

# HOT, DRY SUMMER HURTING FARMERS

## REDUCED HARVEST HAS LED TO PRICE INCREASES

REETI ROHILLA  
rrohilla@metroland.com

Plenty of heat and little rain.

That — along with a lack of adequate irrigation — has been an unfavourable combination for Halton farmers, leading to a reduced crop yield.

"This year the biggest problem is we had all heat and no rain," said Allison's Farm Market manager Katelyn Allison, whose Georgetown farm grows sweet corn, pumpkins and sunflowers while also offering a wide range of fruits and vegetables. "A good combination of rain and heat is needed for the crops to grow."

Abnormally dry weather in Oakville and Burlington, and a moderate drought in Halton Hills and Milton was indicated as of July 31 by the Canadian Drought Monitor, available on the Government of Canada's website.

The probability of abnormally dry weather is forecast as a one in every three years, while a moderate drought is a one in every five-year event.

Environment and Climate Change Canada's warning preparedness meteorologist Geoff Coulson said the first half of August received 18.2 millimetres (mm) of precipitation, which is only a quarter of the long-term average of 78.1 mm. July had 43.6 mm of precipitation, with the long-term average at 75.7 mm.

"March is the last month that Pearson airport (closest weather recording station to Halton) had a little bit more than normal precipitation. Every other month since then we've been consistently drier than normal," Coulson said.



Christine Allison photo

Allison's Farm Market co-manager Christine Allison is among the Halton farmers who've been challenged by an especially dry summer.

Allison's Farm Market co-manager Christine Allison said for the remainder of the harvest season — which runs from May to the end of September — 25.4 mm of weekly rainfall would be ideal. "Everything is much smaller this year and there is not an abundance of it," Christine said. "Last year some corn stalks had two cobs, and each one had at least one. But this year we are picking about one cob every few stalks."

Due to decreased harvest resulting in lesser sales, Christine said the prices of several products have gone up 15 to 20 per cent. This includes both in-house products and those sourced from more than 10 other local farmers also affected by scarce rainfall. Having lost two weeks of the sweetcorn season with an overall decrease in sales by 15 per cent resulting from the reduced rainfall, Christine estimates a "pretty big loss" this year.

Coulson said one of the main factors affecting the lack of rainfall is the irregular movements of the storm systems over southern Ontario during the last few months. "The factor

impacting the storm system is the position of the jet stream, which has been notably further north to us. The jet stream can act as a steering wheel for the weather systems," Coulson said.

Jet streams are known to be narrow bands of strong wind in the upper levels of the atmosphere.

In previous years of scarce rainfall, Christine said they would manually hose the five acres of pumpkin crops through a giant water tank driven around on a wagon, which is "a lot of work and a lot of money."

"August is usually a really dry month so we might have to use the tank and wagon for our pumpkins this year again," she said.

Milton's Wheelbarrow Orchards co-owner Brad Fraser said the lack of rain has been "challenging."

However, since he faced substantial crop damage due to frost in the spring of 2021, he's looking forward to a better overall season this year with the expectation of seeing his biggest apple harvest ever.

"Some people say the less rain we have the sweeter the apples are," Fraser noted.



## RENEW YOUR SPIRIT. REFRESH YOUR LIFESTYLE.

It's a perfect time to make a fresh start. At Amica Georgetown, you'll find the premium lifestyle you're looking for, the social connections you want, and care personalized to your needs. Find out how Amica can help you make this a season of opportunities.

Join us for a tour.

CALL CARI-LEE OR GLENNA AT 905-702-1555

# AMICA

GEORGETOWN

224 MAPLE AVE • AMICA.CA/GEORGETOWN