

# MEDIA RELEASE



## Port of PE – making its mark in the bumper fruit season – despite Covid

**[Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 7 September 2020]** In the midst of the record citrus export season, Transnet National Ports Authority's (TNPA) Nelson Mandela Bay ports have successfully complemented the Port of Cape Town, which was negatively affected by COVID-19. Apart from handling the fruit at the Port of PE's breakbulk facilities, the two Eastern Cape ports' container terminals estimate to handle more than 460 000 pallets by the end of the fruit season. Despite the Covid pandemic, what has contributed to the Port of PE's success?

Sujit Bhagattjee (New Business Development Manager), together with Marine Operations and the Harbour Master, spearheaded a request from the shipping lines for fruit to be handled at the port's Multi-Purpose Terminal. This resulted in the Perishable Products Exports Control Board (PPECB) giving their stamp of approval. The port's customer-centric and flexible approach accommodated an increased number of vessels handled.

The Port of PE has additionally seen the resurgence of palletised fruit, mainly at the Multi-Purpose Terminal, due to a worldwide shortage of reefer containers and also some of the receiving ports in the world using older technology. During the Covid pandemic and the citrus export season, the Port Elizabeth Container Terminal has once again proven its strategic importance to the complementary South African container terminal system in supporting the SA economy.

### Compliance and capacity

"Our COVID-19 compliance and available capacity played a major role in our success. The port firstly addressed the COVID-19 impact by introducing standard operating procedures, granting clearance on a per shipment basis. The port had to ensure that the shipping lines, vessel agents and terminal operators are fully compliant in terms of the COVID-19 protocols. This effort has ensured that the Port of PE has not turned away any vessel to date," said Sujit.

"We also focused on the importance of sound infrastructure, equipment and human capital. These include power and additional plug points in the container terminal, the capacity of the two new mobile cranes as well as the health and safety of our people. TNPA and its terminal operators continued to comply with all standard COVID-19 preventative measures as guided by the Department of Health."

The fruit season is expected to continue until week 40 that ends in September, with the possibility of extension due to demand from European markets.

### Five focus areas

The Port of PE's approach is proactive, customer-centric and caring, aimed at five key focus areas.

1. **Customer service** - Engagements with key stakeholders such as customers, shipping lines, vessels agents, sea rescue, SAMSA, SAASOA, port tenants, the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber and Exporters EC. The port's Joint Operations Centre started issuing daily communication on the status of vessels to all stakeholders.
2. **People** - The port activated its Business Continuity Process (BCP) since 16 March with the main aim of addressing the safety and wellbeing of its workforce, ensuring uninterrupted service to customers.
3. **Asset utilisation** - Ophelia Shabane (Marine Operations Manager) continued to ensure that the tug fleet and berthing crew was manned to serve customers, despite COVID-19 challenges. The slipway has been optimally used for minor boat repairs and surveys during the closure of the fishing season.
4. **Safety** - The port implemented temperature checks and health declarations at its entrances. Thermal health scanners are used to improve accuracy for the safety of all port users.
5. **Cost control** - Covid-19 and the new normal has resulted in us working smarter, more efficient and keeping a watchful eye on expenditure. We are working closely with our customers towards business recovery.

**Ends**

**Photo gallery:**



Sujit Bhagattjee



Ophelia Shabane



An aerial view of the Port of PE.

### **About Transnet National Ports Authority**

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) is one of five operating divisions of Transnet SOC Ltd. The National Ports Authority is responsible for the safe, effective and efficient economic functioning of the national port system, which it manages in a landlord capacity. It provides port infrastructure and marine services at the eight commercial seaports in South Africa – Richards Bay, Durban, Saldanha, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mossel Bay and Ngqura. It operates within a legislative and regulatory environment and is governed by the National Ports Act (Act No. 12 of 2005). For more information visit [www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net](http://www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net).

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#### **Issued by:**

Zinhle Small  
Acting Corporate Affairs Manager  
Transnet National Ports Authority  
Tel: 041 507 1872  
Cell: 082 450 2027  
[Zinhle.Small@transnet.net](mailto:Zinhle.Small@transnet.net)

#### **On behalf of:**

Rajesh Dana  
Port Manager – Port of Port Elizabeth  
Transnet National Ports Authority