

DOMESTIC

Citrus farmers welcome easing of water restrictions

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Citrus and cash crop farmers drawing water from the Kouga Dam in the Gamtoos River Valley received good news this week after authorities announced that punishing water restrictions had been significantly eased.

Around 200 farmers operating in the area, traditionally renowned both locally and abroad for the quality of its fruit, were yoked by a water restriction that allowed them to draw up to 40% of their annual allocation from the dam.

Some farmers could only draw 20% after the dam dropped to drastically low levels.

However, thanks to stronger rainfall and inflows into the valley, Gamtoos farmers will be able to draw 85% of their water allocation for the next “water year”, starting in July.

Currently Kouga’s level is said to have stabilised to about 45% of its capacity compared to recent drought levels that dipped to around half of the previous, parched season.

The announcement that water restrictions would be eased came after a meeting between the Department of Water and Sanitation, the Gamtoos Irrigation Board (GIB), and the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

GIB CEO Rienette Coleky said the news boded very well for farmers, many of them working in the cash crop sector, who were forced to cut back on production because of the 40% restriction.

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