

South African table grape exports are running higher than the previous season, but a lower proportion sent to the industry's leading market, Europe.

Meanwhile, a higher proportion has been sent to other destinations including Canada, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

By week 1, South Africa had exported 23.4m cartons of grapes - compared to 21.7m registered by the same week last year. This rise was driven by higher intake from all production regions except the Northern Provinces.

In terms of the market mix, so far this season 50% of exports have gone to the European Union (excluding the UK), while last season by the same week that figure was 57%.

The proportion sent to the U.K. - the number-two market - has remained steady at 23%, but there have been many increases elsewhere.

Canada's share has increased from 6% to 10%, while the Middle East's has grown from 4% to 5%, and Southeast Asia's has risen slightly to 4%.

In addition, the Far East has so far received 4%, up from 3%, while the U.S. has also seen a notable increase in shipments, although its share remains minor.

## **Regional overview**

Providing a regional overview of South Africa, industry body SATI said the second crop estimate in the Northern Provinces had decreased by 1.5m cartons due to rainfall late last year. Crimson is one of the few remaining varieties to be packed.

In the Orange River, packing is going "briskly", with the Augrabies and Rooipad sub-regions expected to be done by week 3-4.

"This region still has a lot of Thompson Seedless and Sweet Celebration to pack. Early indications are that the lower limit of the estimate will be reached," SATI said.

In the Olifants River, all indications are that vines have fully recovered from the recent drought based on the quality of grapes and berry sizes, which are above average.

"This region finished packing Tawny, Flame and Prime," SATI said. "Producers are currently packing Krissy and Sweet Sapphire. There are strong indications, if the current optimal harvest conditions remain, that this region will reach the upper limit of the estimate."

The Berg River's season got off to a quicker start than normal, with early cultivars up to week ahead of normal. The quality of white grapes is also much better than in the past.

As for the Hex River, it is still early in the season for this region. Weather conditions are described as ideal, and producers are packing Joybells, Midnight Beauty, and Sable Seedless.