

Delivering SADC produce for international export

With Zambia and Zimbabwe entering the international fruit export market, reliable freight forwarding services have become essential, given the fragile nature of the consignments.



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"The first consignment of grapes from Lusaka to South Africa rather surprised us," says Ruth Butcher, sales and marketing director for Beyond Africa Logistics Consultants, which assisted Zambian grape farmers export their crop to an elite supermarket chain in the UK and Zimbabwean citrus farmers with their orange crops to Holland. "We don't think of Zambia as a grape producing country but it had successfully signed up a contract for the UK in 2012 and we were delighted to be called upon to quote for the new contract."

The company has been contracted for more loads later this year.

One of the biggest challenges the company faced in transporting the fruit was ensuring that the processes all happened as timeously and effectively as possibly.

"We had to make sure that once the cargo was packed into pallets, they were loaded onto the trucks as soon as possible and moved quickly. The 24 MT trial load was extremely successful and the grapes were delivered without incident," adds Michelle du Toit, operations director. "The grapes are moved via refrigerated container (reefer) trucks to Cape Town from where they are sent to Europe. It took three days from date of loading to offloading in Cape Town by road via Zimbabwe."

Adding to its experience in perishable loads, Beyond Africa Logistics Consultants has become one of the freight forwarders for a citrus farm, some 60km from Beit Bridge on the Zimbabwe side. The farm is known to export at least 18,000 MT of oranges per season to Holland.

"These oranges are loaded directly onto flat deck trucks (no refrigeration required), as the distance from the farm to Durban is not that far and there is only one border pass. From there they are offloaded directly into cold storage ready for export. We must have moved approx 2000 MT of citrus this year and next year, we plan on moving a lot more," concludes du Toit.

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