

# A little rain goes a long way for farmers

Much-needed rain in the past couple of months has helped to alleviate pressure on South African farmers in a number of provinces, but significant rainfall over the next few months is essential to ensure the full replenishment of irrigation dams, agricultural economists have warned.



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"Eight provinces were declared drought disaster areas early in 2016, which indicates both the severity and extent of the drought," said John Purchase, CEO of the Agricultural Business Chamber, this week.

Fanie Brink, an independent agriculture analyst, said the general outlook at the end of 2016 was much better than a year ago. "Grazing was restored very well in those areas that were blessed with good rains," Brink said. But some areas remained dry.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is expected to release preliminary information later this month about the areas planted with maize and other crops such as soya beans and sunflowers, and the first harvest forecasts.

Purchase said these crops were looking good in the eastern and central areas of Mpumalanga, and in the eastern and northern Free State, but bad in the western Free State and the southern region of North West. In those areas where the outlook was bad, "a number of farmers have not been able to plant because of a lack of finance and insufficient soil water," Purchase said.

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