Overview of the 2019 Western Cape canola crop

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Climate was once again the biggest challenge for canola crops this year. Growing conditions in the Overberg and Southern Cape were optimal at the beginning of the season due to regular rainfall, which resulted in excellent crop establishment and growth.



The Overberg canola region received good rainfall at the beginning of this year's growing season.

Unfortunately, optimal growing conditions were followed by a very dry July, August and September, which shortened the seed-filling stage to a large extent and therefore decreased the average yield potential to below average.

The Swartland region was not as fortunate as the Overberg and Southern Cape regions regarding rainfall at the beginning of the season. Luckily a shift in rainfall events occurred from 20 June, which improved crop stands to such an extent, that a record year for the Swartland region was once again expected for the 2019 season. Unfortunately, extremely high temperatures of more than 35°C during full bloom, which is a critical stage to establish yield potential, resulted in flower burn that shattered record yield expectations.



Crops in the Swartland region were expected to reach a record yield but extremely high temperatures shattered these expectations.

Crop performance

Canola producers still managed to impress with above-average yields this year. Where the correct cultivar was used in conjunction with sustainable management practices, yield averages of more than 1,8 tons/ha were achieved in all parts of the Western Cape.

The total volume of canola production for 2019 was estimated at approximately 100 000 tons compared to 109 707 tons in 2018. *Table 1* compares the canola area planted and volumes for the three canola-growing regions in the Western Cape for the 2019 growing season to that of the 2018 growing season.

Despite persisting drought conditions, the area planted to canola continues to increase each year. The crop's tolerance to drought conditions has proven the crop to be a trustworthy component of a crop rotation system with grains. Seed technology has also kept track of current conditions and continues to release short-growing, high-yielding cultivars on a regular basis.

Table 1: Comparison of canola area planted and volumes for the three canola-growing regions in the Western Cape.

Region	Total hectares (2018)	Total hectares (2019)	Yield in tons (2018)	Yield in tons (2019)
Overberg Agri (OVA)	22 165	22 760	43 017	30 301
Sentraal-Suid Co-operative (SSK)	23 195	26 624	30 297	32 833
Swartland	21 654	19 960	36 393	28 067
Total	**67 014**	**69 344**	**109 707**	**91 201**

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