

Eight years later and FruitLook continues to grow

by Caren Jarman, Ruben Goudriaan and Roan Naude

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Image showing the GrapeLook web portal in 2010 compared to the FruitLook web portal in 2018.

Satellites have been orbiting the Earth's surface for many years capturing information we cannot see with the naked eye. Such information can be of great use to farmers, for example in describing crop growth vigour or soil water content. In 2010 farmers in the Western Cape started to reap the benefits of satellite-derived information for the first time through the GrapeLook

initiative. This initiative supported wine and table grape producers with information to improve their on-farm water use efficiency. Today this initiative is known as FruitLook and has expanded to provide the wider agricultural sector with weekly updates on crop growth, real crop water use and plant nitrogen. All aimed at supporting farmers to produce **“more crop per drop”!**



Photo © Geoff Sperring

Over the past eight years, the initial GrapeLook webportal has been transformed into a multi-faceted FruitLook portal and service, available at no cost to the user. Today FruitLook is fully funded by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. FruitLook data is available free of charge to all registered users, who can build their own data base containing information on their fields of interest to them. The program not only provides information in a spatial way (via a picture), but since the data is updated weekly, seasonal trends can be studied. It allows users access to all historical data (2010-2018), enabling them to compare data from past seasons to attain a better understanding of their block or farm performance.

With all this data, it is not surprising that FruitLook currently has 700 regular users, including producers, consultants and researchers. Users are benefitting from data available for approximately 9 million hectares of the Western Cape, covering a wide range of fruit crops (grapes, pome, stone, citrus, alternative), vegetables, grains, pastures, industrial crops and others.

In a recent survey conducted online, 63% of users indicated that FruitLook made their water management at least 10% more efficient.

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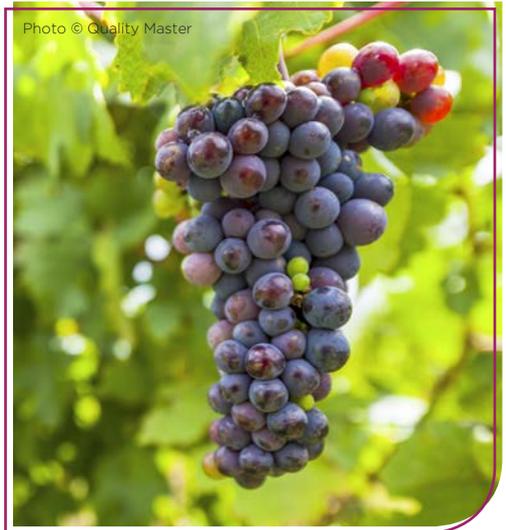
Some users have been benefitting from this service for up to five years and more. It proves to be an effective tool for planning, monitoring and evaluating farming activities:

Planning: FruitLook data can be used to draw up water budgets and prioritise water allocations in terms of block water use efficiency.

Monitor: FruitLook data can assist with water management (how much water should be applied where and when), probe placement, selective sampling prior to and during harvesting and general problem detection through deviations in the spatial pictures and data trends, and in subscribing to FruitSupport.

Evaluate: FruitLook allows users to do a post-seasonal analysis, relating crop yield to the FruitLook data, analyse changes implemented and planning for the future.

Photo © Quality Master

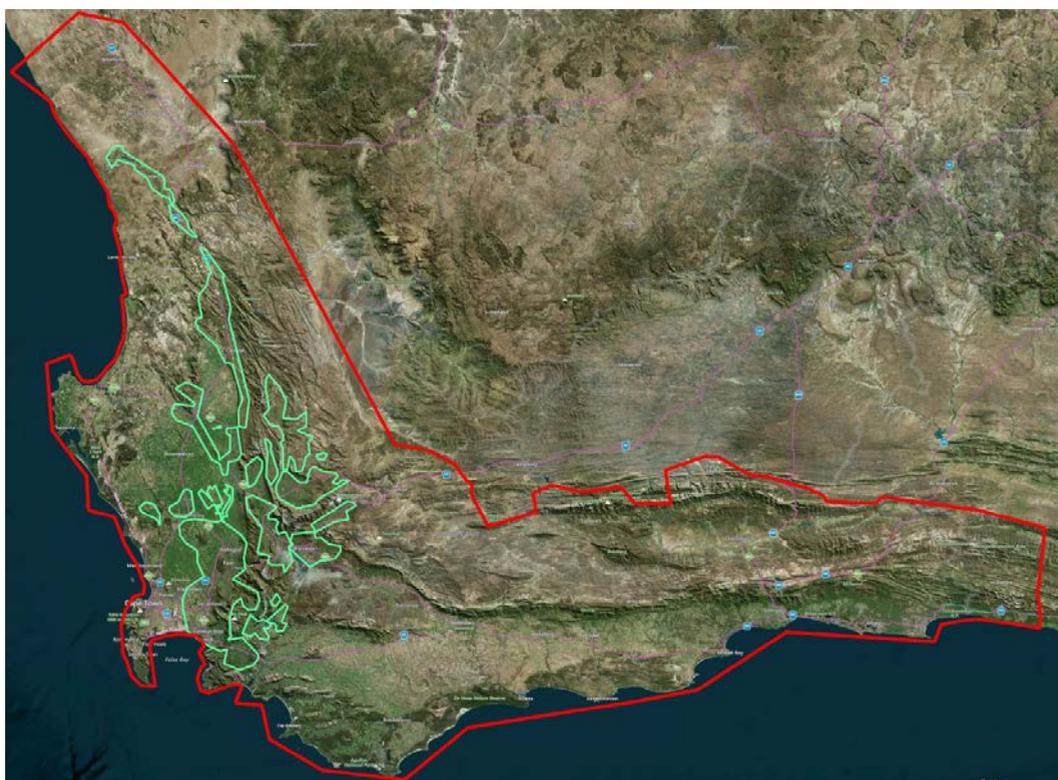


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One success story is that of Hendrik Schoeman from Lochlo farm in Villiersdorp. He registered on FruitLook about five years ago and immediately drew in all the blocks from his farm to access the FruitLook data. Since FruitLook provides “historical” data (a week after it was captured), he uses FruitLook data together with weather data

to plan for the week ahead. For example, if he notices that the coming week will be as warm as the past one was and the FruitLook data shows that the water he gave during that week was optimal, he will typically stick to the same irrigation strategy. Hendrik indicated that when he compares the farm’s productivity over recent years of using FruitLook, he saved water through effective water management. He changed from a five-hour water cycle to a three-hour cycle and the impact on his yield was positive with an increase of 30%! Additionally, he recently introduced probes to monitor soil water content as an additional tool to improve his water management, especially for the fields that present challenges in terms of irrigation. Hendrik especially uses the water use efficiency data from FruitLook. **AP**



The red outline shows the FruitLook monitoring area in 2017-18, compared to the same area in 2011-12 (green outline).

FRUITLOOK 2017/18

 <p>1st & only in WESTERN CAPE</p>	<p>9 DATA PARAMETERS MONITORING</p> 
<p>2 TECHCOACHES help with implementation on farm</p> 	<p>50 BASICS TRAINING SESSIONS</p> 
<p>5 WATER MANAGEMENT AREAS (Olifants-Doorn region, Berg, Breede, Gouritz & Fish to Tsitsikamma.)</p> 	<p>AVAILABLE FROM 2011 for wine and fruit farmers</p> 
<p>7 GROWTH SEASONS SUPPORT monitor production & crop water usage</p> 	<p>WATER MANAGEMENT 63% users = 10% more efficient</p> 
<p>16 507 fields ordered for FruitLook 2017-18</p> <p>85 000 fruit fields available via FruitLook</p> <p>200 000 fruit hectares available via FruitLook</p> <p>9 000 000 hectare area available via FruitLook 2017-18</p>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 20px;"> <p>776 USERS of FruitLook 2017-18</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 20px;"> <p>74%</p> </div> <div> <p>FARMERS Consultants, scientists, students, etc</p> </div> </div>

FRUITLOOK TRAINING

Hands-on training on FruitLook is recommended for optimal use of this program. Training sessions are presented bi-weekly at Elsenburg, while regional training sessions are presented upon request. During these training sessions, users have the opportunity to look at a known field through the FruitLook “lens” and get a better understanding of what is “visible” through FruitLook and what actions can be derived. FruitLook TechCoaches based in the Western Cape are also available to assist with general queries, on-farm assistance or any clarification on the service.

For support, please visit
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To access FruitLook, scan the QR code or visit www.fruitlook.co.za

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