HORTGRO Stone
Growing Fruit IQ
home of the south african stone fruit producer

Tel +27 21 870 2900 - Fax +27 21 870 2915 - Email info@hortgro.co.za - Website www.hortgro.co.za
258 Main Street, PO Box 163, PAARL 7620 - Hoofstraat 258, Posbus 163, PAARL 7620
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Press Release

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South Africa's 2026/2027 Stone Fruit Export Estimate

The South African stone fruit industry has entered the 2026/2027 export season with a mixed outlook. Overall export volumes are expected to decline by 3% on the previous season, reflecting varied trends across stone fruit categories. Nectarine exports are projected to increase, apricot volumes are expected to remain relatively stable, while peach and plum volumes are forecast to decrease.

Weather and production outlook

The season started earlier than last year, following a relatively dry winter. Significant rainfall and storm activity in May improved water availability in several key Western Cape production areas. Fruit development is also progressing noticeably earlier than usual, with early-season fruit expected to ripen about two weeks ahead of a typical season. This earlier timing will require close coordination across harvesting, packing and export logistics.

Hectare trends and varietal developments

The 2025 Tree Census shows mixed trends in South Africa's stone fruit planted area over the five-year period from 2020 to 2025. Fresh apricot hectares remained relatively stable, declining by 4%, while dessert peach hectares fell by 22% and plum hectares by 8%. By contrast, nectarine hectares rose by 28% over the five-year period, with the largest expansion occurring between 2021 and 2022. This increase in planted area has contributed to the recent significant growth in nectarine export volumes. Although planted area influences long-term production potential,

Directors: CG Herbst (Chairperson) • GC Hewitt (Vice-Chairperson) • AJ Smit • C Stander

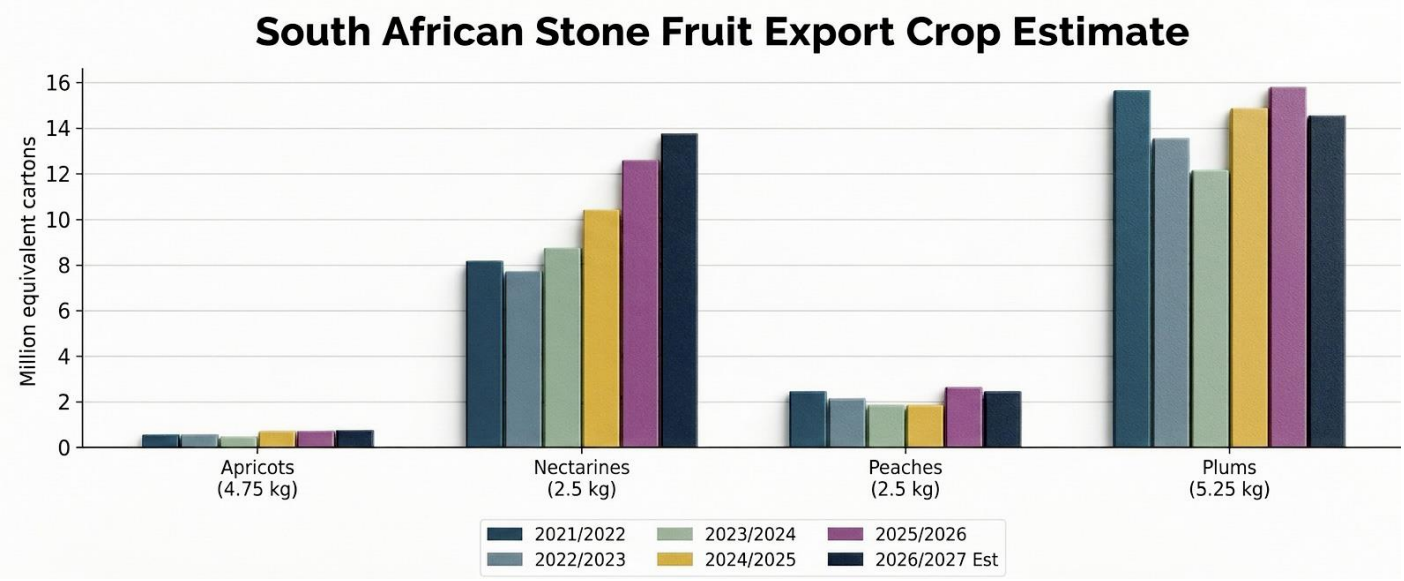
orchard age, yields, fruit set, weather conditions, and the proportion of fruit meeting export specifications also shape actual export volumes.

Logistics and market environment

The Port of Cape Town's performance remains a major concern for the upcoming export season. Hortgro and industry stakeholders will closely monitor port operations, vessel schedules, congestion, and shipment delays, as disruptions can affect fruit quality and arrival times. The Middle East is also expected to pose a significant challenge this season: ongoing geopolitical uncertainty and potential disruptions to shipping routes and trade flows could strain logistics and create uncertainty for exporters. The industry will closely monitor these developments and communicate relevant changes as the season progresses.

Final stone fruit export estimates (2026/2027)

- **Apricots:** Estimated at 766,000 4.75 kg equivalent cartons, up 2% from 750,000 in 2025/2026.
- **Peaches:** Estimated at 2.48 million 2.5 kg equivalent cartons, down 7% from 2.66 million in 2025/2026.
- **Nectarines:** Estimated at 13.81 million 2.5 kg equivalent cartons, up 9% from 12.62 million in 2025/2026.
- **Plums:** Estimated at 14.58 million 5.25 kg equivalent cartons, down 8% from 15.85 million in 2025/2026.



Outlook

The 2026/2027 export estimate points to a mixed stone-fruit season, with nectarine volumes expected to increase, peach and plum volumes projected to decline, and apricot volumes remaining relatively stable compared with the previous season. Hortgro will continue to monitor developments and keep the industry informed as the season progresses.

End

- For more information, contact Pieter-Steyn de Wet, pieters@hortgro.co.za
- Visit our website www.hortgro.co.za
- And follow us on social media