

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Areas Declares Agricultural Disaster

On July 12, 2023, the Special Areas Board declared a state of agricultural disaster for Special Area No. 2, 3, & 4. Prolonged drought conditions continue to create significant challenges for producers in the region.

It is the second time the Special Areas has declared an agricultural disaster in over 20 years.

“Dry conditions are not new to the Special Areas, but ongoing moisture deficiencies and hot temperatures have devastated crops and pasture throughout the region. Producers are struggling to find enough grass, water, and feed for their cattle. Farmers are facing widespread crop failures. Significant grasshopper infestations are making a very difficult situation worse in many parts of the Special Areas. Declaring an agricultural disaster is one way we can raise awareness of how serious this problem is with the province and with the federal government.”

Jordon Christianson, Chair

The Special Areas covers over five million acres in east-central Alberta, and the region has been dealing with significant moisture deficiencies for years. Special Areas declared an agricultural disaster in 2021, and the region has continued to face persistent shortages of spring runoff, precipitation, and severe drought conditions. The lack of spring runoff this year amplified these existing challenges as regular water sources which had already dried up did not fill. The ongoing lack of precipitation and hot temperatures, especially during the earlier part of the growing season, have caused widespread crop failures, degrading pasture conditions, and stock water shortages. Producers are seeing wide-ranging crop losses on hay, pasture, range, and field crops. Consecutive years of severe drought in the region have already begun to force many producers to destock herds due to lack of pasture and feed.

Declaring a municipal agricultural disaster does not impact Special Areas financially but brings recognition to the difficult situation local producers are facing. The Board is looking to provincial and federal governments to provide information on agriculture relief programs in response to crop failures and persisting drought conditions. The Board appreciates the work the province has been doing to help producers access alternate feed sources, including the recent announcement by AFSC to double the low yield threshold to allow crops to be salvage for livestock feed.

Producers are encouraged to reach out to their Agricultural Fieldman for resources on managing pastures and water supplies during drought conditions. For further insurance or Agricultural Disaster program information contact AFSC at 1-877-899-2372 or visit their website www.afsc.ca.

For more information, contact:

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