

## 2006 CROP SUMMARY

The winter of 2006 began with warmer than average temperatures in the northern half of the State and below normal temperatures in the southern half of the State. Precipitation was at or slightly above average. In **January**, temperatures were well above average across Minnesota as precipitation levels fell below normal. Mild winter weather reduced feed usage requirements and livestock were reportedly in good to excellent condition. During **February**, the average temperatures fell and were below normal for the month with only a few exceptions in southeast Minnesota. Despite cooler temperatures, feed availability and livestock conditions remained good. The lack of snow cover created some concern for wintering alfalfa in some areas. Temperatures were above average in early **March** but fell as much as 10 degrees below average by the end of the month. Several measurable snowfalls were received in many areas during calving season in March.

Average temperatures climbed into the mid-50's by the middle of **April**. Both topsoil and subsoil moisture levels were rated two-thirds adequate and one-third surplus. Snow cover quickly disappeared and the average starting date for fieldwork was April 20. Producers in the northeast and south central worked around wet areas to continue field preparations and fertilizer applications. Above average temperatures and little precipitation in late April allowed fieldwork and planting of small grains and corn to advance rapidly. The progress quickly passed the 2005 and five-year average paces. Soil temperatures averaged at or above 50 degrees by the end of April.

Significant rain and resulting wet field conditions slowed fieldwork so progress was at or below average in early **May**. Statewide topsoil moisture was rated nearly 40 percent surplus for the first two weeks of May. Much of the saturated farmland was reported in the northern third, west central, and south central portions of the State. Temperatures remained cooler than normal through most of May but producers were able to make progress near the five-year average pace. Planting neared completion by the end of the month, slightly ahead of average for most crops. The statewide topsoil moisture supply was rated 80 percent adequate by May 26.

Above normal temperatures in early **June** pushed crop development ahead of the five-year average pace. Topsoil moisture was rated most adequate and crop conditions were rated mostly good or excellent. First-cutting alfalfa was 80 percent complete by mid-June, well ahead of average. In the second half of June, topsoil moisture supplies fell significantly in the northwest, north central and central areas of the state. Topsoil moisture in southern Minnesota remained mostly adequate.

Crop development continued ahead of the average with corn advancing an average of 10 inches in height during the last week of June. Small grains also advanced rapidly in late June, while statewide average crop conditions were rated mostly good or excellent.

**July** was notable for well above average temperatures and below normal precipitation. Topsoil moisture supplies fell in the northern two-thirds of the State while south central and southeast Minnesota received rain late in the month.

The warm temperatures pushed crop development and crop condition ratings fell. Corn completed the silking stage and soybeans completed the blooming stage during the heat of July. Alfalfa condition was rated 47 percent poor or very poor and pasture condition was rated 65 percent poor or very poor by July 28, both considerable declines from earlier in the month. The hot, dry conditions allowed small grain producers to start the harvest earlier and continue at a rapid pace. Barley was one-third harvested, and the oat harvest nearly 50 percent complete by July 30.

Near normal temperatures and rain helped to slowly improve topsoil moisture supplies in **August**. Despite receiving the badly needed rain, central Minnesota's topsoil moisture continued to be rated short or very short. Crops in that area continued to be stressed. The small grain harvest was virtually complete by mid-August, well ahead of the five-year average pace. The sweet corn harvest was underway and progressed steadily between rain showers. Potatoes were one-third harvested by month's end. Crop conditions for corn and soybeans, rated mostly fair or good, held steady through the month.

**September** temperatures were near normal and turned cool late in the month. Frequent rains interrupted the dry edible bean, potato, and sugarbeet harvests for short periods of time, but all showed steady progress. Corn and soybean crops started to mature in early September and harvest was underway late in the month. The first frost of the season in central and southern areas was recorded on September 20, 2006. By the end of the month, the first reports of sunflower harvest were received.

Although progress on harvesting soybeans was slightly behind average in early **October**, favorable harvest conditions followed. Over 75 percent of the soybean crop was harvested during the first half of the month. By mid-October, the moisture content of corn for grain fell and harvest was in full swing despite scattered snow flurries. The potato and dry bean harvests were wrapping up and good progress was being made on the sugarbeet and sunflower harvests. By month's end, corn was 80 percent harvested - well ahead of average. Topsoil moisture supplies remained mostly adequate, although pockets in central Minnesota remained short of moisture heading into the winter months.

Above average temperatures and little precipitation in **November** allowed producers to complete most fall tillage and fertilizer operations during the fall season. By November 5, corn was 95 percent harvested and sunflower was 96 percent harvested. Little precipitation was received during the month, causing producers to remain concerned about topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies.

**December** temperatures were much above average with little or no snow. Some rain was received late in the month which brought the monthly total to near average levels. The mild weather was favorable for livestock and they were kept on pastures longer this fall, reducing the need for dry hay and other feed. The first widespread snow accumulations were received on New Year's Eve, where many areas received several inches of heavy, wet snow.