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Georgia forecasts its largest grape harvest since independence

Officials say the crop could top 320,000 tonnes, with rain delaying picking and forcing stricter quality sorting.

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Georgia is heading toward a grape harvest of more than 320,000 tonnes this year, a volume that the country’s agriculture ministry says could become one of the largest recorded since independence and may set a new high.

The forecast was outlined Monday by Environmental Protection and Agriculture Minister Davit Songulashvili, who said the 2026 season is shaping up as an exceptional one not only for vineyards and winemaking but for agriculture more broadly. According to the ministry, the country is now preparing for an unusually large crop at a time when weather conditions and global market pressures are complicating decisions about when to pick grapes, how to store them, and how to manage the final mix of wine and grape-spirit output.

Songulashvili said preliminary estimates point to a harvest above 320,000 tonnes. If that level is reached, he said, it would likely be the first time in the history of independent Georgia that such a large grape crop has been gathered. Georgia is one of the world’s oldest wine-producing countries, and grapes remain central to its farm economy and export trade.

The ministry said abundant rainfall this season has created a key challenge in some vineyard areas. Because of the wet conditions, some grapes have not yet reached the sugar levels needed for harvest. That has delayed picking in certain locations and forced growers and processors to wait longer than usual before bringing fruit in.

Even with that delay, the harvest is now moving into a more active phase, according to the minister. He said the sector still expects to overcome the current difficulties, but the timing of the harvest has become more sensitive because wineries and buyers must balance ripeness, weather risks, and processing capacity.

The government’s message to growers and processors has centered on quality sorting. With such a large crop expected, Songulashvili said the issue is not only whether all grapes can be received and stored, but whether they can be separated by quality so they can later be sold into the right markets. The ministry warned that large volumes without careful grading could create stock and storage problems in future years.

That concern reflects Georgia’s reliance on wine and grape-based spirits as major export products. A bumper harvest can support production and sales if demand is strong, but it can also pressure prices, warehouse space, and inventory planning when global conditions are weak or uncertain. For the beverage sector, that means this year’s crop could test the balance between vineyard output, winery logistics, export

demand, and the management of stocks that may remain in storage after the season.

Songulashvili said global conditions for wine and grape spirits are currently difficult, making quality management more important than volume alone. In practical terms, that means processors may need to direct higher-quality grapes toward wines with stronger market potential while handling lower-grade fruit differently, rather than treating the entire harvest as a single pool.

The ministry did not provide a regional breakdown of the forecast in the statement released Monday, and it did not say how much of the crop is expected to go to wine, brandy, or other grape-based products. It also did not give a revised timetable for harvest completion in areas where sugar accumulation has lagged because of rain. But its comments made clear that the scale of the crop is forcing early planning on storage and marketing, not only on field operations.

Georgia’s wine industry has expanded its export profile over the past decade, but it remains exposed to swings in foreign demand and to the risks that come when agricultural output grows faster than final sales. A harvest of more than 320,000 tonnes could give wineries access to abundant raw material, yet it could also increase the need for disciplined purchasing, selective production, and careful release of inventory if export markets do not absorb the added volume quickly.

The ministry’s statement suggests that officials are trying to avoid a situation in which record grape intake leads to a buildup of unsold wine or grape spirits later on. By urging quality-based sorting at the harvest stage, the government is signaling that commercial planning will be as important as agricultural output in the weeks ahead.

For growers, the immediate issue remains the condition of the fruit in the vineyards. In areas affected by heavy rain, producers are still waiting for grapes to reach the required sugar content before full harvesting begins. For wineries and distillers, the next stage will be deciding how much fruit to accept, how to classify it, and how to align purchases with a market that the ministry described as challenging.