

Russian exports sweeten citrus trade



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BY Ed Richardson

Growing demand for citrus from Russia was the one bright spot in an otherwise blemished 2008 export season, according to FPT Maputo general manager, Paulo Franco.

Economic woes in the traditional European markets saw demand drop off dramatically, with FPT having to store fruit for up to 60 days—and then disposing of it.

All pallets have to be re-inspected after 28 days of storage.

“It was one of the worst years ever,” he says.

In contrast, “Russia is our fastest-growing market and has saved the farmers for the past two to three years.”

But, Franco is confident that Maputo

is in a better position than before to handle increased volumes when demand recovers.

Maputo has proven itself as an export gateway for fruit from Mpumalanga, Northern KZN, Swaziland and Limpopo. Many producers are less than an hour’s drive away from the port, and the fruit is delivered at ambient temperature for cooling by FPT says Franco.

Rail services to the port have proved to be very effective. “We have seen more than double the amount of fruit transported by train compared to last year. All of the logistics are working fine,” he says.

During the off season, the fruit terminal is able to handle palletised general cargo. It also has a warehouse, which is used for bulk commodities such as rice.