

# SPOTLIGHT ON THE PORT OF ANTWERP



The Port of Antwerp was proud to be this year's host Port for the fourth edition of the Cool Logistics Global Conference, which welcomed some 200 representatives from blue-chip organizations from 26 countries around the world. Under the main theme, "Collaborative Planning — Managing The Upswing," participants were given the opportunity to attend different workshops, listen to an impressive number

of informative presentations by high-level speakers and share market- and supply-chains topics with each other. Additionally, there were ample networking opportunities and events to encourage development and cooperation along the supply chain, and to secure the flow of fresh products from producer to end customer.

## Perishables: A Growth Sector With Specific Challenges And Opportunities

The global trade of fruit and perishable cargo is expected to continue to grow on the short-, medium- and long-term, driven by an impressive growth in world population, changing diets (especially in Asia and Middle East due to increased income resulting in more sophisticated menus) and the logistic ability to meet this increased demand. Specifically, the seaborne trade of fruit and perishables is expected to increase nearly 30 percent in the coming five years, despite growing pressure for local sourcing and the necessity to substantially reduce global carbon footprint. This trend, combined with stricter regulations to control and safeguard the food chain has its consequences, and in a world that seems to become more and more complex, the importance of engineering the optimal supply chains to secure steady, efficient and sustainable flows cannot be overestimated.

With a closer investigation, it becomes clear that Antwerp is well suited for this purpose. Historically, Antwerp has always been an important European gateway for fruit and perishable cargos of all nature, and can boast to be the leading banana port of the world. It has a proven track record in inbound and outbound cool logistics and is an excellent one-stop-shop for all types of products, including not only fresh fruit and vegetables, but also meat and poultry, fish and seafood, dairy products and chocolates.

Apart from being the first conventional port, it is the second largest container-port in all of Europe, and can handle both specialized reefer vessels and container-vessels at state-of-the-art — and often automated — terminals with the highest performance.

Furthermore, Antwerp's strategic location makes it the perfect gateway to the European hinterland. All types of fresh cargo can arrive quickly and in good condition to the end customer thanks to the extensive road, rail and barge network. Other key factors of success are the numerous operators and service providers; extensive warehouse and efficient distribution capacity; highly skilled labor force and specialists



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know-how; and finally a wide range of added value services, not only the self-evident logistic services, but also those such as quality control, sorting, ripening, order-picking, re-packaging, etc.

Antwerp is motivated to further increase its market share in fruit and perishables, especially in light of the aforementioned future growth of seaborne trade. Ports play a crucial role in bringing perishables to customers the reliable way, every day, and the Port of Antwerp has taken a number of specific actions to improve its position:

- The creation of APCS (Antwerp Port Communication System) earlier this year further improves electronic communication in the Port and allows the alignment of the information flow with the physical flow, which is crucial to excellent supply chain management
- An integrated border inspection at one single location was recently implemented, leading to higher efficiency, reduced lead-times and avoidance of multi-stops. The resulting cost-savings will allow the Port Authority to decrease the inspection costs by 25 percent in favor of the shippers.
- The recent appointment of three new regional representatives in South America to target perishable cargos to the European Union
- The creation of an Expertise Centre Fruit & Perishables that combines the expertise and efforts of the Antwerp Port Community and will focus on new trades, challenges and opportunities in order to attract new business through our port.

Cool Logistics 2011 turned out to be a great event, and the Port of Antwerp is already looking forward to next year's edition, which will take place from September 24 to 26th at the Antwerp Crowne Plaza Hotel. See you there!

By Wim Dillen

Senior business development manager, Antwerp Port Authority, based in Antwerp, Belgium