O ECONÓMICO (MOÇAMBIQUE) · SOUTH AFRICA · SUBSEA

Grindrod wins coal haulage slot on reformed South African rail

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Logistics operator Grindrod has completed a trial run on the Transnet rail network and is preparing to transport 288,000 tonnes of coal from Mpumalanga to the Matola Terminal in Mozambique starting in 2027. The move follows South Africa's decision to open state-owned rail infrastructure to private operators, a structural reform that marks a significant shift in how bulk commodities move from inland mining regions to export terminals on the southern African coast.

South Africa's rail reform has granted access to 11 private operators on the Transnet network. Authorities expect the opening to add 20 million tonnes per year of additional cargo capacity, with a target throughput of 250 million tonnes by 2029. Grindrod's trial run represents one of the first concrete steps by a private logistics company to commercialise access under the new framework, positioning the company ahead of competitors as slot allocations are formalised.

The Matola Terminal, located in the port of Maputo, Mozambique, serves as a critical export gateway for landlocked mineral production from South Africa's Mpumalanga coalfields. Routing coal through Matola rather than South African ports reflects established commercial patterns in the region, where terminal capacity, tariff structures, and turnaround times influence operator decisions. The terminal is expected to handle Grindrod's volumes once commercial operations begin in 2027.

The broader rail liberalisation programme signals that South Africa is moving to address chronic underperformance on the Transnet freight network, which has constrained export volumes of coal, iron ore, and manganese for several years. By

introducing private operators, the government aims to inject competition, capital, and operational efficiency into a system that has struggled with maintenance backlogs and rolling stock shortages. If the 250-million-tonne throughput target is achieved by 2029, it would represent a substantial recovery relative to recent performance levels.

For bulk commodity exporters, miners, and terminal operators across the region, the pace at which private operators can secure reliable slot allocations and ramp up volumes will determine whether the reform delivers on its headline numbers. Grindrod's 288,000-tonne programme, while modest relative to the network's overall ambitions, functions as a proof-of-concept for the new access regime and may encourage further private sector commitments to rail-linked infrastructure investment in the corridor.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

This story concerns bulk rail logistics and coal export infrastructure rather than oil and gas, subsea, FPSO, drilling, or LNG activity. Norwegian oil and gas service companies have no direct procurement or project angle here. The story should be monitored only for its indirect signal on southern African infrastructure investment appetite, which can correlate with broader energy project activity in Mozambique.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Pipeline:** Monitor whether increased bulk export corridor investment in Mozambique stimulates parallel interest in gas pipeline infrastructure linking the Rovuma Basin to regional markets.
- **LNG:** Rising port and logistics investment at Maputo and Matola may indicate improving Mozambican infrastructure confidence, relevant background for LNG project logistics planning in the country.
- **Service:** Watch the Maputo corridor for future tenders in port engineering or marine services as terminal throughput targets attract infrastructure spending.

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