

South-western parts of SA could receive above normal rainfall

By [Wandile Sihlobo](#)

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Yesterday (25 June 2018), the South African Weather Service reiterated its view that the south-western parts of South Africa could receive above normal rainfall during late winter, which is July to September 2018. This is precisely what the Western Cape needs in order to replenish subsoil moisture and subsequently benefit the winter wheat crop following months of dry conditions.



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The recent rainfall in the province was not evenly spread. The Swartland and Overberg regions received fairly good showers, whereas the other regions in the province experienced dry conditions with light and scattered showers. This is evident in the winter wheat crop conditions, with the aforementioned regions in good shape, while the rest of the province urgently needs moisture to sustain the newly planted crop.

What is disappointing, however, is the near-term weather forecasts which present a contrary view of light showers of below 25 millimetres between this week (ending 29 June 2018) and 11 July 2018. This could potentially strain the winter wheat crop, particularly in the Southern Cape region, which has not received good showers since the start of the season. Against this backdrop, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasts South Africa's 2018/2019 wheat production at 1,65 million tons, up by 8% from the previous season due to expectations of higher yields.

The official production estimated by the National Crop Estimates Committee will only be released at the end of August 2018. What we know at the moment is that South African wheat farmers intended to plant 500 500 hectares of wheat in the 2018/2019 marketing year, which is well above the USDA's estimate of 480 000 hectares, and 2% higher than the area planted.

The feedback from farmers on the ground has been fairly positive regarding planting activity, with provinces such as the Free State still underway. The first area planting estimate for the 2018/2019 production season will also be released at the end of August. As this is all well known in the market, it will have minimal impact. But we stressed it in order to provide context for the recent developments on the production front.

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Wandile Sihlobo, head of economic and agribusiness intelligence at Agbiz, shares highlights in his update on agricultural commodity markets.

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