

Marseilles Fos maintains early growth trend

Throughput at leading French cargo port Marseilles Fos topped 29 million tonnes to the end of April for a 6% increase on the first four months last year, with April traffic underlining the first quarter upturn in container volumes and local steel and chemicals output.

Container tonnage and units each rose 17% at 3.3MT and 331,396 teu. The deepsea Fos terminal added 10% for 244,093 teu while the Marseilles harbour area, specialising in intra-Mediterranean trades, improved 41% to 87,303 teu.

Led by containers, general cargo was up 16% on 5.2MT. Ro-ro traffic slipped 5% to 1.2MT – representing 52,459 trailers (-7%) – but conventional trades charged 68% ahead to 0.75MT in line with revived demand for steel products.

Raw materials for the steel industry prompted an 84% increase in dry bulks to 3.9MT, which included a record 157 Kt iron ore shipment from Brazil in April. Meanwhile the chemicals industry saw liquid bulks up 42% to 1.2MT, helped by further big growth in biofuels traffic – up 39% to 0.36MT.

Oil volumes fell 6% to 18.9MT despite a record crude shipment of 267Kt from west Africa in April. Technical refinery shutdowns were a factor as crude imports fell 3% to 9.7MT for local refineries and by 34% to 2.4MT for pipeline deliveries to Switzerland and Germany. Refined products were stable on 4.2MT, LPG added 2% for 0.8MT and LNG was up 14% to 1.7MT – helped by the Fos-Cavaou methane terminal entering commercial service on April 1 after months of trial operations.

Passenger numbers rose 12% to 339,000 for the four months. Ferries serving Corsica, Algeria and Tunisia saw a 6% drop to 221,500 – mainly due to crew strikes among Corsica carriers – but cruise numbers soared 78% to 117,200 on the back of growing ‘home port’ calls.

Port confirms San Giorgio drydock deal

The Marseilles Fos port authority has signed an agreement defining the terms of a 15-year concession for Italian shiprepairer San Giorgio del Porto (SGDP) to operate dry docks 8 and 9.

SGDP made the winning bid in a call for tenders announced in July 2009 and was selected at the end of last year. The company has now launched administrative and marketing activities with the aim of welcoming a first ship this September.

Meanwhile the port authority has carried out dock 9 gate repairs ready for certification in June, refurbished workshops and acquired the equipment needed to ensure a rapid return to operation.

New berth restores Fos crude capacity

A new crude oil berth has entered service at Fos to replace a former crude facility that now handles LNG after being re-allocated to the Fos-Cavaou Methane Terminal company.

The methane company and port authority shared the EUR33 million cost of the new crude berth – the fourth at the port – which restores full capacity for imports to four local refineries, the main users. It has been designed to handle medium-size tankers of 80,000 to 130,000 tonnes with a maximum draught of 15 metres.

The Fos oil terminal now totals seven berths including those handling refined products and petrochemicals.

Last year the terminal handled 38.4 million tonnes of crude. Overall, Marseilles Fos handled 57MT of crude, refined, LPG and LNG traffic, making it the biggest oil port in France and third biggest in the world.

For port images, see Espace presse/Phototheque at www.marseille-port.fr