

Special Export Programme, Japan



A visit to Khold Durban Terminal was a stark reminder of complexities in the citrus logistics chain. By **Tanya Ungerer**



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Faaisal Asmal, a Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) staff member overseeing inspection and shipping for the Japan Special Exports Programme (SEP), arranged an educational visit for some of the CGA office staff. The goal of the trip was to showcase the ins and outs of the inspection process, as well as witness the loading of citrus onto a specialised reefer vessel. Khold Durban Terminal (previously known as Maydon Wharf Fruit Terminal) is where the inspection takes place for citrus destined for Japan.

Exports to Japan are subject to a strict protocol and Trilateral Agreement between the Japanese, South African and Eswatini governments. The protocol is designed to ensure that all fruit exported to Japan complies with relevant phytosanitary requirements, therefore all exporters must adhere to it to be able to export fruit to Japan. The Trilateral Agreement provides for the exchange of information between the three countries, the promotion of trade, and the settlement of disputes between them.

It also outlines a framework for cooperation between the three countries.

Every season, all growers' PUCs (Production Unit Codes) need to be registered for the programme before it commences. As part of the programme, Japanese officials are welcomed in SA prior to the start of the season to verify and conduct audits of all related facilities in the different provinces. This exercise helps to ensure that all exporting growers adhere to the phytosanitary requirements. The audits also ensure that export facilities are compliant with relevant regulations, and ready for the current season. The outcome is based on exports the previous year, as well as the general cleanliness and readiness of the facilities. Once the audit is approved, fruit inspections take place with 2% samples. These inspections are conducted by DALRRD (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development) officials at the ports (Durban FPT and MFT, Cape Town FCF, and Gqeberha PECS). All passed fruit is put under cooling at -0.1°C or colder, for a minimum of 72 hours before loading it onto the ships. The fruit is then subjected to a strict sterilisation process for 12 consecutive days at a temperature of -0.1°C or colder.

Subsequently, the fruit is loaded into containers or breakbulk vessels for export to Japan. All loading, calibration, and temperature levels of containers and vessels are strictly monitored by PPECB (Perishable Product Export Control Board) and DALRRD officials, to ensure proper handling and quality. Among the citrus fruits that are allowed to be exported to Japan are oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and Clementines. The CGA manages the SA-Japan SEP on behalf of South African growers. Unlike other markets, grapefruit comprises the biggest volume of citrus exports to Japan.

The CGA staff were warmly welcomed

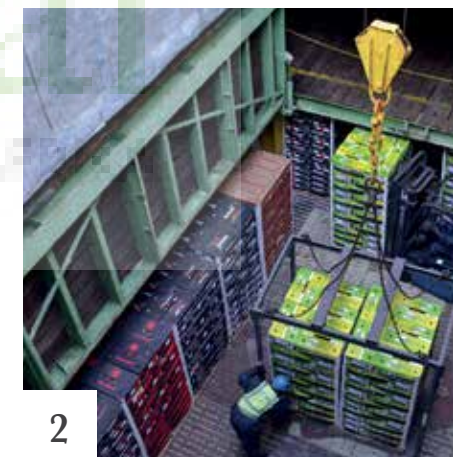


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on board the Green Italia, where Captain Waldemar Gozdziejewicz and Chief Officer Igor Shapovalov took them on a tour of the vessel. They explained every part of the ship in great detail and answered all of the questions. The Green Italia was the third vessel to arrive to collect exports destined for Japan, and loading was completed on Saturday 3 June.

The CGA team immersed themselves in this change of scenery, watching in awe as pallets were swiftly moved from the cold storage and placed on the quayside, ready for the crane to hoist them onto the ship where the temperature was strictly controlled. The pallets were then stacked from the bottom deck up. The process was efficient, and the pallets were quickly secured in their place. The number of hatches on these vessels can range from three to six, depending on the size of the vessel.

The image of the forklifts zipping around the cold storage facility is strikingly similar to the way bees move around in a hive, never colliding with each other. As the crane loads the pallets into the hatch of the ship, one can almost envision a large robot gathering small boxes and delicately placing them into its maw. It's scenes like this that make educational outings so impactful, allowing us to gain a more in-depth understanding of the industry. 🐝



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