

Press release: 23 October 2018

## Optimistic 2018/2019 outlook for South African stone fruit producers

*After a very challenging 2017/2018 season, the forecast for the 2018/2019 season looks closer to a normal crop.*

Decent winter rains over the largest part of the Western Cape have brought much needed relief to many South African producers who have been battling with drought for the past few seasons. However, there are still some parts of the Little Karoo (Barrydale to Ladismith regions) where the drought has not been broken yet. Most producers are confident that they will be able to have a normal season.

The crop projection model has proved its reliability over many seasons and the initial export crop estimate projects an increase in volumes compared to the previous season.

The growth is mainly driven by young orchards coming into production and expansion in recent years. Apricots are the only exception with current volumes estimated to be on par with 2017/2018. This is due to the fact that parts of the Little Karoo region (Ladismith, Barrydale, Prins Albert and Calitzdorp), which is the main production region for fresh apricots, are experiencing issues with water availability and had cold weather during the flowering period.

Product	Carton eqv (kg)	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	3 yr avg	2018/2019 ESTIMATE	2018/2019 vs Previous Season	
Apricots	4,75	699 864	774 240	723 195	732 433	725 558	0%	2 363
Nectarines	2,5	4 017 425	4 122 833	4 202 020	4 114 093	4 431 629	5%	229 610
Peaches	2,5	2 212 478	2 169 010	2 156 038	2 179 175	2 344 930	9%	188 892
Plums	5,25	11 074 170	12 349 114	10 249 055	11 224 113	10 986 422	7%	737 367

Early varieties in all production regions seem to have had good fruit set; mid to late season volumes are also estimated to increase. Good winter rain and chilling, along with new orchards coming into production has contributed to the increase. The general opinion is that the status of irrigation water is adequate to support a good crop for the season.

The stone fruit industry is looking forward the 2018/19 season and remains committed to supplying consumers with good quality and great tasting product. Hortgro will regularly update crop estimates in order to keep all role players informed.