dictate when, where, or whether you should export, we are actively engaged in identifying and addressing key industry challenges. Our role is to support you by providing timely, relevant information and by working to create a more enabling environment — helping you make more informed decisions in a fast-changing landscape.

Some of the important matters:

USA Tariffs: 90-day extension for implementing 30% tariffs on imported goods from South Africa

We have pointed out that in the case of fresh fruit exports (especially Western Cape citrus at this time), decisions must be taken at the latest 60 days before implementation of the 30% due to transit times. The matter is addressed jointly with **Agbiz, BUSA and other affected industries**. It includes meetings on **Ministerial level** with the **dtic, Department of Agriculture** as well as with the **Premier of the Western Cape**.

Our membership of **IFPA** (International Fresh Produce Association), which is headquartered in the USA, is also being utilised to gain information.



Market Access

China:

The **Chinese Government and commercial sector** are taking a bigger interest in importing South African fresh fruit. This is evident in recent meetings which took place with the **Chinese Ambassador and staff** as well as the visit by the **China Wholesale Markets Association (CAWA)**. We delivered the opening address and a presentation on our industry at an engagement with CAWA in Pretoria on **12 May**. A **MoU** (Memorandum of Understanding) has been signed between **CAWA and Fruit SA**. The essence of the MoU is to enhance business opportunities for both sides. Of particular interest for the FPEF is the support of events such as trade shows.

Middle East:

We have provided strategic and trade information for **Minister Steenhuisen** for his visit to the **UAE**.

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Market Access

Provide Information

Government Engagement

Transformation

Export process assistance

Research, Development and Innovation

The SADC region

Agbiz's Chief Economist, Wandile Sihlobo, recently said that ***“South Africa must firm up its agricultural trade approach and minimize friction”*** and stated that the Southern Africa region is a key market for South Africa's agricultural growth prospects and that South Africa must always seek to resolve diplomatically any challenges and promote stability in this region (with reference to recent border closures for South African fresh produce by Namibia and Botswana).

Employment Equity Regulations

The Department of Employment and Labour has officially repealed the 2014 Employment Equity Regulations and replaced them with updated 2025 regulations. These new regulations are legally binding and apply to all **designated employers**—defined as ***those with 50 or more employees or those otherwise designated by agreement.***

Under the revised framework, employers are now required to implement **five-year Employment Equity Plans (EEPs) covering the period from 2025 to 2030**. These plans must align with sectoral targets as published by the Minister of Employment and Labour. Employers must set annual targets for all designated groups, including persons with disabilities, across all occupational levels to ensure progressive transformation within their organizations.



In terms of compliance reporting, all designated employers must continue submitting Employment Equity Reports (EEA2 and EEA4 forms) annually between 1 September and 15 January. Importantly, first-time designated employers will not be evaluated against targets during their initial reporting cycle, giving them time to establish baseline data and systems.

The regulations also reinforce the principle of **equal pay for work of equal value**. Employers are now required to critically assess and correct any unjustifiable pay disparities, particularly those based on race, gender, or disability. Variations in pay are only acceptable when grounded in objective and fair criteria such as seniority, performance, or scarce skills.

An Employment Equity Compliance Certificate remains a prerequisite for all businesses seeking to contract with the state. To qualify, employers must be fully compliant with both the Employment Equity Act and the National Minimum Wage Act. Certificates are valid for 12 months. Non-compliance may result in certificate withdrawal, which could lead to reputational damage and lost commercial opportunities.



Export Directory

The FPEF Export Directory is now also available in Mandarin on our website, www.fpef.co.za

The Regulatory Environment

We are closely involved in legislation, rules and regulations which do, and have the potential to affect our industry. We ensure that our industry's "voice is heard. Recent examples are:

Merchant Shipping Bill



The **Merchant Shipping Bill 2024** in South Africa is currently undergoing public review and is awaiting further legislative action. The **National Assembly's Transport Committee** reopened the public comment period after the Bill lapsed following the 2024 elections and the deadline for submissions was April 25, 2025. The Bill seeks more 'coherently' to reflect South Africa's obligations under the International Maritime Organisation conventions ratified since 1951, when the Merchant Shipping Act came into force. This Act will eventually be repealed.

The Bill seeks:

- to provide for the powers and duties of the Minister and the South African Maritime Safety Authority in the administration of this Act
- to provide for the registration, permitting, and licensing of ships and the establishment and operation of a shipping information centre in the Republic

SARS matters impacting fruit exports - The potential withdrawal of Customs and Excise Concessions

For more than 20 years, several industries were granted conditional concessions to the statutory compliance requirements as per the **Customs and Excise Act 91 of 1964**. Industries, such as the fruit and wine sectors, are diverse in nature and present a high degree of complexity in their supply chains to comply with specific elements of custom regulation.

One concern was that fruit and wine exporters faced challenges in complying with the submission of the export bill of entry under section 38(3)(a) of the Act. Under this section an export bill of entry must be submitted before the goods are delivered to the port authority, a depot operator, the master of the ship concerned or a container operator.

A list of concessions was thus compiled by SARS with the aim of ensuring trade continuity. The list of concessions remains in effect since its published release on 27th February 2007. In March 2025, SARS indicated their intention to potentially withdraw the **Customs and Excise Concessions**.

The FPEF submitted written comments to SARS before the due date of 23 April, on the potential withdrawal of the Customs and Excise Concessions. The FPEF and SAAFF are exploring the establishment of a workgroup to investigate how the export concessions could be incorporated into legislative amendments. The FPEF is awaiting feedback from SARS regarding our formal submission and proposed actions on the way forward.

Apple Exports to China - Labelling requirement

The FPEF identified the need for alignment in compliance to the bilateral protocol signed during the market access of South African apples to China. The aim was to reiterate and harmonise the bilateral protocol and specifically the labelling requirement across the supply chain.

Please use the following label/sticker with the correct Chinese symbols, on all apple consignments presented for inspection.



The Department of Agriculture and/or PPECB will only accept the attached sticker on apple exports to China.

Kindly make sure to use the correct Chinese symbols as per updated one pager circulated to industry in April.

Table Grape Special Market Registration

The eCert Team will host a webinar for producers, exporters, pack house managers and logistics service providers in terms of Table Grapes Special Markets Registration for the 2025/2026. Webinar that provides a refresher for registration on the PhytClean Version 2 platform.

Details of the virtual webinar is as follows:

Date: 20 May 2025

Time: 9 am - 11 am

Venue: Online via Microsoft Teams (MS Teams)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 368 343 086 930 2

Passcode: xt2bo2TD



Deciduous season “Wrap-up” event regarding Logistics

Meetings with Transnet to wrap-up and evaluate the past deciduous export season and to plan for the citrus season took place recently. The deciduous wrap up session served as the starting point for 25/26 deciduous season planning session.

The deciduous grouping met with the **Western Cape Terminal management and Western Cape Government** to review the past season, discussing successes, pain points and priorities. Planning for the next season will start earlier this year, and it was agreed to workshop four main topics that will eventually be driven by work groups that will provide feed back to the management team.



1. Planning tool – Crickmay and SATI grape model
2. Late Arrivals and stack extension
3. Booking System
4. Import and Empties – adding retailers to the conversation

Assembly of the new **Rubber Tyre Gantries are progressing well at CTCT** and whereas the original plan was to have nine operational by the next deciduous season, the terminal has set an ambitious target to increase the number of operations RTG's prior to the start of the season. The new RTG's can work up to **90 km/hour** compared to current machinery that slows at 72km/hr. Cape Town on average loses 30% of productive time during the deciduous season and we look forward to the findings of the CSIR wind study and the reduction of lost time the new equipment will offer us.

The terminal will provide feedback on the generator usage during the past season, lessons learnt and areas that can be improved upon. **Oscar Borchards** shared that the two reefer stack setup impacts productivity and the aim is to have a permanent third reefer stack going forward. An investigation is underway to determine the ideal location of the reefer stack as well as power requirements.

Request for Information (RFI)



Mr Ngwako Makaepea chaired the RFI clarification session in April 2025

The **Department of Transport** has gone out to market with a **Request for Information (RFI)** that is an information gathering and market testing process. At the launch of the RFI, **Minister Creecy** said, ***“It (the RFI) will enable us to articulate the challenges in a structured and coherent way, clearly defining their scope, context, and impact to inform the development of focused, strategic, and sustainable solutions.”*** She further encouraged Fruit SA members to participate in the RFI process to ensure industry needs are understood.



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The input will be used to develop a commonly agreed **Framing Problem Statement** (FPS) that will assist in preparing the design of a policy-aligned programme of one or more PSP projects for procurement. It is not the commencement of the procuring procedure.

The **Intermodal Supply Chain PSP Project** focused on the container and automotive sectors, including the potential designation of the South African container port system as a regional transshipment hub for major shipping lines. This includes the port, container and automotive port terminals, back of-port arrangements, and railway and inland terminals for the Gauteng—Durban port (KZN), Gauteng—Eastern Cape (East London, Port Elizabeth, Ngqura), and Gauteng—Western Cape (Cape Town) corridors.

The Department of Transport is mandated to create a dedicated **Public Sector Participation** (PSP) unit to enhance state capacity and provide support to Transnet and PRASA in the procurement of potential PSP projects. The Department is in the final stages of concluding a Memorandum of Agreement with the **Development Bank of Southern Africa** (DBSA) and the **National Treasury**, appointing DBSA as the hosting institution for the Unit. We have set up an interim PSP Unit within the Department, comprising a team with extensive expertise in structuring PSP contracts and procurement. In collaboration with Transnet, the interim PSP Unit has developed the Rail Freight and Port RFIs.

Due to the volume of queries, a clarification session was hosted on the 24th of April which attracted 180 participants from all over the world.

The freight rail and ports RFI's launched on the 23rd of April was initially scheduled to close on the 9th of May at 18:00 but has been extended to the **30th of May 2025**.

TRANSFORMATION

Stellenbosch University Post-Graduate Agricultural Economics Speed Networking Event

On **April 16th**, the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum (FPEF) joined a **dynamic speed networking event** hosted for post-graduate **Agricultural Economics students** at **Stellenbosch University**. There was a vibrant atmosphere as students connected with industry professionals, exploring a wide range of exciting career opportunities. Lively Q&A sessions showcased the students' enthusiasm and curiosity, making it a powerful platform for learning, networking, and future possibilities.

Until next time,
Anton Kruger

