

Press release: 15 October 2019

## Slight upturn in prospects for South African 2019/2020 stone fruit exports

*The forecast of the South African stone fruit season indicates improved volumes when compared to last year. The continued effects of drought in some areas and adverse weather during pollination has impacted on the full potential.*

The past winter may have brought much needed rain to most parts of the Western Cape. Climatic conditions in the northern provinces were also favourable for good flowering and fruit set. Unfortunately there are still parts of the Little Karoo (Ladismith, Calitzdorp to Barrydale) where a crisis situation is looming and where rain is needed urgently.

The initial export crop estimate projects an increase in volumes compared to the previous season, with the exception of apricots given that the majority of fresh apricots are produced in the Little Karoo. The decrease in volumes is not only due to the drought but also a decline in the area planted to apricots. Since 2014, apricot hectares have decreased and thus also contribute to the low apricot forecast.

Nectarines are expected to increase from last year's 4 million cartons to almost 4.7 million cartons (2.5kg). A more normal water regime, higher yielding cultivars and young orchards coming into production continue to drive this growth. Peaches are slightly below the 3-year average, in part due to older orchards being removed. Plum growers expect an increase of 15% compared to last season; this however is still below the 3-year average. At this stage, the increased volumes are mainly driven by young orchards coming into production and producers having more available irrigation water.

Product	Carton eqv (kg)	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	3 yr avg	2019/2020 ESTIMATE	2019/2020 vs Previous Season	
Apricots	4,75	774 240	723 195	574 935	690 790	543 533	-5%	-31 402
Nectarines	2,5	4 122 833	4 202 020	4 010 973	4 111 942	4 692 058	17%	681 085
Peaches	2,5	2 169 010	2 156 038	1 835 008	2 053 352	1 937 013	6%	102 005
Plums	5,25	12 349 114	10 249 055	8 790 651	10 462 940	10 152 003	15%	1 361 351

The stone fruit industry is looking forward to the 2019/20 season and remains committed to supplying consumers with good quality and great tasting products. Hortgro will regularly update crop estimates in order to keep all role players informed.