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## **Del Monte raises the bar with energy-efficient containerships**

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Port Manatee is now receiving imports of Central American fruit via the newest energy-efficient refrigerated containerships of longtime port tenant Fresh Del Monte Produce Inc.

“These new-generation vessels bring significant sustainability and operational advances while heralding the next era in port Manatee’s long-term partnership with one of North America’s leading marketers and distributors of fresh produce,” said Reggie Bellamy, chairman of the Manatee County Port Authority.

Fresh Del Monte Produce, which has been importing fruit into port Manatee since 1989, is transitioning to deployment of the eco-friendly containerships in place on noncontainerized vessels to

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bring burgeoning volumes of bananas, pineapples and avocados to its Southeast distribution center at Manatee County's rapidly growing container hub.

The Del Monte Spirit, like five sibling vessels, has a full cargo capacity of 1,276 20-foot-equivalent container units, or TEUs, with 634 plugs for 40-foot-long high-cube refrigerated containers, or reefers.

The new ships help fulfill a company commitment to dramatically reduce vessel fuel consumption and emissions, according to Helmuth Luty, senior vice president of shipping operations at Coral Gables, FL-based Fresh Del Monte Produce.

"As one of the world's leading producers, marketers and distributors of fresh fruits and vegetables, we have set a very high bar for all the reefer containers and ships in our fleet," Luty said. "These six new vessels set the bar even higher, and allow us to deliver the high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables we are known for while meeting our sustainability goals."

The vessels feature fuel-efficient hull design, emissions-reducing scrubber systems, connections to operate on shore power when at berth, and the latest in preventive maintenance technologies.

Luty was among those celebrating the Jan. 9 call of the Del Monte Spirit. In addition to Bellamy, those participating in an inaugural call ceremony and tours of the vessel included Denise Tuck, Fresh Del Monte Produce's port Manatee-based port manager; Capt. Roman Federov, the ship's master; Arthur Savage, president of ship agency A.R. Savage & Son; and Carlos Buqueras, executive director of port Manatee.

"The new Del Monte vessels represent the latest development in the advancement of port Manatee as Central and Southwest Florida's preferred gateway for global commerce," Buqueras said. "Fruits arriving on these ships further add to the record volumes of containerized cargo crossing port Manatee docks and underscore the importance of key infrastructure enhancements."

An all-time high 88,466 TEUs of containerized cargo crossed port Manatee docks in the fiscal year ended Sept. 30, 2020, up 54.6 percent from the preceding 12-month period and 2.3 times the fiscal 2018 volume. Meanwhile, the \$8.3 million project to nearly double the size of port Manatee's 10-acre dockside container yard is moving toward mid-2021 completion.

Located where Tampa Bay meets the Gulf of Mexico, port Manatee is the closest U.S. deepwater seaport to the expanded Panama Canal, with 10 40-foot-draft berths serving container, bulk, breakbulk, heavy lift, project and general cargo customers. The self-sustaining port generates more than \$3.9 billion in annual economic impacts while providing for more than 27,000 direct and indirect jobs, all without benefit of local property tax support.

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