

Sea traffic re-routed from Red Sea leaves mark on South Africa's port operations and the environment

# Final citrus exports held back by wind, distressed vessels

Many citrus exporters from the Eastern Cape hope to finish off the season by the end of the month; it's "chaos" at the two ports serving this province, Port Elizabeth and Ngqura, after a particularly fierce winter resulting in various oil spills along the South African coast and cargo losses (<https://gcaptain.com/cargo-losses-surge-off-south-african-coast-amid-red-sea-rerouting/>). The container ship MSC Apollo leaked oil close to penguin colonies and the vessel is currently taking up a valuable berth at the Ngqura Container Terminal.

More than living up to its name, the Cape of Storms has led to a number of distressed vessels being rescued by South African authorities this winter. "The surge in cargo loss incidents coincides with an increase in ships rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid Houthi attacks in the Red Sea," writes Mike Schuler in gCaptain (<https://gcaptain.com/oil-spill-in-south-africa-msc-containership-under-investigation-as-wildlife-impact-assessed/>).

## Eastern Cape cold stores "bursting at the seams"

"It's total chaos here," says an exporter based in the Eastern Cape. "Every cold store is bursting at the seams because we can't load out at the tempo it's coming in."

Cold stores in the nearby apple and pear-producing Langkloof are a back-up to cold stores in the Gamtoos and Sundays River Valley.



"Last week we couldn't load out from the Eastern Cape, and we had to catch up over the weekend. Today the ports are windbound again for the third day running, so at this rate we'll be loading out this weekend again. If we can't load out a large volume of citrus this weekend, we might have to move volumes to the Langkloof next week, which is terribly costly."

There's less pressure on the port of Cape Town where, despite another distressed vessel taking up berth space, the weather is calm and fruit is being steadily loaded out.

### **30% drop in national volumes**

The national citrus crop was lighter by a third, short on nearly everything except late mandarins, remarks an exporter in Cape Town.

Citrus black spot persuaded many to send their oranges for processing rather, avoiding exporting costs and risks and taking advantage of the high orange juice prices, which has had an impact on export volumes.

Many exporters have expressed their difficulty in filling their orders this season, while local consumers, too, are seeing fewer oranges on the shelves.

Fortunately, the Eastern Cape exporter remarks, the issues with uncharacteristically low acid levels of acid, plaguing widespread citrus-growing areas this season across the country, are not present on the Midnights and Valencias which they are currently packing.

Publication date: Thu 12 Sep 2024

Author: Carolize Jansen

© FreshPlaza.com

•

