Temperature controlled services like those provided by East Coast Warehouses are critical in perishable commodities and the exportation trade.

(East Coast Warehouse photo)

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Get ‘em while they’re cold!

By Harrison Donnelly

Ports and their business partners on three coasts are gearing up for intensified competition over the growing and lucrative markets for imported food and other perishable products. Surging consumer demand for year round fresh fruits and vegetables combined with improvements in cold-chain technologies have boosted sales volumes and led to strained capacity at ports. In response, ports and several major

partners with global trade

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Cold chain companies are making major new investments in temperature-controlled capabilities. The BPL providers are also putting together networks of temperature-controlled distribution facilities across the country.

The new projects range from Cool Port, an advanced cold storage and logistics facility in Oakland, CA, to the port of Savannah, GA. whose ambitious expansion plans include perishable exports as well as imports. Less prominent ports of entry such as Laredo, Texas, and Mobile, AL, are also expanding temperature-controlled facilities to capture perishables business.

Meanwhile, traditional perishables powerhouses such as the ports of Philadelphia and Wilmington, Del., are also stepping up their games. Philadelphia’s nearly $1 billion investment in infrastructure includes refrigerated warehousing and distribution capabilities, and the port recently announced the first fresh beef imports from Argentina in nearly two decades.

Wilmington, whose imported perishables represent nearly half of total traffic, has a $500 million expanding plan that includes a major new "refrigerated-centric" container terminal.

"Cool Port sets a new standard for efficiency, food safety and speed in the temperature-controlled and transportation industry."

- Greg Lehmkuhl, Lineage

Fresh produce is in our DNA.

Consumer demand for fresh produce is at an all-time high. Generations of experienced, dedicated workers means we get it to the tables faster and fresher! Centrally located in one of the largest U.S. population centers, PhilaPort is a vital cold chain gateway. We’re home to the nation’s leading buyers, sellers and packing centers. We have ample refrigerated and freezer warehousing including the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market – one of the world’s largest enclosed, secure cold chain produce markets. It all adds up to one East Coast U.S. port determined to change your expectations.
South Atlantic and Gulf ports, we do not see the competitive landscape changing much as a result,” explained a spokesperson for the port of Wilmington, Del. “The decades of experience in handling perishables on the Delaware River, along with its superior location in terms of access to the population dense regions of the mid-Atlantic and Northeast US and Canada will enable the Delaware River’s competitive advantage.”

**Expansions**

Lineage Cool Port Oakland, opened last fall by Lineage Logistics in collaboration with Dreisbach Enterprises, is an advanced storage and transportation hub designed as an international gateway for temperature-controlled cargo. The 280,000 sq. ft. facility has 90 truck dock doors that can send up to 1 million tons of perishable product through the port. “Cool Port sets a new standard for efficiency, food safety and speed in the temperature-controlled and transportation industry,” said Lineage President and CEO Greg Letzmeier, noting that the distribution center offers 20,000 pallet positions, has three blast cells, and includes a 100,000-square-foot, high-cube, multi-temperature storage environment. Cool Port is also significantly reducing truck usage compared to standard temperature-controlled facilities, with up to 36 railcars per day going straight to shipping containers to be loaded on ships, eliminating the need for an intermediate truck transfer. Letzmeier added, “The project is part Lineage’s broader strategy of expansion and acquisition, which has given it a total of 17 automated facilities with more than 80,000 automated pallet positions.”

Another cold chain specialist with active construction and acquisition plans is Amecold, which recently announced plans to build a 15 million sq. ft cold storage facility at Savannah. The company acquired local operator PortFresh Holdings and said it would spend up to $65 million on an additional facility featuring 37,000 pallet positions and blast-freezing capabilities. With an eye to a growing market and economies of scale, Amecold also has undertaken an ambitious acquisition program. This spring, for example, it

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Scanned with CamScanner
Cool Chain gang declare war on waste

Cool Chain Association (CCA) members have shared temperature data from perishable consignments moving from Latin America to the Middle East as part of a scheme aimed at tackling food loss.

Five pallets of berries and connections and track records for them to have confidence in us," said PhilaPort director of marketing Sean F. Mahoney.

The port expects access to the information rich data bank to help develop a "Speed to market is essential. First one in market wins," said Mahoney. "Slow to market is essential. First one out wins." The port has the technology to get the perishable containers off the ship, cleared, through the gate and on to market in a realistic time.

As we improve our infrastructure with the goal of increasing our cargo volumes, we are planning and building with cargo velocity in mind," said Mahoney.

Washington, D.C., officials similarly highlight the competitive advantages created by aspects of their infrastructure. Such aspects include cold-weather-controlled warehouse and fleets of refrigerated trucks, that may not be available at other ports. But they also acknowledge that it has faced challenges.

Logistics, for example, plans a new temperature-controlled facility at the port of Mobile. U.S. Cold Storage now has three refrigerated warehouses in Laredo to serve the fast-growing refrigerated export market from Mexico.

Handling more than $5 million in food and $3 million in produce each year, the Philadelphia port complex has a small-scale operation to handle the volume. In response, officials are undertaking improvements designed to speed perishable shipments, while also counting on the advantages of long-term ties and locations.

"The entire supply chain - from ocean carriers to refrigerated warehouses, freight forwarders to truckers - is comfortable with the Philadelphia-Latin American perishables connection and together we can grow that trade. We have the cultural sensibilities, personal

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