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By Carl Collen

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Antwerp boosts reefer position

Reefer container volumes grew 7.2 per cent in 2019, driven in large part by Latin American business



The port of Antwerp has highlighted the "increasingly important" role that it is playing in the reefer market, as a growing number of reefer services from Latin America use the Belgian facility as their first port of call.

According to the port, this resulted in a strong expansion of 7.2 per cent in the volume of reefer containers during 2019.

Overall, 2019 was a record one for the port of Antwerp for the seventh year in a row, with freight handling growth of 1.2 per cent and a total freight volume of 238m tonnes of cargo.

During the past year the port once again experienced strong growth in perishables, handling a total of 871,757 TEU of reefer containers, up 7.2 per cent compared with the previous year.

"Container shipping companies operating in the big reefer markets of Latin America are increasingly choosing Antwerp as their first European port of call," the Poer uthority outlined. "Antwerp's central position deep inland offers shippers short transit times for perishables on their way to large consumer markets in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany and beyond.

"Furthermore the port's experienced service providers offer fast, high-quality unloading and storage, as well as added-value services and completion of customs and food inspection formalities. Far-reaching digitisation such as the ViSiGiP platform also allows shippers to visually follow the reporting and inspection process at the border inspection post, which in turn makes for a simpler, more efficient process."

In addition, the Flemish government took a recent decision to construct additional container handling capacity in the port of Antwerp, so that sufficient handling capability will be assured in future to cope with the strong growth in freight volume.

Ingrid Vanstreels, key account manager for shippers and forwarders at port of Antwerp, commented: "Port of Antwerp has the ambition to be the leading perishables port in Europe. These growth figures confirm that our efforts and investments to ensure top-quality service are appreciated. Antwerp is the first port of call in continental Europe for four out of the five weekly reefer services from Latin America."