



Western Cape citrus export season will end two weeks earlier than usual

Industry experts and economists are predicting that the Western Cape export season for citrus will end two weeks earlier than usual. According to MEC for Agriculture in the Western Cape, Andricus van der Westhuizen, the timing of the harvesting season is determined by various factors, from when the fruits are formed from the blossoms, right through to the ripening process on the trees.

Van der Westhuizen: "I would therefore be reluctant to say that the wet winter season was the sole cause of this. The biggest challenges were not the high, overall rainfall figures during the winter, as most farmers ensure that their orchards have the necessary drainage for rain. What was challenging were the floods (as experienced in mid-June 2023), as well as repeated hailstorms, the latest of which occurred this week in the Citrusdal area. Citrus trees are normally irrigated during the summer months (when the fruit are formed) and load shedding also impacts negatively on the size of the harvest.

"The expectations are that the season will not only end somewhat earlier this year, but also that the harvest will be about 10% less than estimated. This puts farmers in a difficult position, as their income will be affected, while input costs continue to rise. The weak currency (rand) helps a bit for the fruit that can be exported. But hail-damaged fruit cannot be exported and these fruits fetch a significantly lower price when destined for juice factories. Overall a strange, challenging year for many of our citrus farmers in the Western Cape," he added.

Source: [iol.co.za](https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/concerns-expressed-over-premature-end-to-western-cape-citrus-export-season-7866ae66-a38b-434e-9514-39d7940c3887) (<https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/concerns-expressed-over-premature-end-to-western-cape-citrus-export-season-7866ae66-a38b-434e-9514-39d7940c3887>).

Publication date: Mon 18 Sep 2023

