

LEADING GATEWAY FOR FRESH FRUIT IMPORTS

Anticipates Another Busy Chilean Season

On December 16, the Port of Wilmington welcomed the start of a busy Chilean fruit season with the arrival of the *M/V Supreme Harvest* carrying the first shipment of winter fruit. Wilmington, Delaware is the nation's leading gateway for imports of fresh fruit and produce and one of the major U.S. ports to receive Chilean fruit.

"We anticipate a very busy season with increased volumes of Chilean grapes and other deciduous fruits discharged via weekly vessel calls through the end of April," said Adam McBride, Executive Director of DSPC.

Wilmington is the preferred port-of-call for many of Chile's largest fruit exporters and shipping groups, including Pacific Seaways and Dole Fresh Fruit Company. During the 2002 season, Wilmington handled 150,000 tons of winter fruit. This season, Wilmington expects to receive nearly 200,000 tons of table grapes and stone fruits from the Chilean ports of Valparaiso, Coquimbo and Caldera.

This increased volume is attributed to Chile's favorable growing season this year and the addition of new shippers. Chilean farmers enjoyed fair weather which produced a bountiful harvest throughout the country.

New fruit exporters are coming to Wilmington because of its reputation for service, its state-of-the-art facilities and its excellent transportation infrastructure.

Pro-Fruit, a Chilean fruit importer, has recently chosen to open an operations and marketing office at the Port of Wilmington and ship its cargo on Pacific Seaways' weekly sailings from Chile. Pro-Fruit will send two-thirds of its imports through Wilmington this year, significantly contributing to the increased volume of Chilean fruit at the Port.

Pro-Fruit decided to use Wilmington as its distribution center in the Mid-Atlantic region after successfully handling smaller shipments at the Port over the past few years. "We were very satisfied with the advantages of the Port's modern cold storage facility and its excellent location for distribution of our products," said Pro-Fruit Vice President Lance Nelsen. Pro-Fruit has been marketing Chilean and Argentine fruit since 1998.

"We are ready," exclaimed DSPC Director of Operations Fred Fitzgerald. "As a strategic distribution center for Chilean fruit for the entire U.S. East Coast, we have prepared the Port's refrigerated warehouses

and cargo handling equipment to move and store our customer's cargoes. Our service department is prepared to load and dispatch a record number of trucks."

Fitzgerald is proud of the efficient service his experienced warehouse and customer service staff provide for the nearly 1,000 trucks per day that load cargo at the Port.

This season, all Chilean fruit entering the Port will be tracked utilizing *E-Port* and *E-Loads* – customized, bar code based inventory control and cargo dispatch systems created by First State Innovation (FSI), DSPC's Technology Solutions Department.

E-Port is supported by a wireless communications network that links all the Port's berths and warehouses. It allows Port customers around the world to track the location of their cargo in real-time – from loading in Chile to dispatch from the Port. By utilizing *E-Loads*, importers and buyers are able to manage the precise loadout and distribution of cargo from the Port of Wilmington's refrigerated warehouses to the market via web-based cargo loading instructions.

Port Illustrated is excited about the upcoming Chilean season, and wishes all a bountiful and successful year.

