

# Bumper harvest for SA olive growers

Despite bad news, loadshedding woes and ongoing challenges that face farmers in South Africa, many olive growers had a bumper crop harvest. According to SA Olive data, local farmers have produced around 1.6 to 1.7 million litres of EVOO over the last two years, and production is expected to be at a similar level in 2022, despite varying yields across South Africa's olive growing regions.



Source: Supplied

With the harvest now complete, experts indicate that table olives and Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) from the 2022 harvest will be excellent.

SA Olive CEO, Vittoria Jooste says that the South African olive industry is really coming of age. "Our growers' orchard management practices are constantly improving - from the pruning of their trees to the management of soil and nutrients - and this helps achieve better yields and mitigate some of the adverse factors, such as weather."

## Olive production in SA

The olive harvest in South Africa begins in late February and runs through to June and sometimes even July in some areas. Most olive farms are situated in the Western Cape and the majority deploy traditional methods, manually harvesting their olives and paying specific attention to quality olives that will be used to produce premium Extra Virgin Olive Oils (EVOO makes up over 95% of olive oil production in South Africa). For South Africa's olive growers, the work does not stop when the harvest ends, because they now must prepare their orchards and prune their trees in readiness for the next crop.

Weather conditions in the Overberg were perfect and allowed an easier harvesting process with, for example, Greenleaf Olive Company and Mardouw Olive Estate in the Swellendam area both reporting increased yields compared to 2021 – Greenleaf's is up by a whopping 40%. Mardouw's Philip King said that a combination of factors contributed to their record harvest this year: "We prepared the trees really well last year; this and the perfect weather conditions has resulted in higher olive yields, although the actual oil yield is smaller than in previous years."



Source: Supplied



Source: Supplied

Meanwhile, in the Klein Karoo, the olive farmers were not so fortunate. Bad weather has resulted in a smaller crop. Contributing to the low yield have been many factors apart from the weather, such as increased costs for fuel, water, fertiliser, and labour. This means that many farmers will not be exporting their products and will focus their efforts on the local market. This is good news for South African consumers who will be spoilt for choice with top-quality 2022 EVOOs, many of which have already won international accolades competing with the best in the world.

André Conradie from Kloovenburg Wine and Olive Estate in Riebeek Kasteel says that increased fuel costs and loadshedding have challenged their operation massively. "While we currently supply the local market with olives and EVOO, we would like to export to Europe in future and, if all goes well, perhaps over the next year. Some of our trees are 35 years old and like red wine our olives are definitely getting better with age, and we are optimistic about the future."



Source: Supplied



Source: Supplied

The manager at Tokara, Gert van Dyk and Jason de Beer, the CEO at Morgenster Estate olive farms in the Western Cape echoed that they had a much larger crop this harvest compared to 2021 and managed to produce some exceptional quality

oils, with distinct organoleptic characteristics, good fruitiness, pronounced bitterness and spiciness and will most definitely meet export standards.

Farmers have expressed thanks to the SA Olive Industry Association for their support during the harvest season and look forward to the upcoming SA Olive Awards which will take place in September at Laborie Estate in Paarl.

Jooste adds: "With an excellent harvest, and good fruit, we expect to celebrate many of our 2022 EVOOs in the upcoming SA Olive Awards. We acknowledge the enormous challenges faced by our producers with loadshedding at its highest at the time of processing, but this is another matter altogether and one that we hope will be soon overcome."

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