

Gamtoos citrus growers back at 80% water restriction



Citrus growers in the Eastern Cape's Gamtoos Valley are back at a 20% water use quota, after a year of functioning at 85% of their allocation.

Like two years ago, an 80% restriction is back in place because of the very low dam level of the Kouga Dam (*pictured right*).

Good rains in January and February nurtured a good citrus crop but the new restriction effective from the new water year, starting 1 July, could place stress on late cultivars harvested two or three months hence.

Vegetable production in the Gamtoos Valley has decreased as result of the lingering drought. Some growers who produce vegetables for pre-pack programmes are renting land outside the Gamtoos Valley to meet their requirements.

In the Mondplaas area dairy farmers will run out of forage and will have to buy in.

What they need, explains Rienette Colesky, CEO of the Gamtoos Irrigation Board, is a flood. Two years ago rain in the catchment area during August lifted dam levels to 55%, the highest level it has reached since. Now the dam is at 6.8% again.

The Kouga Dam's catchment area is the Langkloof which has received minimal rain during the recent frontal system, but some of the rain falling in the Langkloof, like that from yesterday's rain around Kareedouw, instead drains away to the Churchill (Kromrivier) and Impofu dams.



The Kouga Dam in the Eastern Cape (photo supplied by Rienette Colesky)

Agricultural use has a 71.3% allocation from the Kouga Dam, while the Nelson Mandela Municipality (Port Elizabeth) holds 27.7% and the Kouga Municipality (Patensie and Hankey) receive 1% during a year of full allocation.

The large metropole of Port Elizabeth is restricted by 70% out of the Kouga sub-system.



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