

Controlled atmosphere trials begin

Transcom Sharaf is pioneering the use of CA or controlled atmosphere in Beira to treat tobacco as an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional chemical fumigation.

In a joint venture with Control Union, the company has installed a mobile Eco2 CA fumigation unit at its Beira warehouse facility.

There is a growing demand for the service following successful trials, according to customer liaison manager Justin Jahme.

In the completely chemical-free process cartons are packed into airtight chambers. Up to seven containers of product can be treated at a time.

Nitrogen extracted from the atmosphere on site is pumped into the chamber to replace the oxygen. At the same time the temperature is raised if necessary in order to increase the insects' metabolism and ensure all the life-stages of tobacco beetle are destroyed.

Investment in the Transcom Sharaf warehouses and container handling facilities in Beira is providing exporters and importers with the services and capacity of an inland port capable of handling the full range of dry cargo, together with value-added services.

The facilities now have the capacity and systems in place to pick and pack to clients' requirements.

"This is to cater for the trend in the tobacco industry to supply some global factories direct from source. Some companies are moving away from centralised warehouses in Africa/Europe and are relying on us to pack containers to order," says Guy Harvey, Transcom Sharaf CEO.

Factories require a mix of different types of tobacco, which are then blended for final production.

The same system is being used for other agricultural products.

All cargo is monitored live on an internal management system, which also tracks containers.

Individual boxes stored in the warehouses are tracked to allow for efficient and accurate picking.

Transcom Sharaf is the first in

Demand drives ongoing investment in Beira facility

Africa to use wireless phosphine monitoring for the fumigation of tobacco containers, in conjunction with Eco2 Mozambique.

Monitoring software processes the data to predict whether the fumigation

of individual containers will be successful, and also provides 24-hour data monitoring on all fumigation processes.

"It has been a challenge because no-one else in the

world is monitoring and managing containerised fumigation on such a large scale and we have had to be very innovative," he says.

On the infrastructure side, the

container yard has been expanded by an additional 12 000sqm, allowing for additional container storage prior to movement to port or final destination.

Other investments in the facility include the building of a 3000sqm covered area for the loading and unloading of trucks and containers, the implementation of an electronic management system, and the upgrading of security through

the installation of new cameras, floodlights and fingerprint access control.

"Security services have been brought in-house to ensure there is

full control", says Harvey.

The facility now handles an average of 40 trucks in an eight-hour shift.

Fire protection has also been upgraded, with tanks storing 700 000 litres of water on site. They are connected directly to the internal firefighting system.

While the company is retaining its focus on serving the tobacco industry the investment in a new 12 000sqm facility allows it to support other sectors as well, he says.

Some 18 000sqm of bonded warehousing across a number of different buildings allows the company to handle a range of products without the risk of cross contamination.

The systems and upgrades have been implemented in accordance with the requirements of ISO 9001 certification.

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– GUY HARVEY