

South Africa expects a good table grape season despite persistent drought

The South African Table Grape Industry (SATI) is concerned about the persistent drought described as a 3 in 100 years occurrence, but expect it to lead to a 2017/2018 harvest in line with the 5 year average crop (the average crop size from the 2012/13 to 2016/17 season is 57,9 million cartons).

Although certain producers and areas most affected by the drought are likely to be significantly impacted, the effect at a national level is less pronounced. This expectation is ascribed to the climatically diverse industry, increased hectares in production, the continued shift to higher yielding new generation varieties and the resilience and adaptation of table grape farmers.

According to Mr Michael Laubscher, Chairman of SATI, “we as an industry are concerned about the persistent drought in the Western Cape. As an industry we realise that South Africa is a water scarce country, therefore everyone has a responsibility to be water wise.”

In this regard SATI hosted seminars at the end of September in the three table grape growing regions in the Western Cape most affected by the drought.

While table grapes are resilient plants, enough water is needed during its different and critical growth stages. During the seminars leading researchers from SATI, the Agricultural Research Council and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture shared best practice and practical advice on dealing with drought and water stress.

An official from the National Department of Water and Sanitation presented an overview of the status of dams as well as plans to manage the remaining water resources.

SATI traditionally releases the 1st crop estimate at the end of October, when the early production regions have commenced with packing. Given the extraordinary drought conditions in the Western Cape, a detailed estimate would only be released early November.

According to Willem Bestbier, CEO of SATI, “South African producers will still deliver excellent quality to our export markets during the coming season.”

“We are in close contact with the Western Cape Provincial Government as the table grape industry is particularly vulnerable due to its reliance on irrigation. It makes a huge contribution to the employment and economy of the Western Cape and the country,” highlighted Bestbier..

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