

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Severe Flooding Disrupts Citrus Operations in Northern South Africa

Country: South Africa - Republic of

Post: Pretoria

Report Category: Citrus

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Report Highlights:

Heavy, persistent rainfall in South Africa's Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces has caused widespread flooding. South Africa has declared a national disaster as the flooding has resulted in significant infrastructure damage. Waterlogged orchards have hindered disease management and increased the risk of citrus black spot (CBS) infestation, threatening market access, especially to Europe. The affected regions do not export citrus to the United States, as only CBS-free areas in other provinces are eligible for U.S. export.

Background

The Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces in the north-east part of South Africa experienced heavy and persistent rainfall in the third week of January 2026. Reports indicate that Limpopo province received 28 inches (700 millimeters) of rain since January 9, exceeding the 100-year flood line in many areas. The widespread flooding has been declared a national disaster. Significant infrastructure damage has been reported, particularly to roads and bridges. Thousands of homes have been damaged, and agricultural activities have been disrupted. Although citrus growers have been most affected, the two provinces are also major production regions for macadamia nuts, avocados, mangoes, lychees, bananas, and various vegetables. The rains also flooded areas in neighboring countries Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Botswana.

Figure 1: Areas affected by the Flood



Source: Google Maps



Photo: Limpopo Department of Public Works



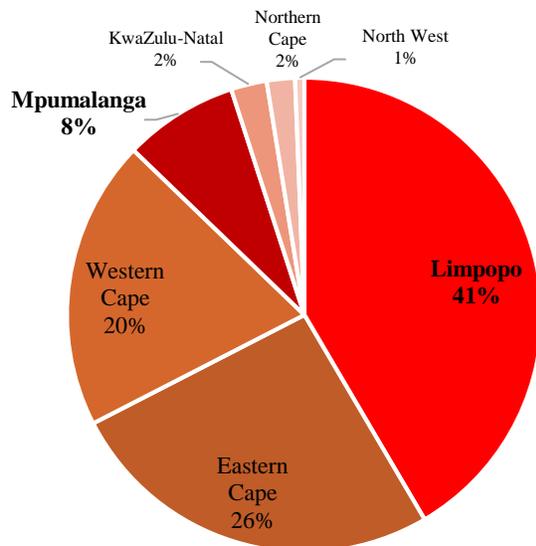
Photo: SANParks

Flooding Affects Citrus Growers

Citrus growers in both provinces have been significantly affected by recent rain and flooding, which coincided with the start of the harvest season. According to FAS Pretoria contacts, one production region in Limpopo received about 13 inches (330 millimeters) of rainfall over five days, while the annual average rainfall in the region is approximately 25 inches (640 mm) per year. Although this region did not report extensive damage, the rain resulted in waterlogged orchards, preventing growers from working. The rainfall disrupted harvesting and export activities for early-harvested lemons, which are mostly exported. Some growers expect to harvest lemons around week ten if weather permits, but fruit may be lost due to over-maturity. Additionally, the heavy rains may affect the internal quality of mandarins by reducing acid levels if orchards do not receive new, improved drainage to allow water to pass through and minimize damage to the trees before harvesting. The wet conditions also favor citrus black spot (CBS) infestation and limit spraying for CBS, which poses a market access risk for exports, particularly to Europe.

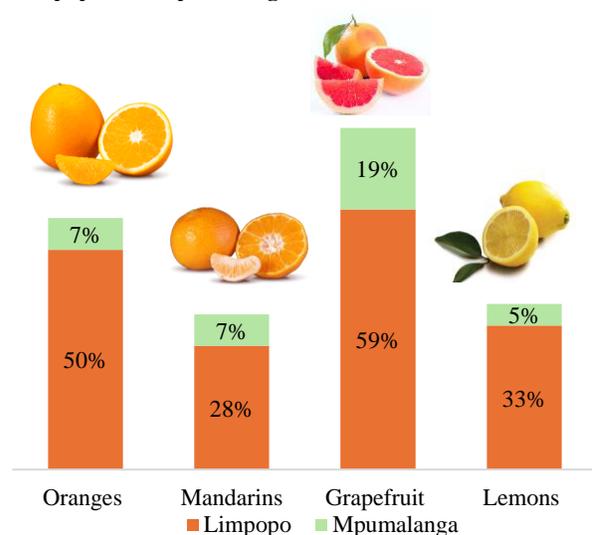
Limpopo province is a leading citrus production region, accounting for 41 percent of the total South African area under citrus cultivation, while Mpumalanga accounts for 8 percent. Limpopo is responsible for 59 percent of the area planted to grapefruit and half of the area planted to oranges, particularly Valencia oranges. The citrus industry is engaging with government in assessing road and bridge damage and tracking the progress of rehabilitation of critical road networks as the citrus season commences.

Figure 2: Provincial Distribution of Citrus Production Area in South Africa



Source: Citrus Growers' Association

Figure 3: Proportion of Planted Area by Citrus Type in Limpopo and Mpumalanga



Source: FAS Pretoria using Citrus Growers Association data

The regions affected by the recent floods do not export citrus to the United States. Currently, South Africa may only export citrus to the United States from areas officially recognized as free from CBS. These CBS-free areas are in the Western Cape and Northern Cape provinces, as well as designated districts in the Free State and North West provinces.

Attachments:

No Attachments.