

Cold, wet spring impacts growing season for Hamilton-area farmers

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By Mike Pearson Dundas Star News



An access route to a field at Manorun Organic Farm remains flooded as of May 16. - Mike Pearson/Torstar

A cold, wet spring is delaying the planting season for some Hamilton-area farmers shut out from their fields.

At Manorun Organic Farm in Copetown, a section of field is currently inaccessible due to a dense, muddy quagmire.

Staff and interns were still busy on May 16, planting potatoes and onions in a field at a higher elevation.

But a tractor route that links an additional field remains flooded.

“We’ve never seen that much water at this time of year, so it’s meant that we haven’t been able to get in as early as we would have liked,” said farmer Chris Krucker.

Krucker and partner Denise Trigatti own about 25 acres of farmland and rent an additional 15. Their base farm features an array of crops and livestock.

Some vegetable crops have already been planted, such as carrots, beets, baby greens, peas and spinach.

"They tend to be good in the wet weather and they can handle some of the cold," said Krucker.

Krucker said Manorun copes with extreme weather by using a diversified crop portfolio and a "permaculture" system of agriculture that incorporates different types of plants, trees, shrubs and naturalized areas.

"With vegetables, we're planting over and over again. So I don't think it's going to affect the vegetables. We're not reliant on one crop, so being diversified means that we can let one or two crops go. Our garlic could rot because of all the wet, (for example). It's unfortunate, but we've got every other vegetable you can grow."

Farmers are nonetheless gearing up for another farm market season, which fully kicks off in early June.

Manorun is a vendor at the Dundas Farmers' Market, Thursday afternoons starting June 4, from 3-7 p.m. in a parking lot at Hatt Street and Miller's Lane.

Just down the road from Manorun on Highway 52, MacGregor's Farm Market already has a fresh produce stand featuring items like asparagus, cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers.

While it's too soon to determine the impact the cold, wet weather will have on late summer crops, conditions have been less than ideal for trees that require cross-pollination in order to bear fruit.

Michael Josiak, farm and grounds operations manager at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, said peaches, apricots, cherries and plums could be impacted.

"Apricots have had a very bad week or two," Josiak said on May 16.

The centre is actively hybridizing new vegetable varieties that can be adapted to southern Ontario growing conditions, such as the Radiance variety of sweet potato.

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