

South African Winter Cereal Production

Wheat is by far the biggest winter cereal crop planted in South Africa. Other winter crops are barley for malting purposes and canola. Summer field crops are better suited for the South African climatic conditions. Maize has the largest crop size of the different crops, followed by wheat, then soya-beans, sunflower seed, malting barley, sorghum, groundnuts, canola and dry beans.

South Africa (made up of nine provinces) is divided into 36 crop production regions with wheat planted in about 32 of these regions. These production regions are described on pages 21 to 52 (in the header of the left page) giving the specific intake silo names for each region.

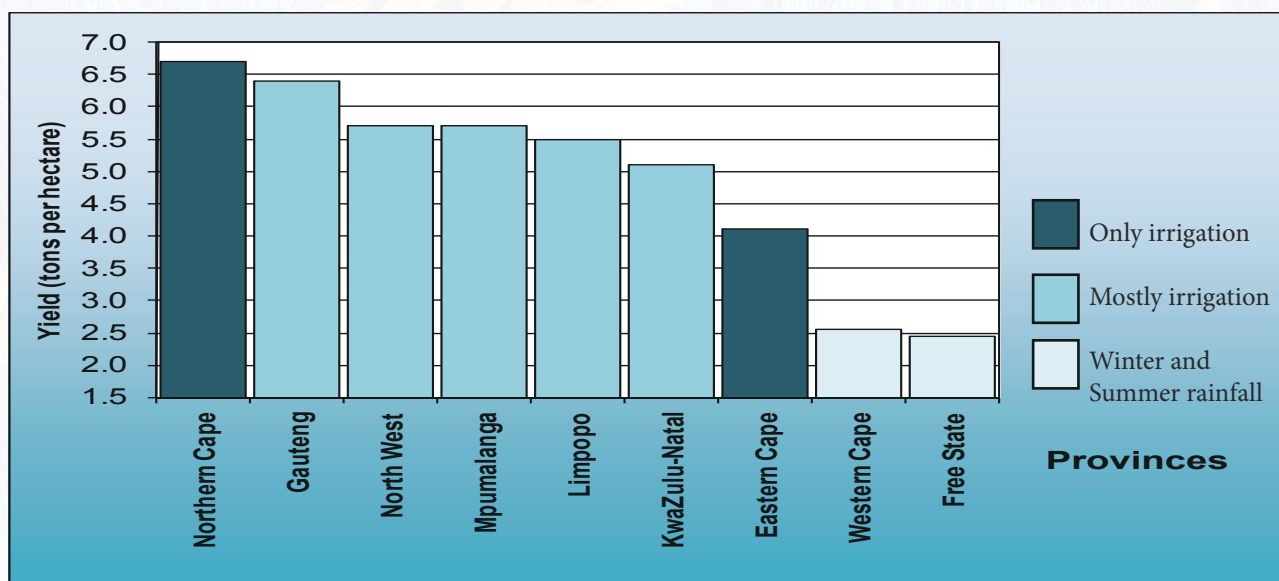
The three main wheat producing provinces are Western Cape (winter rainfall), Free State (summer rainfall) and the Northern Cape (irrigation). Other provinces worth mentioning is Limpopo (irrigation) and North-West (mainly irrigation). The local production is not sufficient for domestic requirements and South Africa has to import wheat to meet its domestic consumption.

The Western Cape province produced 675 750 tons and the Free State province followed with 551 250 tons. These two provinces were responsible for 64% of the total wheat produced. The Northern Cape produced 281 400 tons, Limpopo 170 500 tons and North West 125 400 tons. (Final production estimate by the Crop Estimates Committee, CEC).

The yield in the main production areas ranged from 6.7 tons per hectare (t/ha) in the Northern Cape (irrigation area) to 2.6 t/ha in the Western Cape and 2.5 t/ha in the Free State. In the Western Cape and Free State, yields increased from the 2.1 t/ha and 1.9 t/ha averaged during the previous season. Gauteng gave a yield of 6.4 t/ha, followed by North West and Mpumalanga both with 5.7 t/ha. Limpopo averaged a yield of 5.5 t/ha, KwaZulu-Natal 5.1 t/ha and the Eastern Cape 4.1 t/ha. See graph below.

South Africa has three major wheat-breeding programs. The South African breeders can only release a new cultivar or an introduction cultivar if it has better agronomical as well as better flour quality characteristics than the cultivars planted commercially in a specific area. Producers continuously strive to improve the wheat yield and quality by selecting the best cultivars for commercial production in a specific area. Grading standards are also set high to ensure adequate quality control.

Average yield per province
(Irrigation versus summer and winter rainfall areas)



(Based on final production estimate figures obtained from the CEC)