

Plea for help for flood-ravaged Citrusdal

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 17 July 2024

Immediate funding is required to help the farmers of Citrusdal's agricultural community out of flood distress

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has written to the Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Dr Ivan Meyer, to request support for the farming communities in Citrusdal.

In recent weeks, the area has suffered from flood damage for the second time in the past two years.

It is also marked the the third time in two years that the town had been completely cut off from the rest of the province after the the Olifants River flooded.



Image: Adobe Stock

The CGA said the community was facing a "very difficult time". There have already been reports of essential goods shortages.

"Concerning costs to the agricultural community specifically, early estimates suggest that the floods were more serious than those of 2023," highlighted Gerrit van der Merwe, chairperson of the CGA and a citrus grower in the area.

"Last year damage of more than R430m was experienced by citrus growers in the valley alone."

The CGA said it welcomed the fact that the provincial government had approached the National Disaster Management Centre and that a state of disaster had been declared.

"The CGA asked minister Meyer and his department for assistance in securing swift and effective access to funding and support," the association stated. "The CGA also requested that the citrus growers and farm workers of Citrusdal, who have been the hardest hit, be prioritised."

Van der Merwe said the citrus industry was the very heart of the community and generated opportunities for employment and economic betterment throughout the area.

“EUROFRUIT” te solutions, a private bridge on Mouton Citrus farms offers an option for reconnecting the town, but issues touching on liability, traffic management and possible infrastructure deterioration need to be addressed before this option can be actioned,” he noted.

The CGA said access via roads should be speedily resolved.

“Not just for everybody in the town, but also because it is currently the height of the export season” it outlined. “The floods have unfortunately coincided with the mid-point of the season, as massive volumes of especially oranges need to be moved to the Port of Cape Town.”

The citrus industry was proud of the fact that it “contributed substantially” to the Western Cape economy, the CGA confirmed.

“Every year we export more than 20m 15kg cartons of citrus from Western Cape orchards to overseas markets,” it said.

“As severe weather is becoming a regular occurrence, more must be done to ensure that Citrusdal’s infrastructure and emergency management can handle high water levels.

”Last year we also welcomed the provincial department’s extension of the current river protection works programme to flood-affected river systems,” CGA added. “Everything possible should be done to mitigate the impact of future floods.”

