

Press release: 15 October 2020

A normal outlook for South African 2020/2021 stone fruit exports

The 2020/2021 season is upon us and the stone fruit forecast and overall estimate volumes are looking much better compared to the same time last year.

Good winter rains in most parts of the Western Cape during 2020, together with good winter chill and moderate spring conditions contributed to better overall fruit set of all stone fruit commodities. Although very early in the season we are optimistic about the anticipated volumes of especially apricots and plums that is said to normalise. The drought conditions plaguing the Little Karoo for the last number of years is not fully broken, however water availability has improved slightly and things are looking better compared to the previous 2 seasons for this region.

The initial export crop estimate projects an increase in volumes compared to the previous season. Early varieties are estimated to be 7 – 10 days later than last year. Apricots are estimated to increase by 23% y-o-y; mainly due to Imperial/Palsteyn returning to an average export crop. Fruit set is looking much better and with more available irrigation water in the Little Karoo, compared to previous seasons, apricot volumes are set to increase.

Nectarine export volumes are expected to increase from last year's 5mil cartons to 5.6 mil cartons. The growth in export volumes are driven by young orchards coming into production, mainly in the mid-season, as well as more favourable weather conditions. Similarly peaches are also expected to increase to a normal crop (5% Y-O-Y).

Plum growers are expecting export volumes to increase by 22% compared to last season, returning to a normal plum export volume. The past 2 seasons' volumes were negatively affected by the drought and warm weather during spring. Favourable weather conditions definitely had a positive impact on fruit set for this coming season and we are optimistic about the harvest.

Product	Carton eqv (kg)	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	3 yr avg	2020/2021 ESTIMATE	2020/2021 vs Previous Season
Apricots	4,75	723 195	574 935	354 804	550 978	435 600	+23% 80 840
Nectarines	2,5	4 202 020	4 010 973	5 065 598	4 426 197	5 608 500	+11% 542 936
Peaches	2,5	2 156 038	1 835 008	2 010 484	2 000 510	2 111 800	+5% 101 341
Plums	5,25	10 249 055	8 790 651	8 892 993	9 310 900	10 870 500	+22% 1 977 607

The South African stone fruit growers, packers and exporters remains committed to supplying consumers with excellent quality and great tasting products. The logistical chain has also returned to a more normal operational status, with a lot of focus having gone into improving efficiencies in all the major ports where fruit are shipped from. The industry is confident that the logistical challenges experienced during the past year due to COVID19 is something of the past and is looking forward to a great season.

Hortgro will regularly update the crop estimates in order to keep all role players informed.

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