

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, sorghum, barley, groundnuts, dry beans and canola.

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 16 to 44 (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). A fourth province worth mentioning is the North-West (mainly irrigation).

The Western Cape province produced 675 000 tons and the Free State province followed with 622 750 tons. (Seventh estimate by the Crop Estimates Committee, CEC). These two provinces were responsible for 67 % of the total wheat produced.

The yield in the main production areas ranged from 6.3 tons per hectare in the Northern Cape (irrigation area), 2.7 tons per hectare in the Free State and 2.3 tons per hectare for the Western Cape. Gauteng gave a yield of 6.4 tons per hectare, followed by North West with 5.7 tons per hectare and Limpopo and Mpumalanga both with 5.5 tons per hectare. KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape yielded 5.0 and 4.0 tons per hectare respectively. See graph on page 13.

The local production is not sufficient for domestic requirements and South Africa has to import wheat to meet its domestic consumption of approximately 2.9 million tons every year.

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.

Imported wheat (1 October 2008 - 30 September 2009) (Previous season)

The quality of all wheat imported into South Africa is also monitored by the SAGL. The range of analyses done on the local crop for the purpose of this survey are also done on the imported wheat. These results may only be made available at the end of each season.

Pages 56 to 67 of this report contain summaries of wheat imported from specific countries during the 2008/2009 season. This imported wheat quality is compared to a summary of the local crop quality for the same season.

The quality of the Australian and Canadian flour milled from wheat imported during the 2008/2009 season were better than the local wheat flour quality. The Argentinian and German flour were not as good as the quality of the local flour of the 2008/2009 season, while the Brazilian and American flour were noticeably weaker than the local flour.