

REPORT
—Shipping

Wilmington invests in client satisfaction

DELAWARE—State-of-the-art cool chain technology is putting the Port of Wilmington ahead of the competition.

by Jeff Long

Collectively, the Delaware River ports constitute one of the largest gateways for imported produce in North America. Deciduous fruit, citrus, table grapes, avocados and tropical fruit all find their way in huge numbers to US and Canadian consumers via Wilmington (Delaware), Gloucester (New Jersey) and Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). With multiple facilities to

choose from, customer service is paramount in terms of retaining and expanding market share.

The Port of Wilmington, in particular, is investing in cutting-edge cool-chain technology to better serve its clientele. "Full service is what we're all about," says Tom

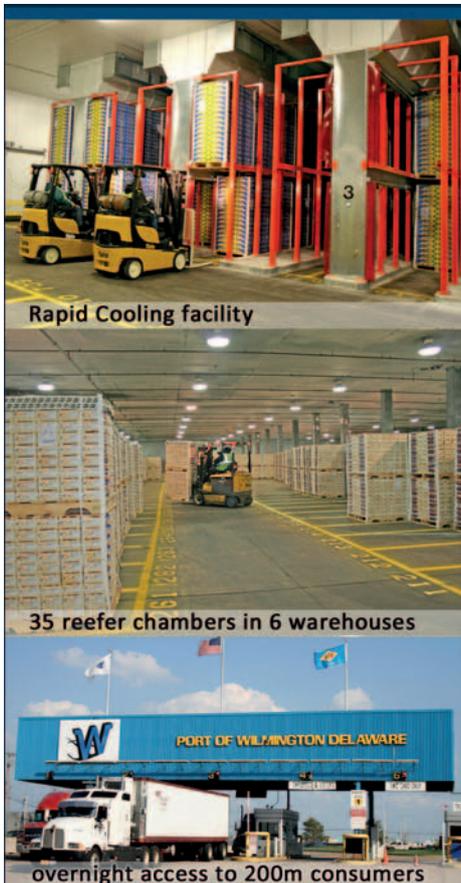
Keefer, the port's deputy executive director. "We make a point of listening to what our customers are telling us and then finding a way to deliver."

One example is the facility's new Rapid Cooling system, which came online last March. With much of the Chilean fresh fruit entering the US required to undergo fumigation at relatively warm temperatures, a concern for exporters is that product quality could be compromised unless quickly re-chilled.

By investing approximately US\$1m in four on-site chambers, Wilmington is now able to rapidly return fruit pulp temperatures to optimal levels in as little as three-and-a-half hours, servicing a minimum of 300 to 400 pallets per day.

Wilmington's state-of-the-art refrigeration warehouses have also enabled Moroccan citrus exporter Fresh Fruit Maroc to begin supplying the US market with clementine mandarin oranges this season.

Utilising its USDA-approved facilities, the port is easily able to meet the strict cold-treatment fumigation protocol of 1.1°C pulp temperatures for 15 days. As a result, Wilmington has seen a nice bump in its Moroccan clementine volume against last year. [A](#)



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1 Hausel Road, Wilmington, DE 19801-5852