

South Africa's 2018/19 maize harvest estimate lowered

 By [Wandile Sihlobo](#)

20 Dec 2018

There are growing concerns that the [current dry weather conditions](#) in most parts of South Africa could lead to a lower maize harvest in the 2018/19 production season; but the production expectations for the season are not as acute as what was seen in the 2015/16 drought periods where South African maize production amounted to 8.2 million tonnes - turning the country into a net importer of maize.



Figures released by the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) show that South Africa's maize harvest could amount to 12.0 million tonnes, down by 8% from the previous month's estimate, and 11% from the 2017/18 production season. Moreover, this is slightly lower than [our estimate](#) of 12.2 million tonnes.

While it is still too early in the season to be certain about the 2018/19 maize production prospects, a harvest of 12.0 million tonnes would mean that South Africa would have sufficient maize supplies until April 2020.

When the current marketing year ends in April 2019, South Africa could have approximately 3.3 million tonnes of maize carry-over stock (opening stock for the next year), which would mean that the country might have roughly 15.3 million tonnes of supplies in 2019/20 marketing year (assuming that the estimated 12.0 million tonnes materialise). Remember, our annual maize consumption is about 10.8 million tonnes.

The numbers look fairly good, but let us put our eyes on the [precipitation prospects](#) and hope that there will be good rains soon.

ABOUT WANDILE SIHLOBO

Wandile Sihlobo is an agricultural economist and head of agribusiness research at the Agricultural Business Chamber (Agbiz) in South Africa. He is a columnist for Business Day and Farmers Weekly magazine.

- 30 years into democracy: How has South Africa's agricultural sector performed? - 15 Jan 2024
- Agribusiness confidence remains subdued in Q2 - 20 Jun 2023
- #BizTrends2023: SA agricultural trends to watch in 2023 - 9 Jan 2023
- The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on agricultural employment in South Africa - 23 Jun 2020
- Southern Africa could face another season of poor agricultural output - 9 Dec 2019

[View my profile and articles...](#)

