

Soybean crops can be saved, but rain is needed soon

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"Corn and soybeans are the major cash crops in Halton, and they also feel the impact of dry weather the most," added Allison, "Should the rain come now, there is enough time for the soybeans to yield, at best, an average crop. The plants are in the flowering stage right now— they could be saved with decent rainfall. But they need it 'yesterday'."

Limehouse cash cropper Fred Anthony of Anthony Acres agrees.

"I'd say there was virtually no impact on the fall wheat from the dry weather," said Anthony, "We had average yields and the quality was pretty good too."

"However, the corn and soybeans are really suffering right now," added Anthony, "The tips of the cobs haven't filled, and by now, they won't be either. All we can hope

is that the rain does come to fill what is there already."

Anthony, who runs a 12,000 acre crop operation across southern Ontario, said that the 4,000 acres of crops he has in Halton Hills area are average or a bit below for a normal year, but rain could save them, at least giving an average yield.

"Our Milton area land is heavier, with more clay, so those crops are suffering more, while our crops in the Shelburne area are doing fine— it all depends where you are, how much impact the dry weather has had on the crops."

Anthony said soybeans are the dicey crop at this time.

"The soybeans are flowering right now, so if it rains, the plants will be able to complete that flowering stage and produce beans. But if this dry spell continues, they will be a mess."

Not only is the dry weather a problem for soybean

growers, but with the dry spell comes the aphids, a common side effect of dry weather.

"We've been spraying the soybeans with insecticides the past month to control them as much as possible," said Anthony, "But that can be pretty costly too."

"A real good rain could certainly save the soybeans, but the corn yields are pretty well predetermined," said Anthony, "There are only so many kernels in the cobs now— there won't be any more— and all we can hope is the rain comes and fills out what is already there."

To date, that 'real good rain' has been pretty elusive, according to University of Guelph records.

"From May to July this year, we have experienced less than 50 per cent of average rainfall for that time," said Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMFRA) corn specialist Greg Stewart from his office at the University of Guelph, "And like any dry weather period, the weather has been very sporadic, causing some areas to be more impacted than others."

Stewart added that dry spells often cause soil textures to play an even bigger role in the conditions of the crops, and how well they handle the dry weather.

"Sandy, gravelly land tends to be unable to hold the necessary moisture when a dry spell hits," said Stewart, "And conversely, the heavy clay land holds the moisture, yet can't make it available to the plant since the surrounding areas are so hard and dry."

Stewart added that differences in farm practices are also much more pronounced during a dry spell, and one farmer will see an average crop, while his neighbour's fields might be wiped out in the knolls, yet average in the lower areas, simply because the crops were planted in different ways.

"One thing is sure," said Stewart, "The dry spell started at the worst possible time for the corn to pollinate, so many ears of corn are not filled to the end with kernels. That can't be remedied, and the only thing that Ontario farmers can hope for is the rain to come now... at least (to) rescue the kernels that are there now, and in doing so, hopefully give a bit better yield."

"During the past three years, Ontario corn yields have been increasing dramatically, with the past three years continually breaking records every year. I can only guess, but I'm pretty sure they won't be breaking the previous year's record this year."

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