

South Africa has seen a sharp uptick in early table grape exports, with volumes through week 45 significantly higher than previous seasons.

Data from the association South African Table Grape Industry ([SATI](#)) shows that 334,000 boxes had been shipped by the end of the week.

This contrasts with the 76,000 boxes shipped by the same time last year. The total by the same week in 2017 and 2016 was 145,000 and 155,000, respectively.

The vast majority of the South African table grape volumes are of the white seedless variety. A little more than half of the exports have gone to the European Union (excluding the U.K.). The next biggest markets so far are the U.K., Canada, and the Middle East.

Two of the five production regions - the Northern Provinces and Orange River - started harvesting in weeks 44 and 45.

This region started packing in week 44 although a bit slowly. Producers packed early varieties such as Early Sweet, Prime and Starlight.

Meanwhile, initial developments in the vineyards had pointed to an earlier start in the Orange River, SATI said. But it changed to a normal start for the region with only two farms that began packing from week 45.

Most farms are starting to pack from week 47. This region is experiencing relatively cooler weather, which aids the color development of grapes. The first volumes of Flame seedless, Early Sweet, Prime and Starlight are coming through.

The Olifants, Berg and Hex River regions have not started packing yet.

This season SATI is forecasting a South African [table grape crop of 61m - 68m boxes](#). Last season the industry packed 61.3m boxes.