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Rains and hail see cotton output drop 13% in South Africa for 2022

- Cotton yields will be lower for the 2022 season and are expected to drop 13%.
- The industry, which planted on more than 14,000 hectares of land, has managed to produce 68,000 lint bales of cotton.
- The drop comes as demand for cotton products and apparel returns after being dampened during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
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South African cotton growers expect volumes to drop as much as 13% this year compared to the prior season, following heavy rainfall and hail that caused damage to some farmers' fields.

The industry estimates that it can produce about 68,000 lint bales of cotton this year, which is already lower than last month, industry body Cotton SA said in its latest crop estimate report for 2022, which is about to come to a close.

The crop estimate has also not increased from the previous season, Cotton SA said.

“Regardless of the higher commodity price, the crop estimate has not increased from the previous season, and in addition, producers suffered considerable damage from sustained rain and hail in various regions,” it said.

Cotton in South Africa is produced mostly in the northern parts of the country in the Northern Cape, North West, and Limpopo. It also grows in the Mpumalanga, the Free State and Kwa-Zulu Natal.

The industry, whose plantings were spread out on 14,044 of land for the season, anticipates a yield of 4,140 kg per hectare under irrigation from seed cotton and 1,523kg per hectare on drylands. It produced 4,515kg per hectare and 2,552kg per hectare during the prior season.

The drop in cotton production comes as the demand for cotton products increases globally, especially with the world opening up and as sales of cotton apparel and related products return. The Covid-19 pandemic dampened demand for cotton.

Prices for the commodity are also on the rise.

“The outlook for the remaining hectares remains increasingly weather dependent, especially in the dryland areas and we are likely to finish the season on a positive note if the growing conditions retain the current momentum,” Cotton SA said in the report.

“It is, however, important to note that current drought conditions in certain growing areas can place pressure on final yields,” it said.