

Oklahoma pecans won't be in as many pies and other Christmas goodies this year after drought diminished much of the state's crop. Farmers and agricultural researchers are reporting one of the toughest years in recent memory for pecan growers. "Most of it is drought related, and in some parts of the state we also had a late freeze that did a lot of damage," said Charles Rohla, president of the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association and a pecan researcher at the Noble Foundation in Ardmore. With about three weeks left in the harvesting season, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is reporting that the state will produce 9 million pounds of pecans, less than half of last year's haul. But farmers and pecan industry officials are predicting a far smaller harvest. "We're estimating between 5 and 7 million pounds, and the estimates we keep seeing are getting smaller and smaller," Rohla said. Statewide, Oklahoma has received about two-thirds the normal amount of rain during the last 12 months, according to the Oklahoma Climatological Survey. The weather also has been sporadic, with long periods of little or no precipitation during crucial growing periods. Current estimates would make this year's pecan harvest the smallest since 5 million pounds were brought in during 2008. Collinsville grower Jim Wolfe said his 400 acres of groves are in such bad shape that the nuts are barely worth harvesting. "We'll send someone to see if they can get anything, but I doubt they'll get much," Wolfe said. Harvester and grower Bill Clark of Oologah said he is nearly ready to finish his harvest for the season, weeks earlier than normal. "My only hope is that I'll get some out of Missouri, and even they don't have a good crop," Clark said. Oklahoma growers have been battered by weather-related problems in recent years, with a series of ice storms bringing down branches and even entire trees. "Just when the trees are starting to recover and produce more pecans, we don't get any rain," Clark said. Oklahoma is the nation's fifth-largest supplier of pecans, with Georgia the leader. In a good year Oklahoma's harvest is about 10 percent of the nation's supply. Fortunately for

farmers, pecan prices have remained high because of higher demand from Asia and a

slowly rebounding economy in the U.S. Wholesale and supermarket prices have increased about 20

percent in the past year. Kyle Arnold 918-581-8380 kyle.arnold@tulsaworld.com SUBHEAD: The Oklahoma harvest

expected to produce 9 million pounds, which is less than half of last year's

haul. Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration

on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy

policy.