

Western Cape drought – no crisis for citrus farmers

By Jeandré du Preez April 11, 2017 11:53 am

Citrus growers in the Western Cape are optimistic about this year's season, despite the devastating drought currently experienced by the province



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The drought in the Western Cape has not particularly affected the 2017 soft citrus season as most growers still have sufficient water supplies, said Piet Smit, the Citrus Growers' Association's Western Cape vice-chairperson, who farms in Citrusdal.

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"The harvest looks particularly good, the internal fruit quality is great, and we expect a higher export percentage than the previous year," he said.

Smit expects an export volume increase of 7% to 8% for soft citrus, while Valencia export volumes are pegged at 15% to 20% higher than 2016. However, he expects a 10% decline in Navel export volumes.

According to Smit, the swing between warm-day and cold-night temperatures contributed to the fruit acquiring a good colour and sugar content.

Substantial rainfall is, however, still needed during the coming winter. Smit anticipates good precipitation over the Easter weekend.

In addition, the ongoing drought has brought on higher levels of pests in the orchards, particularly the fruit fly and false codling moth.

However, since many of the growers expected this, “they had the necessary counter-measures put in place to mitigate any potential losses and problems,” said Smit.

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