

## AgTC urges ILWU and PMA: avoid West Coast port disruptions



by [Stas Margaronis](#) May 11, 2022

The Agriculture Transportation Coalition (AgTC) is urging the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) to avoid even a minor disruption of West Coast terminal operations as the two sides begin negotiating a new labor agreement.

AGTC is urging restraint from both parties: “We ask that labor and employers not forget what’s at stake for the ag exporters (and importers) who depend upon the West Coast gateways.”

In a statement released on May 10<sup>th</sup>, AgTC said that exporters are already challenged by recent supply chain disruptions and congestion at U.S. ports:

“Massive inflows of cargo, marine terminal congestion, lack of schedule integrity, needed port-wide information portals, ocean carrier business priorities and practices, as well as container and chassis shortages, rail service limitations, have collectively made US agriculture exporting extremely challenging, imposing billions of dollars of additional costs on the cargo that does ship, and even more costs in lost sales.”

In addition to financial losses suffered by exporters there is the human toll: “In addition to financial injury, the human toll on those who attempt to keep their ag products moving is heartbreaking.”

Congress has recognized the severity of losses suffered by agricultural exporters and is preparing legislation to regulate ocean carrier practices that have adversely impacted exporters: “The crisis confronting agriculture is recognized throughout the Federal and

state governments. Both the US Senate and House of Representatives are rapidly advancing new ocean shipping legislation, specifically impacting carrier and marine terminal practices, for the first time in over two decades.”

However, AgTC is worried that these potential legislative gains could be jeopardized if there is West Coast disruption in 2022: “But all these efforts will be undermined should West Coast marine terminal operations be further disrupted during the labor contract negotiations. In the current environment, there is no such thing as a “minor” disruption. Any disruption will have a debilitating impact on all exports and imports, none more than agriculture exports.”

In 2014-2015 PMA/ILWU contract negotiations became bogged down. As a result, AgTC Executive Director Peter Friedmann reached out to ILWU leaders and invited them to meet with exporters at AgTC’s annual meetings, to assure all were aware how much farmers had suffered from the port uncertainty.

Friedmann and AgTC members are clearly hoping to avoid a repeat of 2014-2015 in the 2022 contract negotiations.



Stas Margaronis

WEST COAST CORRESPONDENT  
Contact Author