

South Africa's blueberry production increased to 18,000 metric tons (MT) in 2019-20 from 11,700MT the previous season, slightly higher than [pre-season projections](#) of 17,000MT.

The South African Berry Producers Association ([SABPA](#)) said the 53% increase was testament to the growing investment in, and demand for, the country's berries.

"Our projections for the year ahead indicate that blueberry production could reach 25,000 tons for the 2020/2021 season, a solid increase considering the impact of the Covid-19 crisis," SABPA chairman Justin Mudge said.

He said the industry's growth was particularly good news for the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, where output was expected to grow by 136% and 102% respectively by 2025.

Earlier this month, the association announced a new record of 12,282MT in blueberry exports in 2019-20, meaning that exports accounted for 68% of the industry's output.

Mudge said the agriculture and food supply sectors had been deemed essential services during South Africa's national lockdown to contain the Covid-19 coronavirus, allowing farmers to stay on schedule with the planting season.

"We have every expectation that this year will be as productive as previous years, and that we will continue to see the growth that has allowed the industry to extend career and work opportunities to South Africa's labour force," he said.

"In this industry at least, we can continue to attract export revenue into the country since global demand for our fruit remains high, especially amongst health-conscious consumers. The well-known immune-boosting properties of berries means that they are likely to remain in demand for the foreseeable future," Mudge added.