

South Africa: Rain good for citrus, not so good for grapes

After a long period of drought in South Africa the rain is now falling. This is great news for the growers in the north east, especially the citrus growers as things were getting to a critical stage. There has been rainfall for the last few weeks and it is set to continue for another week.

But what is great news for one is not necessarily good for someone else. It also rained in the Orange River where they are in full grape production just now.

"There was some rain in the Orange River region last week, with as much as 36mm falling within a short time in some areas," explains exporter Gary Britz from Ele Trading.

"This will have a big effect on the white seedless grapes with a lot of split berries, there will also be a dip in supply as they can't harvest till the vines are dry."

Harvest in the Orange River should start up again on Monday when the vineyards dry out, the varieties most likely to be affected are the Sugra One and Thompson.

Production has moved down to the Oliphant's River and the Hex River region has also started with the early white seedless and early red varieties, so supplies will pick up again and, according to Gary, a lot of the Prime seedless and Early Sweet did get into the market in time.

The Orange River will resume with some of the later varieties.

These days a lot of growers do have nets and have plastic in place as rain is expected at this time of year, but they can't withstand a downpour of 36 mm in a few hours as the moisture gets to the berries and they split.

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