

Timeous rains boost outlook for grain yield

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Farmers in the Western Cape are looking forward to better than expected grain harvests despite SA suffering its worst drought in decades. The Western Cape government said on Wednesday dam levels in the province were showing a slight decrease as the region entered summer.



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Agri Western Cape CEO Carl Opperman said on Tuesday the prospects for grain harvests were looking better than last year's because the rain had fallen within ideal intervals for production. However, he was worried about the wine and fruit industries. The Western Cape produces more than 50% of SA's agricultural exports.

Opperman said that in the Karoo area, farm dam levels were now 30% lower than the same time last year.

Grain SA's Toit Wessels said it was being estimated that the Western Cape would harvest about 900,000 tonnes of wheat, "which is impressive" during a drought. The province usually harvested between 800,000 and 1-million tonnes of wheat every year. The Western Cape has just more than 46% of SA's wheat-producing land. "We will only have the final figures at the end of November, farmers are busy harvesting now," said Wessels.

Although the drought persisted, rainfall in the province had come at the right time and was evenly spread, which boosted plant development.

Western Cape economic opportunities MEC Alan Winde said although average to below-average rainfall occurred in the Swartland, this rain fell timeously and an average grain yield was expected. "The Western Cape remains water-stressed and we all need to play our part by not wasting this vital resource."

Opperman said, although orchards were in full bloom, it was too early to predict the outcome of the fruit season.

Agri Western Cape was still delivering feed to the Karoo and West Coast areas, where livestock producers had been battling for months with no available grazing, he said.

Source: Business Day

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