

* FTW - FRIDAY 20 APRIL 2007

Maputo reefer facility set to challenge Durban

Farmers could save R15m in inland costs

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WITH THE plans drawn and put out to tender, building begins next month on a new state-of-the-art fresh produce terminal at the Port of Maputo.

The R30m project could provide a viable alternative to Durban for farmers in the natural hinterland, with promoters claiming they could save in the region of R15m per year in inland haulage costs once full capacity utilisation is reached.

The Industrial Development Corporation and a consortium of private equity partners have concluded the financial package to build and operate the facility whose major shareholders are Port Elizabeth Cold Store and a Mozambican company, Fidelity Investments.

But it's the proverbial 'chicken and egg' situation that needs resolution to

achieve real savings, says Jacey Strauss, one of the project's investors.

"We have a model that we have discussed with some of the shipping lines that if they load full in Maputo – and with ourselves and the present Fresh Produce Terminal (FPT) in operation this is viable – they could possibly avoid stopping at a second harbour like Durban, Port Elizabeth or Cape Town, on the way to Europe. And this would reduce shipping costs."

But in terms of the full logistics package, Strauss sees considerable savings for containerised traffic from Maputo to the Far East.

"Farmers based in the region as far as Hoedspruit would save around R1500 per container in transport, shipping and harbour fees," says Strauss.

"At present the seafreight rate is not cheaper because

the line still has container repositioning costs to contend with. But I'm campaigning to encourage farmers to support Maputo, even if the costs are the same as Durban, because as soon as there's critical mass it will pay the lines to bring containers to Maputo."

Strauss believes that MOL, which has already committed to Maputo and is bringing in a large volume of general cargo containers, will find that fruit will become a major player.

The new reefer facility will have dedicated container loading capacity as well as steri capacity, especially for markets like China, Korea and Taiwan.

It is situated 500m from the quayside and has the capacity to handle 3 200 pallets at a time.

One of the potential new markets that Strauss expects to open up is bananas to the Middle East.