



For Immediate Release

ONTARIO GRAIN CORN ESTIMATES DOWN AFTER 2011'S TURBULENT WEATHER

Chatham, ON (Aug 29, 2011) – With two tornadoes in the southwest and Hurricane Irene brushing by the east, all just in the past week, dramatic and often severe weather continues to make news across Ontario this year. The story for corn farmers began early with a cool and tremendously wet spring, followed by an extremely hot and somewhat dry summer, adding up to a difficult season for many of the provinces growers.

The latest grain corn survey report from Statistics Canada released last week estimates significantly lower total production than last year, around 6.6 million tonnes – down almost 15 per cent due to yield losses.

High levels of precipitation in the southwest this spring severely hampered planting and establishment of healthy growth. Farms in Kent and Essex counties, for instance, saw rain on about 17 days out of 31 in May, as observed through Weather INnovations Incorporated's (WIN) network of monitoring stations. Total rainfalls for the month were well above normal across much of the province, according to WIN researcher Karla Jackson.

"Rainfall in May for southwestern Ontario usually averages 70-80 millimetres," Jackson said. "This year it was more than double the normal, which meant some growers had to wait until June for their fields to dry before they could plant their corn – a month later than normal."

She indicated that many of the corn fields seeded before the rain were damaged and had to be replanted. Those and subsequent sowings in June received a major boost from the heat wave in July, despite the relative shortfall of moisture.

"The daily average temperature for July surpassed the 30-year normal by at least 3 degree Celsius in most regions. Crop heat units that had so far fallen short jumped significantly, coming within 100 units of 2010 totals," she explained. "Chatham-Kent, for example has reached 2600 to 2700 CHUs as of August 24th."

Accumulated rainfall and CHU levels have now generally evened out compared to 30-year normals in most parts of the province. The Windsor area stands out as a particular exception, with over 500 millimetres of rain, almost doubling the average. With the majority of that precipitation falling in the

spring, Grain Farmers of Ontario's Manager of Research & Market Development Crosby Devitt pointed out the high "on-versus off" moisture factor this year.

"Across the growing season, we may have had an average amount of rain," said Devitt, "but the timing is critical. The numbers appear good overall when you look at them, but really it hasn't been a great year."

Devitt remains optimistic, however, for the rest of this season's corn crop.

"Thanks to the higher temperatures and a lot more mid-summer heat units than normal, plants have advanced much faster and have a better chance of reaching maturity," he said.

With so many late plantings though, he expects an extended harvest that may stretch through autumn, which could be problematic if a cold snap hits.

"We're hoping for a sunny and moderate September, with a bit of moisture," he said. "The one thing we don't want is an early frost. That would basically shut everything down and stop the corn from maturing sufficiently. It's difficult since we can't anticipate what will happen weather-wise."

Weather INnovations Incorporated (WIN) – www.weatherinnovations.com

WIN specializes in providing turnkey weather based monitoring and modelling solutions for agribusinesses, producer organizations, government agencies, researchers and others. WIN strives to make its models easier to use at the farm level by providing a connection to innovative research with site-specific applications.

For more information, please contact:

Rory Sweeting, Communications & Marketing Co-ordinator – 519-352-5334 ext. 228
rsweeting@weatherinnovations.com