

# Bulking up in the Baltics

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## Port of Riga moves towards containerized bulk handling solutions

### RIGA UNVEILS 2017 THROUGHPUT STATISTICS: BULK INCREASES WHILE OVERALL VOLUME FALLS

Over the first three quarters of 2017, the Port of Riga has handled a total of 25.5mt (million tonnes) of cargo, 5.1% — or 1.4mt — less than during the same nine months of 2016. The Port of Riga is a multi-functional port handling both dry and liquid bulk, as well as general cargo. Dry bulk is the largest cargo segment of the Port of Riga, amounting to 63% of cargo handled by the port over the first nine months of 2017. As compared to the same period of the previous year, the amount of dry bulk handled by the port has increased by 2% (the volume of general cargo has increased by 9.6%, while the turnover of liquid bulk has dropped by 32.9%).

The Port of Riga maintains its leading position among the ports of the Baltic States in terms of handled volume of dry bulk. The Port of Riga is the second-largest dry bulk port in the entire Baltic Sea,

behind the Russian port of Ust-Luga, which has been developing extremely fast in recent years due to the Russian policy of transferring cargo of Russian origin only to its own ports.

Over the first three quarters of this year, the Port of Riga has handled a total of 16mt of different types of dry bulk. According to Q3 2017 results, the largest group of dry bulk at the Port of Riga is coal, mineral fertilizers, wood pellets, grain and grain products, metals and wood chips.

Coal is a transit cargo at the port of Riga, which is 100% received by rail from Russia. The Russian transport policy in recent years envisages transferring all cargo only to its own national ports and fully closing cargo transit via the Baltic States' ports. However, despite this policy, this year's volume of coal handled by the Port of Riga has increased by 2.5% compared to 2016. Overall, 9.3mt of coal were dispatched from Riga this year.

The second-largest group of dry bulk at the port of Riga is mineral fertilizers. Mineral fertilizers are handled at two specialized port terminals and are 100% received in transit from Russia. Over the first three quarters of this year, the Port of Riga has handled 1.8mt of mineral fertilizers, which is 12.3% less than a year before.

As compared to the previous year, the total volume of dry bulk timber handled by the port over the first nine months of this year has increased by 9.7% and 1.8mt of cargo has been dispatched from the port. Dry bulk timber is an export product of Latvia and an increase therein also suggests an increase in the Latvian wood processing sector. An increase in handled cargo, compared to the previous year, has been registered for woodchips (+13.5%) and sawn timber (+77.9%), while stagnation after the fast growth of the previous year is seen in the wood pellets segment (-4.5%).



*Containerized dry bulk handling is often called a revolution in dry bulk logistics and the Port of Riga is the first port in Europe to use the technology.*

Grain cargo in Latvia is both of local origin and received in transit from neighbouring countries, i.e. Lithuania, Russia and Belarus. Taking into account the unfavourable effects of this year's weather conditions on crop harvesting in Latvia, handling of grain products at the port was actively commenced only in the second half of September. Despite that, 261,800 tonnes of agricultural products were handled in September, a new monthly record. Overall, the volume of grain products over the first three quarters of the year has remained at the same level as the previous year.

Over the first three quarters of this year, the total volume of dry bulk metals (ore, metals, scrap metal and ferroalloys) has increased.

#### **PORT OF RIGA INTRODUCES NEW AND INNOVATIVE DRY BULK HANDLING TECHNOLOGY**

As part of its ongoing development of the terminal, and in order to increase the effectiveness of cargo handling, the company Riga Universal Terminal Ltd. (RUT) has introduced a new technology: containerized dry bulk handling. This technology is often called a revolution in dry bulk logistics and the Port of Riga is the first port in Europe to use it.

The company RUT is currently using the containerized handling method for handling

wood pellets on large dry bulk ships. Pellets are delivered from warehouse to pier in special-purpose open-top 20-foot containers. Using a portal-frame container lift equipped with a revolte system (revolver), the entire contents of a container are delivered onto the ship by turning the container over into the holds.

Atis Šulte, RUT Trade and Business Development Director: "The main benefit from introducing the new technology is significant optimization of terminal expenses and increase in performance. Now, we can perform dry bulk handling operations involving a significantly smaller number of machinery and human resources. Savings on resources amount to almost 50%. By introducing containerized cargo handling, we have become more competitive and can better adjust to customer requirements. Following the general tendency in cargo carriage, dry bulk ships handled at our terminal are becoming even larger. By means of the new technology, we are able to ensure fast and effective loading of large ships. By applying the new technology, we are able to load dry bulk and containers at the same pier, using one portal-frame lift. It allows us to quickly organize our work in the terminal and quickly handle any type of ship".

Containerized dry bulk handling is also

an environmentally-friendly technology. Cargo is practically poured into the holds, rather than above them, which reduces the amount of dust that ends up in the air. Likewise, spread of dust and cargo losses are reduced by handling a great amount of cargo within one lifting time.

This method of containerized dry bulk handling is used in the ports of Australia and South America, where it is used with the logistics of mining industry products, i.e. metal ore, coal, as well as grain. This technology is called a revolution in dry bulk logistics, since by using closed standardized containers, dry bulk can be transported from the place of extraction, stored at the terminal without unloading from the container and loaded onto the ship using the same container. As a result, no investments are needed for warehouses and the entire logistics chain from extraction to loading onto a ship can be optimized, using standardized containers and equipment which has been developed and is already used in container cargo logistics.

(For more details on RAM Spreaders' work in containerized bulk solutions, please see 'Flexible containerized bulk attachment works with multiple lifting equipment,' on p54-55 of the August 2017 issue of *Dry Cargo International*: Ed.)