

New horizons for ports and terminals?

Container terminal operators have been warned that the coming years could prove crucial for the industry, write Katerina Kerr & Julian Stephens

Drewry Shipping Consultants says terminal operators are faced with “the spectre of congestion” if vital expansion projects aren’t reactivated in the next five years.

In its *Annual Review of Global Container Terminal Operators 2010*, Drewry warned that investment in new terminals must return in order to avoid congestion at ports.

It projected container throughput would increase by an average of 7.2% a year between 2009 and 2015.

“As a result, global container port volumes are forecast to rise by 245 million teu, from 473 million teu to 718 million teu, an increase of just 50% in this period,” said Drewry.

The report forecasts the capacity of the world’s container terminals will grow by 143 million teu between 2009 and 2015, an increase of almost 20%.

“The much slower rate of container terminal capacity growth relative to throughput will inevitable increase global container terminal utilisation rates unless more projects are brought back to life.

“Several parts of the world could see the spectre of congestion returning by 2015 if some of the originally planned expansion projects cannot be reactivated within the next three to five years,” warned Drewry.

Drewry predicts that by 2015 average global terminal utilisation levels will have reached just over 80%. However, it said while this prediction may not appear to give much cause for concern on a global level, terminals in prime locations are usually more highly utilised than the average.

“By 2015 average utilisation levels could be

around 95% in the Far East and Middle East regions,” it said.

To combat the problem of congestion and secure the future of ports and terminals around the world, a partly EU-funded project has resulted in the first real-time optimisation system that targets congestion around container terminals

The appeal of container shipping is easy to appreciate with multiple cargoes travelling thousands of miles extremely economically on a single vessel. However, the irony of the situation is that once a vessel offloads its cargo, the delivery of each container to its final destination will precipitate multiple truck moves, some loaded, some empty. This creates a wide range of issues including congestion, health and safety, pollution, fuel inefficiency, and time inefficiency.

However, not all solutions necessitate massive construction projects: the intelligent application of smart software and a small change in behaviour can achieve the desired result. The system, known as Flagship-RTS, has demonstrated in trials that it can reduce wasted repositioning movements in and out of the terminal by up to 25% while saving 10-20% of transport costs through improved planning and faster response times.

Flagship is a consortium of more than 40 European maritime organisations, collaborating in a part EU-funded project focused on improving the safety, environmental friendliness and competitiveness of European maritime transport.

The overall Flagship project focuses on on-board systems and procedures, ship management systems on shore, the impact of new technology on present ship-, owner- and operator organisations, effective and efficient communication interfaces and the impact of standards and regulations. The Flagship-RTS sub-project was led by MJC² in the UK and was supported, delivered and trialled by five

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