

South African floods devastate fruit crops across Cape regions

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 18 May 2026

Flooding and high winds have caused widespread damage across key fruit-growing regions, with crucial access roads to ports washed away



Image: Adobe Stock

The devastation caused by last week's floods and wind in South Africa's Western and Eastern Cape has struck a devastating blow to the fruit industry.

In the Gamtoos Valley of the Eastern Cape the flood struck as growers started to get into full swing packing their new crop.

In the Langkloof, whole communities have been isolated with crucial access roads to ports washed away, and in the Cape region the Breede Valley has been severely affected.

South African minister of agriculture John Steenhuisen and the premier of the Western Cape Alan Winde are today (18 May) conducting an overview of the Cape regions by helicopter.

Sources said, however, that will be a long time before the real effect of the storm and flood damage is quantified.

In the Cape, the key access road to Ceres through Mitchell's Pass was blocked by rock falls, and the crucial N-1 highway between the north of Cape Town through the Hex Valley and via the Huguenot Tunnel was closed.

Emergency work has been done, and it is expected that limited traffic movement will be possible from today.

There are however many other roads closed and communities isolated and without power.

The scenic Meiringspoort Pass road from George to Beaufort West and the north of the country has been completely washed away. Repair work will take months, if not years, some observers say.



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Along the banks of the Breede River, whole holiday communities have been devastated, while the wine industry and the popular region of Worcester and Robertson have suffered great losses.

Late apple varieties Cripps Pink and Rosy Glow, which are used to pack the specially selected fruit for the Pink Lady brand, have been badly affected, with trees being stripped by high winds.

Wide-ranging power cuts are also affecting some processing plants, and it is anticipated that up to 50 per cent of the late crop could be lost.

In the Gamtoos Valley, from where the popular Cumbria navel comes, orchards have been flooded and it is unclear precisely what the damage will be.

The Gamtoos Valley is a unique citrus growing region which at times in the past has suffered prolonged droughts, but now has too much water, according to local growers.

All the industry bodies, mainly the deciduous fruit body, Hortgro, and the Citrus Growers' Association, are conducting surveys to establish the real damage to the crop.

The table grape and stonefruit industries have completed their harvest but said in some areas growers also suffered severe damage to vineyards and orchards.

For the citrus growers of the Olifants River Valley near Citrusdal the rain and floods came at a difficult time.

The first bulk shipments to the US are due to start soon, but growers are confident that they will be able to meet shipping targets.

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