

The South African Table Grape Industry (SATI) has lowered its crop estimate for the 2020-21 season after heavy rains at the start of the year hit the key Orange River region.

The trade association now expects the country's intake volumes to be between 61.7 million and 67.1 million cartons (4.5 kg equivalent), down from 65 million and 69.8 million cartons.

The mid to late cultivars in the Orange River, namely Autumn Crisp, Arra 15, Sweet Globe, Scarlotta, Sugar Crisp, Crimson Seedless and Red Globe will still be packed with "great care and focus on quality," it said.

It added that the geographical diversity of South Africa's five table grape production regions is once again demonstrated with the mid to late Olifants River, Berg River and Hex River regions in the Western Cape expected to make up for the volumes lost.

"In these regions the quality is excellent, and the weather forecast for the foreseeable future is equally promising," it said.

The earlier Northern Provinces region started about 2 weeks late but is expected to reach the upper level of the first crop estimate, while they report good quality and berry sizes.

The Olifants River region, with its packing window predominantly between that of the Orange River Region and the mid-to-late Berg and Hex River regions, reported very good quality and berry sizes. The estimate of the Olifants River region has been raised to a low of 3,7 million and a high of 4,0 million cartons.

The Berg River region, the third biggest production region in SA, reported equally good quality grapes with very decent berry sizes. The estimate for this region remains unchanged.

The quality of grapes in the Hex River region also looks very promising. The estimate has been changed with the upper limit increased to 23.0 million cartons, while the lower end remains unchanged at 20.6 million cartons.