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APMT Itajai to double capacity via three new services

Rob Ward, Brazil Special Correspondent | Feb 13, 2018 4:00PM EST

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Brazil's chicken exporters will be among those very pleased to hear about the expansion of services at a key terminal. (Photo credit: Cristiano Andujar.)

Brazilian chicken exporters will be among those who will gain most from the recent resurgence in the fortunes of [APM Terminal Itajai](#) (<https://www.joc.com/port-news/terminal-operators/apm-terminals>), which starting this month will double its container handling with the arrival of three new services.

Monthly throughput will double from about 18,000 TEU to 36,000 TEU with the start, this month, of three services. Two include the Brazex service to the US Gulf and Caribbean — fronted by CMA CGM — and the SamWaf service to South Africa, Congo, and Angola — also operated by CMA CGM (<https://www.joc.com/maritime-news/container-lines/cma-cgm>) along with NileDutch, Safmarine, Maersk Line, Hapag Lloyd (<https://www.joc.com/maritime-news/container-lines/hapag-lloyd>), and Hamburg Süd.

The third new service is a Mercosur trade bloc coastal service — to Argentina and Uruguay from Brazil — belonging to Log-In Logistica, Brazil's last surviving container carrier.

The Brazex service — which called for the first time on Feb. 6 — has switched from Portonave, APM Terminal Itajai's rival across the River Itajai-Açu, which, together with APM Terminal Itajai, forms the Itajai Port Complex (IPC). It offers weekly sailings with rapid transit times of 17 days to Colombia (Cartagena), 20 days to Jamaica (Kingston), and 25 days to the US Gulf ports of New Orleans and Houston. APM Terminal Itajai says the main exports will be reefer cargoes, especially chicken and pork, closely followed by timber and wood products. Maersk Line, Sealand, and Melfi Marine of Panama, are all slot charterers on this service, although none of them for the full rotation, just for various legs of the service.

The addition of these new services, especially the deepsea pair, is a tremendous fillip to APM Terminal Itajai's chicken shippers — of which the largest are BRF, JBS, and Aurora — who will have much better options for their logistics managers, as they plan their assault this year on expanding Brazil's considerable export market. With 4.5 million tonnes (5 million tons) of chicken exported last year, Brazil is the world's largest exporter of the white meat and has held this position since 2004.

For a number of reasons APM Terminal Itajai has been in what seemed like an almost a death-spiral decline over the past few years, partly due to a shortage of berthing capacity and partly due to the continuing growth of Mediterranean Shipping Co.-backed Portonave, its 10-year-old rival located across the River Itajai-Açu in Navegantes, and the emergence of new competition in the guise of Porto Itapoa, about 50 nautical miles away to the north. The shortfall in berthing capacity was due to extreme flooding in 2008 that damaged key quays at the facility, which have taken several years to repair, due to lack of government funding.

According to [Itajai Port Authority](#) (https://www.joc.com/port-news/south-american-ports/itajai-gets-desperately-needed-dredging-funds_20170207.html) (IPA) statistics, APM Terminal Itajai handled only 212,627 TEU last year (up 8 percent from the 196,226 TEU in 2016), but now APM Terminal Itajai looks like it might even register a record year and surpass the previous highest throughput of 416,000 TEU in 2013. The recovering terminal now hosts seven regular services (Maersk Line's ASAS Asia/South Africa service, the NGX service to Asia led by Hapag Lloyd and CMA CGM, Maersk's Bossa Nova service to the Mediterranean, and one Log-In cabotage service to Manaus) compared with just four in January.

"These are very important achievements for us, demonstrating that the consistent standards of productivity and flexibility that APM Terminals Itajai offers to shipping lines, combined with a strong focus on importing and exporting customers, are highly valued by the market," said Ricardo Arten, the superintendent director of APM Terminals Brasil. "Our terminal has a unique position in Santa Catarina as it is located in Itajai, which is the main logistics platform of the state. All this makes the difference when it comes to handling containers."

Interestingly, although APM Terminal Itajai lags behind Portonave — which handled 906,508 TEU last year, up

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slightly from 905,962 TEU in 2016 — the Danish-owned operator has a much higher percentage of reefer cargo than its rival across the river. Of its 212,000 plus TEU handled during 2017, 74,500 TEU were reefer full containers and 63,500 TEU were dry full, with the rest empties. Of those export reefers, 64,000 TEU were exports and the rest imports, mostly fish. For Portonave, it was 113,200 TEU reefers, of which 106,193 TEU were exports. Overall, the Itajai Port Complex (including both terminals) handled more than 189,000 TEU of reefer boxes last year, of which about 145,000 TEU was chicken, which is why it vies with Paranaguá, to the north, for the title of “[chicken export capital of the world](http://www.joc.com/international-logistics/global-sourcing/brazil-holds-poultry-export-crown-despite-slumping-economy_20160319.html).” (http://www.joc.com/international-logistics/global-sourcing/brazil-holds-poultry-export-crown-despite-slumping-economy_20160319.html)

Although it does not have exact figures, APM Terminal Itajai told JOC.com that the breakdown of its reefer export numbers is 75 percent chicken, 20 percent pork, and the remainder mostly fish. It is mostly fish and beef that is unloaded.

Robert Grantham, a director for Solve Shipping, the Navegantes-based consultancy, said that APM Terminal Itajai and the port as a whole should be congratulated for bouncing back from difficult times.

“They have clearly staged a very commendable comeback, and with 13-plus extra calls per month they will soon get back much of the cargo they lost recently,” said Grantham, formerly a commercial director for the IPA for several years, and Brazil country manager for China Shipping during the early 2000s. “It proves once again that Itajai is a resilient port complex and it often takes me by surprise how resilient, after all the terrible problems from the floods, etc.

“There was a point where it seemed they would not recover, but I think the Maersk policy of optimizing the use of their sister company’s terminals obviously played a part here and also the tremendous reefer storage facilities we have here in the Itajai area,” Grantham added. He suggested that importers, too, were choosing the IPC because of the port’s good transport infrastructure.

“And not just from the state of Santa Catarina,” Grantham noted. “They are also importing from neighboring states, such as Sao Paulo and Parana and Rio Grande and distributing around the south and southeast of Brazil from Itajai.”

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