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Mother Nature – Friend or Foe

Mother Nature—friend or foe? The answer is both! She gives us what we need to grow our crops, warm sunshine and just the right amount of rain. But on the other hand, she can be very cruel. An ill-timed spring freeze or a hail storm just before harvest can really throw your yearly plans a curve ball.

It is what all farmers in all parts of the world deal with every year. You really have to respect her power. The usual complaints – too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry does not make weather perfect but it is what we as farmers accept. What other business in the world would work all year, take the risk and lose everything on one of Mother Nature’s events?

This year Mother Nature dealt us one of those events. A “polar vortex” is the term they use. The Midwest and East Coast suffered damage on fruit crops that had just started the growing season. Our biggest snow of the year came in April with low temps for a whole week. Fruit trees get one chance each year to grow a crop.

So why be a Farmer? There are many reasons. We love our land and our animals that produce the food that feeds millions of people all over the world. While there are challenges, it is the feeling that we make a difference to those that rely on our hard work. Producing a quality product and being able to serve that product is the greatest feeling in the world.

It is important that the public understands the effects that weather can have on a farm. One year on our farm, we had an early hail storm. When pick-your-own apple time came around, we notified our customers that our orchard had apples filled with hail. While the apples were not pretty, they were still delicious. The hail did not affect the flavor. We were very surprised when so many came to support us, and the orchard was picked clean.

After hurricane rains, some of our fellow farmers lost barns, livestock and crops. But they have been able to continue, rebuild, and move on because this is their livelihood.

So when it is dry – we irrigate. When it rains – we try to drain. When it is cold – we use our air machines to circulate the warm air and when it is hot – well, there is not much to do about that. But a farmer always tries their hardest to work with Mother Nature the best way with the best methods that we have to do that with.

As I traveled to Washington D.C. for the AFBF Woman's Committee and Promotion and Education conference, I learned from ladies all over the country how unkind the weather has been. I heard the same crop issues that we have here in the Northeast. This is something as farmers we have to endure, but with the true love of farming, we all need to make the best of what Mother Nature gives to us.