

Sugar output in South Africa may gain after recent rainfall

MEDIA RELEASE

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Recent rains falling over most parts of KZN are most welcome by cane growers who are recovering from a 'difficult' two seasons that have included drought and frost conditions and a volatile world market sugar price. The rain has come at an ideal time as most growers have commenced fertiliser and planting operations for next season's crop.

However, the rainfall has not been widespread throughout the sugar industry with the Midlands region receiving approximately 25mm compared against the long term mean of 112mm. Brian Pearce, CANEGROWERS Regional Manager for the Midlands region, said today, "the area going inland from the coast has dried off and rain is badly needed in this region."

Chris Gillitt, Regional Manager for the Tugela region on the KZN North Coast is more optimistic. "The rain gauge overflowed on weekend recording in excess of 100mm (130mm long term mean) and more rain is expected. The Amatikulu cane supply area recorded in excess of 220mm of rain which is above the long term mean of 121mm. This will be welcome news to growers in that region who were amongst the hardest hit by the earlier drought conditions."

The recent rainfall will have little impact on this year's crop as the season is almost at an end. However, it may hamper extraction operations which could lead to increased carry over cane.

In looking to the 2012/13 season, the wet weather conditions have set the foundation for a good crop. Continued good rains December, January and February, coupled with good heat units, should see a good start to the season and an improvement in cane production and yields, according to national cane producer body CANEGROWERS. South Africa's 2011/12 season is 92 per cent complete with cane crush expected to total 17 029 000 tons, an increase of 1 013 351 tons cane over the previous season.

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COMPILED BY JAYNE FERGUSON

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
CANEGROWERS

CONTACT

TEL: 031 508 7200
FAX: 031 508 7201
CELL: 083 381 3990
E MAIL Jayne.Ferguson@canegrowers.co.za