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(S.D.)-Drought Could Make Sunflowers More Popular



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 01/14/2013 12:07 PM

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) - Lingered drought might prompt more farmers in the Dakotas to plant sunflowers this year.

The crop's extensive root system enables it to tolerate dry conditions better than many other crops. Longtime North Dakota sunflower grower Tim DeKrey of Steele says that if dry conditions continue that will make the crop more inviting.

Record sunflower yields in North Dakota also are encouraging to farmers in the state that typically leads the nation in sunflower production. North Dakota lost that crown to South Dakota in 2011 because of extensive flooding, but gained it back last year.

South Dakota State University agronomy specialist Ruth Beck says sunflowers might gain acreage in that state this year because of the drought, but she says moisture conditions could change drastically by planting time.