



New Refrigerated Cargo Storage Facility to be Constructed at Port of Houston Authority's Bayport Container Terminal

HOUSTON, Feb. 16, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The first phase of a 300,000-square-foot temperature-controlled cargo facility will be built at the Port of Houston Authority's Bayport Container Terminal by AGRO Merchants Group, which provides cold supply chain operations globally.

Upon completion, the new facility will add significantly to the state-of-the-art infrastructure that's already in place at Bayport, which opened in 2007 and is one of the newest container facilities on the Gulf Coast.

Negotiations between the Port Authority and AGRO Merchants Group regarding construction and operation of the refrigerated cargo center had been under way for some time and were successfully concluded recently.

Plans call for the new cold storage facility at Bayport to be a multi-use building that will include state-of-the-art warehouse space to handle storage and the import and export of chilled and frozen meat, fish, poultry, fruits and vegetables.

The first phase of the building will take up more than 12 acres of land, with ample room for expansion. The facility will offer customers innovative and value-added services for chilled goods moving across the docks at the Port Authority.

This expansion will allow the port growth opportunities in the

refrigerated cargo sector, which has been restricted until now.

“Developing the refrigerated cargo business has been one of my key initiatives. Our central location on the Gulf Coast, our consumer reach of 144 million consumers within 1,000 miles, and our ready access to South American sources of produce drive this opportunity,” Port Commission Chairman Janiece Longoria said. “I am pleased that Roger Guenther and staff have brought this to fruition,” she added.

Inspection and handling facilities for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, blast-freezing cells and deep truck docks with ample doors for shipping and receiving will be included. The facility will have segregated frozen and chilled warehouse space to support a diverse array of products and include value-added capabilities geared toward protein and produce commodities. The site is expected to be operational by summer 2017.

Port Authority Executive Director Roger Guenther said the addition of the temperature-controlled facility at Bayport enhances the other state-of-the-art infrastructure already being offered by the Port of Houston Authority.

“We welcome AGRO Merchants Group and the additional cold storage capacity the company will bring to regional and global customers to help support trade growth and create economic activity through our port,” Guenther said. “This is a win-win for the Port Authority, AGRO and the Houston region overall.”

Don Schoenl, President of AGRO Merchants North America said, “We are extremely excited to build a new facility that will provide our customers with industry-leading solutions and cost-effective alternatives to move product into and out of the U.S., especially in the Gulf Region. In Houston, we plan to leverage our property’s proximity to the Bayport Terminal to take advantage of legal transportation limits on overweight cargo and provide important rail and intermodal service capabilities.” AGRO Merchants Group has made strategic investments in 8 countries, including 12 greenfield and expansion projects.

The expansion of the Port Authority’s capacity for handling

refrigerated cargo makes sense given the population growth in Houston and Texas, with numerous people being attracted to the city and area because of jobs. Houston's central location in the Gulf of Mexico allows for fast transit times to the major produce markets in Central and South America.

AGRO Merchants Group owns and operates 53 facilities in 8 countries across the US, Europe, and Latin America, with over 700,000 square meters of cold storage space. The company is focused on providing innovative cold chain solutions on a global basis by partnering with the highest quality family businesses and creating new, reliable, and integrated trade networks to help its customers grow. AGRO invests in modern assets, industry-leading technologies, and value-added service offerings to ensure the highest quality supply chain management standards in the industry.

For additional information, please visit AGRO's website at www.agromerchants.com.

The Port of Houston is the number one container port in the Gulf of Mexico and number six in the United States in terms of containers handled.

About the Port of Houston Authority

For more than 100 years, the Port of Houston Authority has owned and operated the public wharves and terminals of the Port of Houston – the nation's largest port for foreign waterborne tonnage and an essential economic engine for the Houston region, the state of Texas, and the nation. It supports the creation of nearly 1.175 million jobs in Texas and 2.7 million jobs nationwide, and economic activity totaling almost \$265 billion in Texas – 16 percent of Texas' total gross domestic product – and more than \$617 billion in economic impact across the nation. For more information, visit the Port Authority website at: www.portofhouston.com.

The Port of Houston Authority logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=720>

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