

Cape Town port cuts vessel waiting times by 61% ahead of fruit season

Transport Minister Barbara Creecy announces that the Port of Cape Town has recorded significant operational improvements ahead of the 2026/27 deciduous fruit export season, including faster truck turnaround times, stronger rail performance and a sharp reduction in vessel waiting times.

The port handles around 80% of South Africa's deciduous fruit exports, covering citrus, table grapes, apples, pears and stone fruit. Creecy made the announcement at an engagement with the fresh produce industry on Tuesday, reporting that container volumes at the Cape Town container terminal rose 16% in the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year compared with the same period last year.



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Average truck turnaround time improved to 39.9 minutes, with year-to-date truck turnaround performance improving by 35%. Rail performance improved by 82%, while average vessel waiting time fell from 115 hours to 44.3 hours. Container terminal ship turnaround time improved from 103 hours in 2023/24 to 55 hours year-to-date in the 2026/27 financial year, and average vessel anchorage waiting time improved 65% over the past four financial years.

Creecy says: "These improvements reflect enhanced terminal handling rates and a reduction in marine-related delays."

All 28 new rubber-tyred gantry cranes at the Cape Town container terminal are now operational. Four additional straddle carriers received in June have completed endurance testing and been approved for operation. Ten permanently deployed shore tension units have reduced long-wave-related downtime at the terminal by 92% since 2023/24.

Preparations for the fruit export season include ensuring sufficient reefer plug-point capacity and infrastructure to maintain the cold chain while export cargo is held at the terminal. Transnet is working with the industry on vessel planning, cargo deliveries, stack management and recovery measures in the event of weather-related disruptions.

Extended periods of windbound conditions remain a particular risk for Cape Town. Transnet Port Terminals is incorporating coordinated recovery measures into its planning, including reviewing vessel and berth schedules, adjusting reefer stack dates where operationally feasible and aligning cargo deliveries with revised operating windows. Transnet Port Terminals is also exploring the use of Belcon, or another suitable intermediary facility, to temporarily store export reefer containers and move them by rail into the Cape Town Container Terminal.

Nine of the 11 terminals at the Port of Cape Town are privately operated. Requests for proposals have been issued for a multipurpose terminal and a floating dock facility as part of a broader push to use private-sector participation to modernise infrastructure and unlock additional capacity.

Creecy says: "Every participant has a role to play in ensuring the steady movement of cargo from farms and packhouses, through the port, and onwards to international markets."

Creecy adds: "The focus now is on sustaining the gains already achieved, applying lessons from the previous season and continuing to address remaining constraints."

Source: [businessday.co.za](https://www.businessday.co.za) (<https://www.businessday.co.za/news/2026-08-13-cape-town-port-performance-improves-before-fruit-export-season/>)

Publication date: Fri 14 Aug 2026

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