

Floods swamp fruits, vegetables

COUNCIL BLUFFS (AP) — Torrential rains and floods took a heavy toll on Iowa's corn and soybeans. But apples, squash, melons and other crops haven't fared so well, either.

"I hate to paint too bleak a picture, but the weather this year has surely had a big effect on a lot of crops," said Eldon Everhart, an Iowa State University Extension horticulturist in Harlan.

Heavy rains and floods, which drowned thousands of acres of corn and beans across the state, also swamped fruit and vegetable land. And many of the orchards and fields that escaped the water have been hurt by cooler-than-normal weather, disease and lack of sunshine.

Fruits and vegetables also were hampered by heavy

losses in Iowa's bee colonies, which reduced pollination.

Apple farmer Ray Cunningham has been fighting a two-pronged battle — Mother Nature and Uncle Sam.

His orchard is perched high on the Missouri River bluffs near Council Bluffs. But Cunningham found out even the high ground is not necessarily safe.

On July 8, a high-speed wind blew through his orchard, ripping many of the thousands of trees out of the ground.

"I knew I was in trouble when I heard that the wind was snapping telephone poles in Lincoln and Omaha," Cunningham said.

He estimates the storm cost him \$300,000-\$400,000 in trees and apples.

Still, it's not the weather that is causing the real frustration for Cunningham. It's the federal government. Efforts to get insurance through the Federal Crop Insurance Corp. (FCIC) have been thwarted.

"We don't want a handout," Cunningham said. "We just want to be treated like a business."

The FCIC allows insurance to be sold to growers in big apple regions, such as Washington state and Michigan. But Iowa has not produced enough apples to qualify. ■