



## Q: Are Salinas Valley Crops Affected by Dry Spell?

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SALINAS, Calif. - Right now it's off-season, so many farmers are preparing the fields for the harvest to peak in the Spring. Luckily, they won't encounter any problems with dry land, thanks to a good supply of water.

According to Bob Perkins from the Monterey County Farm Bureau, the Salinas Valley has a secure irrigation system that stores and meters out water to 275,000 acres of agriculture year-round.

The system consists of two reservoirs upstream of the Salinas Valley, built in 1959 and 1969. In times of a drought, he says, it's a good thing that Monterey County had the foresight to develop a water system to sustain the valley.

But, even with this system in place, the dry weather does have some drawbacks.

"As we rely more on the aquifer and fresh water coming in constantly," says Perkins. "The water table is slowly dropping, these farmers have to pump from a greater depth which costs more. It's more energy to pump the water."

But he adds, it's nothing like the problems that the farmers in the San Joaquin Valley are dealing with. Since they don't have an irrigation system, in some cases, they've lost a lot of water to grow crops. That could serve as a benefit for local growers.

"If there's a shortage of produce from the San Joaquin Valley," says Perkins. "That means there will be a greater demand for supply that's produced here in the Salinas Valley. It's very likely the shortage in the San Joaquin Valley will translate higher prices for growers in the Salinas Valley."

So that's good news for farmers in the Salinas Valley, since prices will be more competitive. On the flip side, consumers may pay more for fruits and vegetables in grocery stores, if less produce is available.



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