

How did the drought like conditions this summer affect the farmers' crops?

Northern New York farmers faced one of the driest growing seasons on record. Areas of Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties' precipitation totals from March through August 2016 **were nearly seven inches below normal!** This prolonged period of dry conditions affected all of the crops grown in the region. Corn, soybean, small grains, hay and pasture yields were below average for most farms. Most of the crops grown in this area are grown to feed the nearly 194,000 head of dairy and beef cattle. Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence County farmers planted more than 100,000 acres of corn in 2016. As for expected yield losses, many corn growers are facing at least a 30% yield loss on corn (silage and grain) with many farms close to a 45 to 50% loss. Soybean yields are projected to be 25% below average. Hay crop yield losses in the affected areas of the region are over 25 to 30% at this time. The dry weather also had a very negative effect on the growth of the grasses and legumes in the pastures. The pasture regrowth was stunted and did not produce adequate amounts of forage for the cattle. Farms that rely on pasture as a form of feed for their cattle had to provide additional feed in the form of hay to these animals throughout the summer.

Question answered by Mike Hunter, Regional Field Crops Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension

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