

Farmers hoping for Indian summer.....

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shortage" in good quality horse hay that will drive up prices.

Johnson said they expect a reasonably good soya bean crop this year although there

is more mold than in past year and a lot of root rot because the beans "don't like to get their feet wet."

Corn good

Corn can handle wetter soils better and it looks

"pretty darn good" although some crops are not maturing as fast as expected.

He said farmers he talks to are feeling the stress of the harvest but are reasonably optimistic that all will be well with a warm sunny September.

"Prices are still quite decent – not at the record levels of six months ago – but there is some profit potential. The farmers are tired and are trying to tough it out," Johnson said.

For local farmer Harry Brander, a member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Halton Agricultural Advisory

Committee, the wet weather means less yield, more diseases and higher fuel costs. Brander farms 1,500 acres of land in Halton and Peel.

"The rain caused some sprouting and some fusarium (head blight) in the wheat and with fusarium the wheat can't be used for human consumption and is downgraded to feed wheat for livestock, so as a result it cost us more to take our wheat off," Brander said on Friday, adding he was in four-wheel drive the whole time he was harvesting and that increased his fuel prices.

Brander said the wet weather has also made it

difficult for farmers to take off hay this year and there is still some first crop hay that is still standing out in the field because it is so old and mature that farmers have just given up.

"Last year the second crop of hay was pretty well non-existent because of the dry weather – this year within three weeks the second crop is already up your knees and just kept coming on."

Brander expects good yields with soya bean crops and corn that like wet weather.

"But, the concern we have now is that it's been a much cooler summer we're behind in what you call the heat units which is the amount of heat we have during the growing season. In this area we are about 100 to 125 units below normal, and there's always concern that there might not be enough heat to mature the soya beans," Brander said.

Despite the wet weather, Brander is optimistic that this year will be much better than last when he had his poorest year with corn and soya beans in 35 years of farming.

"There's always lots of

concerns but I think that overall I'm fairly optimistic with the year and the crops – it's been challenging but I seem to be making it okay," Brander said.

Along with the wet weather, Brander said farmers are dealing with 40 to 50 per cent increases in diesel fuel, huge increases in fertilizer costs – from 80 cents per litre to \$2.36 – and "horrendous" increases in equipment costs.

Agriculture generates approximately \$126-million in Halton annually, and of the 23 municipalities in the GTA, Halton Hills has the highest gross farm receipts, valued at more than \$65 million.

Over 400,000 poultry were produced in 2001, and the 1,027-acres of vegetables that went to market were valued at \$3.5-million.

Gross farm receipts (GFR) are a measure of productivity and the latest statistics show that Halton is ranked fourth in terms of productivity.

In 2001, the provincial average GFR per acre was \$675, for Halton Region and \$1,433 for Halton Hills. There are 619 working farms in Halton and 226 in Halton Hills.

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