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Irish bishop appeals for prayers for a break in the rain

Michael Kelly Catholic News Service | Jul. 11, 2012

DUBLIN -- An Irish bishop has appealed to parishioners to pray for a break in the rain.

Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns asked local churches to offer prayers for farming families struggling under a severe loss of income due to the weather conditions.

The Irish Farmers' Association warned that farm families across the country have been hit by a loss of 100 million euros due to higher feed costs and a loss of output as a result of the poor weather conditions.

Bishop Brennan said many farming families in the area are "experiencing real strain and anxiety as they grapple with the prospect of a continuation of the current poor spell and its threatened adverse effects on the annual harvest."

He also expressed the fear that the poor weather could hinder the wider national economic recovery.

Bishop Brennan said many parishes in his diocese have received requests for prayers for fine weather.

"In truth, they range from the very heartfelt of the farming community to those of parents whose children are looking to get outdoors and enjoy the best of the summer holidays," he told Catholic News Service.

"Our real thoughts and prayers are with the farming community at this time. I am very conscious of the vital role it plays in our society and our economy. This persistently poor weather is a real threat to crops and livelihoods -- and it now spells extra animal feed costs," Bishop Brennan said.

While summers in Ireland are generally damp, this year has proved to be particularly wet. Nine inches of rain -- nearly three times the average -- fell in the month of June. June had only 93 hours of sunshine, scarcely half of the monthly average. It was the wettest June since records began in 1910.

Farmers warn that this year's harvest will be ruined unless the bad weather breaks soon.

Forecasters say there is little chance of an improved outlook, with more rain predicted.

The Diocese of Ferns encompasses part of County Wicklow and all of County Wexford, known as the "sunny southeast," where the chief economy is agriculture.

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