Citrus volume exported by reefer container has significantly increased since the 2007 citrus season; this trend is currently being carried through to the 2009 season. Based on the last two years of citrus volumes exported in this way, it would be accurate to forecast that the container sector currently has a 62% share of the total citrus export volume as opposed to a mere 28% during the 2004 citrus season. The volume percentage share towards the reefer container sector has increased on an annual basis, although the volume percentage largely increased during 2007 and 2008 citrus season. A further trend which is illustrated on the chart below (Source: PPECB) is the heightened volume of reefer containers loaded at inland facilities. Inland facilities are cold stores and production points which are not located within port limits. This exercise is more active in the Eastern and Western Cape where production points are in close proximity to ports, therefore it can be deemed that there is an additional cost saving as well as increased efficiency by loading containers at inland points. The port cold store facilities are by and large geared to handle break-bulk export volume whereas the more sophisticated and modernized inland cold store facilities that have been built are more efficient when loading reefer containers. During the 2008 citrus season Eastern and Western Cape combined handled 70% of export volume by way of containers and 50% of this volume was loaded at inland facilities, during the current season these regions combined have increased the loading of containers at inland facilities to 64% of total reefer containers exported. On a more interesting note Durban port loaded 68% of all reefer containers exported from RSA during the 2008 citrus season and a mere 6% of this volume was packed at inland facilities. CGA have recognized an opportunity that may extend the trend and associated benefits seen from inland container loading obtained in other production regions to Northern production regions. The City Deep inland container loading concept is currently being investigated by the CGA along with various stakeholders that could potentially allow citrus to be sent by road truck to City Deep, pre-cooled and then packed in containers which could be transported to Maputo, Durban, Port Elizabeth (Coega) or Cape Town ports by rail. This initiative would support Transnet Freight Rail and the ‘Tonnage off Tar’ project, which is aimed at reducing the use of roads and reducing the carbon footprint.

The inland container loading trend is an important move for citrus exports that will draw export volumes of citrus away from ports in general which have become over-congested in recent years. Refer to the chart below (Source PPECB) that illustrates the total volume trend of citrus exported from inland facilities as opposed to port facilities.