

# Cold Storage Expansion at Walvis Bay

By Simon Cummings

**W**ith promising signs of improvement in horse mackerel and orange roughly catch rates, Walvis Bay Cold Storage is expanding loading and truck facilities at the commercial harbour. Situated along berths 4 and 5, the company started expansions in September 1997. These should be completed by the end of the year.

Walvis Bay Cold Storage foresees an increased focus on exportation of high value fish products through reefer containers to niche overseas markets. The opening of the Trans-Caprivi and Trans-Kalahari highways will strongly influence the growth in the supply of Namibian horse mackerel to SADC markets. The Trans-Caprivi Highway will form a convenient road link to landlocked Zambia, Zimbabwe and Congo. It will open new opportunities for the export of fruit and meat from SADC countries through Walvis Bay. At present the cold stores rely solely on fish products, which do not fill the cold room chambers throughout the year.

Horse mackerel, hake, orange roughly and tuna trawlers discharge frozen fish in cartons or loose fish into cold stores at Walvis Bay Cold Storage. The fish cartons are placed on pallets on the quayside and shrinkwrapped before passing into the cold store handling areas for weighing and storage. The inventory is recorded through product receipts and issues issued at on-line computer terminals. Clients have access to immediate stock updates.

Five cold rooms provide a storage capacity of 14 000 tons, of which 9 000 tons are for rack storage and 5 000 tons for bulk storage. Meat and fruit can also be stored in dedicated cold room space at a temperature of  $-0,5^{\circ}\text{Celsius}$ .

The high-tech racking system allows efficient placement and retrieval of products and maximum use of the storage space. Mobile racks are propelled by electric motors activated from within cold room stacking machines. Drivers operate the machines from inside heated cubicles, with outside cold room temperatures running at  $-24^{\circ}\text{Celsius}$ . Temperatures are controlled by a computerised energy management system, which monitors and adjusts the electronic screw-compressors and blower fans powering the ammonia cooling system.

## Fish products in cold storage

### Horse mackerel

Large volume of frozen horse mackerel destined for SADC markets move through Walvis Bay Cold Storage. These are mostly transported by refrigerator road trucks via Ariamsvlei to Johannesburg in South Africa and further to Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The completion of the Trans-Caprivi and Trans-Kalahari roads in 1998 will shorten the distance to these markets considerably, resulting in more efficient trade.

Horse mackerel catches were good in 1996 and 1997. In 1997, the volumes landed increased due partly to the waiving of quota levies on horse mackerel landed at Walvis Bay. The saving of N\$62,55 per metric ton has encouraged companies to move greater volumes of frozen fish to SADC markets than in previous years.

### Orange roughly and alfonsino

Following experimental trawls for deepsea fish species in 1995 and 1996, exploitation rights were granted to three companies this year. Orange roughly, alfonsino and cardinal are caught in Namibian waters and exported in refrigerated containers to markets in Europe, the Far East and the United States of America. Successful marketing and a reputation for high quality products have secured a demand for this high value export commodity.

Frozen orange roughly is unloaded from freezer trawlers for storage at Walvis Bay Cold Storage and subsequent processing into filleted portions in a land-based factory. The value adding process results in attractive fish packages for sale in retail markets in the USA. Direct containerised shipping services from Walvis Bay to Europe and the USA since March 1997 allow for speedy delivery on a bi-weekly basis.

### Hake and tuna

Over the past two years, reduced hake catches due to poor fishing conditions have resulted in lower volumes of frozen hake in cold storage. There had been a further shift of stored frozen hake from the commercial harbour to in-house cold storage facilities in factories at the fishing harbour.

Tuna landings for the 1997 season were lower than catches recorded in the preceding three years. Loose, fresh tuna was discharged and blast frozen at Walvis Bay Cold Storage for export per reefer containers or in bulk form to markets in the Far East and the Americas.

## Cold storage at Walvis Bay harbour

Walvis Bay Cold Storage has the only cold store facility in the commercial harbour. Several factories also have cold stores.

Company	Capacity in tons
Walvis Bay Cold Storage	14 000
Consortium	2 000
Tunacor	2 000
Cadilu	2 500
Deep Ocean	250
Northern Fishing	400
Benguela Enterprises	300