



Taahir Tayob

Temperature controller at Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban
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Taahir grew up in Durban and attended Overport Secondary. After matriculating in 2000, he studied mechanical engineering and motor electrical at Cato Manor Technical College. "After my studies I found it difficult to find a job. I was told that I was overqualified and under-experienced. During this period I had some part-time jobs and did some mechanical work on cars. I was referred to Fresh Produce Terminals in 2002 by a friend who was an employee there. He saw that I was keen and had some experience and suggested that I apply for a job here. I was employed as a temperature monitor in a seasonal position by Sisonke Logistics, a service provider to Fresh Produce Terminals and after two seasons I was appointed as a permanent employee."

The FPT plant has three control rooms and there are nine temperature monitors responsible for controlling the fruit temp throughout the plant. "When the fruit is received by FPT, we liaise with the planners regarding the destination of the fruit and cool the fruit accordingly. Our terminal handles approximately 80% of South African citrus that undergoes the cold sterilisation process required for import into Japan and I work in one of these control rooms that handles these shipments. In order to ensure that the fruit is cooled strictly according to the protocols, we have to follow complex routines meticulously. At the outset it is important to make sure that the pallets of fruit are stacked absolutely straight so that skew pallets do not disrupt the airflow and create uneven cooling. This characterises the kind of strict adherence to detail throughout the whole cold-steri process. We have to remain ever vigilant as even a temperature variation of 0.1 degrees Celsius requires a response so we are continuously monitoring temperatures all day." The purpose of the thick coat becomes abundantly clear!

job.

"We use about 6 chambers and 60 tunnels for this process moving large volumes of fruit during the season. To give you an idea, last week we loaded a vessel with 5,000 pallets

It was certainly not cold on the day I met Taahir Tayob at the FPT terminal, yet he arrived wearing a very thick jacket which was a clear indication of where he works. He was also wearing a broad smile and from what he said, obviously loves his

Below: Interior of Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban



for Japan. I have been involved in the cold-steri process at FPT for seven years and we are continuously refining our application of this protocol. We work in different shifts during the week but when the cold-steri vessels are being loaded, we work a 12-hour shift to ensure that the fruit is shipped within temperature protocol and everything goes smoothly.

"We work with citrus all day and I would enjoy the opportunity to visit the farms where the citrus is produced as it would give me a better perspective on the product. I really enjoy my job because the challenges of temperature control during the season are exciting. During the off season I am able to use my engineering skills when we do maintenance of the cooling plant and other machinery. I am fortunate to be part of a great team at work. We work very well together and there is a true sense of loyalty to each other.

I am grateful to my department head and for the supportive people I work with at FPT. I would like to grow within the company and if an opportunity arises would like to become a vessel project manager. As for me, it is quite simple - I love my job and don't ever wake up regretting that I have to go to work."

"I am fortunate to be part of a great team at work."



Above: Loading fruit, Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban

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