

Circular From GARD**Date: 10 March 2017****Brazil - Heavy rainfall has led to port congestion and risk of delays**

Trucks carrying soya beans to the ports have been stuck on a stretch of highway BR-163, otherwise known as the “Soya Highway”, due to heavy rains according to the Brazilian Ministry of Transport, Ports and Civil Aviation.

Due to the recent seasonal heavy rainfalls, a traffic jam started forming; leaving trucks loaded with soya beans stuck fast in the mud and unable to advance or return to point of origin. This has disrupted the supply chain to the ports and has led to congestion at ports exporting soya beans.

Conditions at the ports

The congestion currently affects the river port of **Santarém** and the ports of **Vila do Conde**, **Baracarena** and **Belém**. As a result, operators are now diverting vessels to ports in the south-eastern and southern regions which may lead to congestion at these ports in the next few weeks.

The National Department of Transport Infrastructure reports that the traffic jam is now clearing and that trucks are being pulled through the mud with the help of bulldozers and tractors. The traffic is expected to resume providing weather conditions improve. However, further rains are forecast for the next weeks and the congestion is likely to last the entire Brazilian summer albeit to a much lesser extent, according to industry sources.

Recommendations

Gard's Members with vessels fixed to load soya beans at Brazilian ports are advised to take note of the above and to seek the most up to date information from their local ship's agent and to ensure that:

- Vessels arriving at congested ports should carefully plan the taking on board of provisions, fresh water and fuel and be prepared either to wait at anchor for prolonged periods or to be diverted to other ports. Particular attention must be paid to the need to renew the vessel's documents, such as Ship Sanitation Certificate, which are not obtainable at all port.
- While there is, so far, no indication that the delays has led to significant deterioration in the quality of the soya beans, Masters and crews should increase their vigilance during cargo operations and visually monitor the condition of the cargo being loaded.
- Owners and operators concerned about the cargo condition, eg because of discoloured beans or significant temperature variations (say 5 to 10 °C) and/or elevated temperatures (which may be indicative of self-heating already underway), should consider engaging experienced surveyors to assist the Master with cargo related matters.

- As Brazil is currently in the rainy season, the crew should increase the weather lookout and ensure that loading equipment is removed from within the cargo holds and hatch-covers closed in a timely fashion to avoid cargo being affected by sudden rainfalls, which are particular common at ports in the Northern Arc.

If the Master is in any doubt about the condition of a soya bean cargo at any point during loading or during the voyage, or in the event of complaints at the discharge port, Gard should be contacted immediately.

We also refer to our Gard Alert of 26 October 2016 addressing [Heat damage in soya bean cargoes - the importance of inspections](#) which may be of interest.

Source of Information: Gard P&I Club