

Columbus Stainless affirms commitment to Maputo

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... despite border delays and limited Far East shipping options

BY Liesl Venter

Despite the need for more shipping lines from the Far East and a more efficient border post, Columbus Stainless remains determined to use the Maputo port for most of its exports.

According to Dirk Nell, senior logistics manager for the company, the Mozambican port allows a shorter lead time and is a more cost-effective choice than the ports in Durban and Richards Bay.

"We use both road and rail transport to Maputo and have developed a very smooth operation with very little wastage. The cargo moves direct from the train onto the vessel making rail more reliable to Maputo than to other corridors for Columbus Stainless. Rail is also substantially cheaper."

Nell said the company had strategically decided to

FACT SHEET

- Averaging 65 containers a month.
- 88% move to port by rail.
- 1323 containers shipped from Maputo since Jan '07.

use Mozambican-based road transporters instead of South Africans for its road freight.

"The drivers know the system well and seem to handle the border post better. It is also a way of us giving back to the Mozambican community."

According to Nell, several issues such as border post clearing and limited shipping options from the East remain cumbersome to operations.

"If you were to send 32 trucks to Maputo on one day, you would congest the border post. At this stage it is all about paper, paper and more paper, but the plans for the

new border post are a welcome relief. Border clearing, the cost of scanning containers on road and the high level of congestion all remain problematic.

Working hours at customs and the border post not operating 24 hours a day also pose a challenge.

"At present we are mostly using shipping lines from Italy. We do need more lines from the Far East. But despite these challenges we remain positive and upbeat about Maputo as our main port."

The company has exported 26 008 tons (1323 containers) from Maputo since January 2007 with 226 495 tons breakbulk being shipped since January 2004.

"We average around 1300 tons per month – about 65 containers. At least 88% of our containers go to port via rail, creating an opportunity for empty containers to be utilised in Maputo."