

Crop concerns continue for area farmers

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Acton Tanner

Three seasons of bad weather have left area farmers "frustrated but optimistic" according to a crop and soil adviser with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

"It's not a happy picture and I hate to be a whiner and complainer," Richard Hendry explained recently.

"Farmers are farmers because they like to run their own business, work for themselves, work outdoors and grow crops but this has certainly not been a great year to brag about - it's one we would like to forget about."

Last year's long, cold and hard winter led to a late, wet and cool spring and that led to late planting, Hendry said

for many crops that has meant low yields, pests and damaged fields.

"We had a lot of corn and soya beans going in very late and consequently we've got corn that didn't reach physiological maturity before the first killing frost," he said, noting that the corn has been very slow to dry down after harvest with farmers using a high amount of energy to dry the corn before storing it.

"We've got bushel weights of corn that are down significantly and we expect lower than normal weight for soya beans still to be harvested," Hendry said, adding that some farmers struggling to get the crop off are "mudding it out" and causing damage to the fields with harvesting

equipment.

Hendry said they are also expecting lower-than-average yields for mixed grains and the number of acres planted in winter wheat is down significantly, partly due to the fact that the wheat is planted after the soya beans, which in many cases haven't yet been harvested.

Hendry said last year's long, cold winter and January thaw resulted in severe winter kill in alfalfa and winter wheat. This was compounded by problems getting corn and soya into the ground. When the wheat was harvested it was diseased and graded lower than normal which meant lower prices.

"The other frustration is that over this time commodities of bean prices and corn prices were at an all-time high and here's the producer trying to get crops in the ground," Hendry said, noting that farmers are optimists and seem to be dealing with the crop problems very well.

Farming production in Halton was worth \$120 million last year with approximately \$30 to \$40 million coming from Halton Hills crops. Roughly 40,000 acres of land in Halton Hills is cropped each year.



Farmer Ross Britton at his Dublin Line farm.

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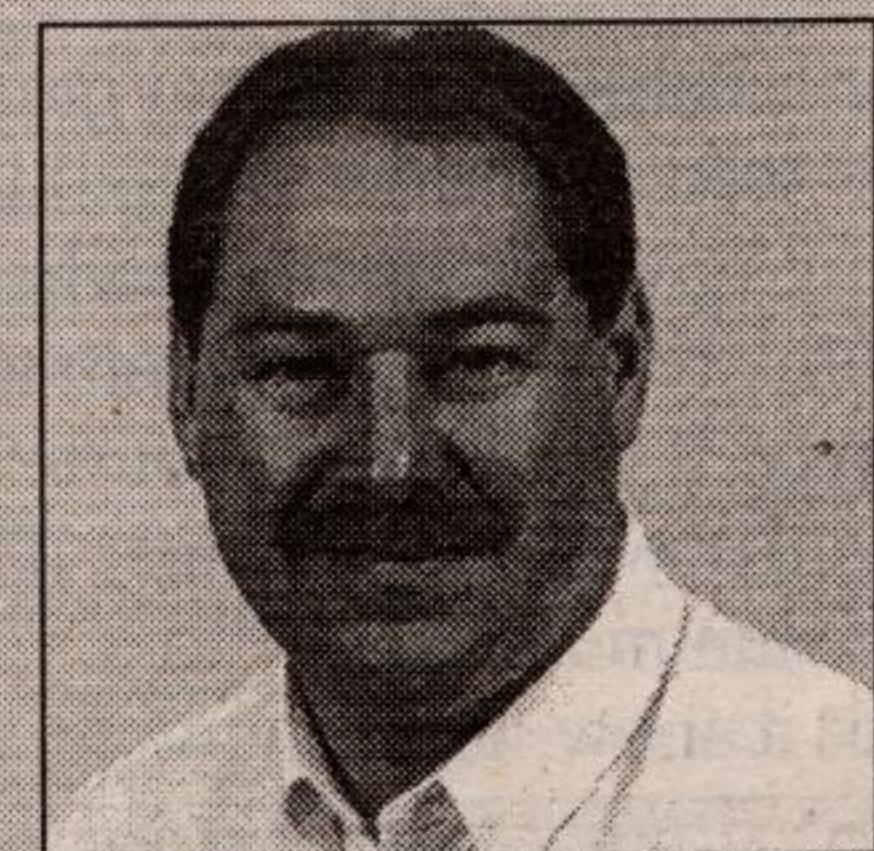
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