

# Long period of cold dramatic for growth of maize

Dairy farmers will be experiencing abject harvest results this growing season

"Due to long periods of persistent cold, the development of maize crops has fallen behind to the extent that the maize will not have enough time in the remains of the growing season to recover itself", according to agricultural consultant and maize expert Hein-Willem Leeraar from Raerd. "Especially maize is very susceptible to periods of cold. The environment cannot be warm enough for this sub-tropical crop."

Leeraar especially emphasizes the disadvantages for the development of the cob. "If temperatures rise next week, the maize can experience extensive growth in a short amount of time. People will, all of a sudden, notice huge amounts of leaf and stem. But the development of the cob will be dramatic: the grain will never mature in time, whereas that is the most important part of the plant for dairy farmers.

Grain contains high starch values. Starch is very important for the energy balance of highly productive cows. It keeps them 'in shape'. In case of a 'normal' harvest situation a kilogram of dry matter contains around 350 grams of starch. This year it will be somewhere in the region of 200 grams, 250 grams at most, according to Leeraar. Due to these low values, he foresees a rise of prices of maize.

Sugar manufacturer 'Suiker Unie' openly stated, that it will be a disappointing year for sugar beets, last Friday. Due to persistent cold growers were not able to sow in time. The exceptionally cold spring will show detrimental effects for the growth of sugar beets, because sugar beets, similar to maize, need warmth to develop properly.

Suiker Unie expects that harvest results will show a 10 percent decrease compared to last year. Especially in the North the development lies far behind. On lower located, peaty, soils the development of sugar beets lies far behind, due to the necessity of re-sowing after heavy wind erosion during spring.

Suiker Unie processes around 6 billion sugar beets every year. Almost half of this amount is processed in factory in Hoogkerk near Groningen.