



**By Russ Pankonin**

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Assuming the weather holds out for the rest of the week, most of this year's corn crop will be in the bin.

Local elevator operators said they expect the bulk of the harvest to be complete by week's end. However, there is some rain and snow in the forecast today (Thursday) that could slow the finale.

Elevator operators have been forced to pile much of this year's crop on the ground for now. Two factors come into play for this situation.

This area's crop proved to be bigger than last year, which was down due to the hail storms last summer. That's one reason.

But the bigger factor comes from the fact there simply wasn't enough storage space for this year's crop due to a holdover of this summer's wheat crop and even some of last year's corn crop.

Frenchman Valley Co-op grain manager Ryan Schultz said this year's crop will likely compare to 2008's bumper crop, which was one of the largest ever.

He noted last summer's hail took a toll on overall production compared to this year.

Plus, farmers planted a lot more dryland corn this year, prompted in part by a better soil moisture profile. Then, the area got some real timely rains that bolstered the dryland crop even more.

Schultz said it wasn't uncommon for dryland yields to exceed 100 bushels per acre this year.

While farmers locked in some profits when corn rose to \$4 per bushel, Schultz said there was plenty of corn that wasn't contracted.

Now, with the cash price for corn still above the \$5 mark, there's been a lot of selling activity, Schultz added.

Government projections still show the size of this year's overall corn crop to be lower, which has propped up the higher cash prices.

Schultz felt this region was one of the few regions in the state that experienced a big crop.

The big factor now will be converting the lower overall supplies into demand. Schultz said it takes awhile for that demand to trickle down to the local level.

In the meantime, there's still corn piled on the ground.

"That's what's keeping me up at night," he said with a chuckle.