

Crops

Warm temperatures were the highlight of the 2006 growing season. Above normal temperatures in April allowed for early fieldwork, but rains throughout the middle of May delayed some fieldwork until warmer temperatures arrived in June. Above normal temperatures and below normal rainfall continued until September, when temperatures dipped slightly below normal. The warm weather assisted crops in growing, but cool and moist weather in the fall kept harvest progress at or behind normal levels.

Precipitation was below average through most of the growing season. April through September rainfall totals were 2.0 inches below normal. Timely rains throughout the growing season helped yields improve more than anticipated despite the below normal precipitation.

Overall, temperatures were above normal for the second straight growing season, although not as high as in 2005. April started this trend at 5.9 degrees warmer than normal. September was the only month of the season with below normal temperatures. June through September averaged 1.3 degrees above normal statewide. During the growing season, the northwest district had the largest deviation of both temperature and precipitation, with an average temperature that was 3.2 degrees above normal and precipitation that was 7.3 inches below normal.

Corn planted for all purposes totaled 3.65 million acres in 2006, a 4 percent drop from the previous year. Acres harvested for grain were 2.80 million acres, down 100,000 acres from 2005. Grain yield declined to 143 bushels per acre, but still reached the second highest yield in history. Acres harvested for silage decreased 6 percent to 830,000. Silage production declined to 14.1 million tons, the second highest amount recorded.

Increased soybean acreage helped set a new record for soybean production in 2006. The 72.2 million bushels of total production surpassed the previous record set in 2005 by 2.6 million bushels. Yield was the same as the previous year, finishing at 44.0 bushels per acre. Planted acres of soybeans increased by 40,000 acres to 1.65 million acres, and producers harvested 1.64 million acres, 60,000 more than in 2005.

Winter wheat and alfalfa both had limited winterkill damage in 2006. Winter wheat yield was 78 bushels per acre, the highest yield on record. Production increased 80 percent from 2005 to 17.9 million bushels. With records set in planted and harvested acres, winter wheat production eclipsed the old record set in 2004 by 5.34 million bushels. Timely rains and warm weather aided quality and yield of second and third crop alfalfa. Hay cutting was well ahead of schedule throughout the growing season. Overall yields were the highest since 2002.

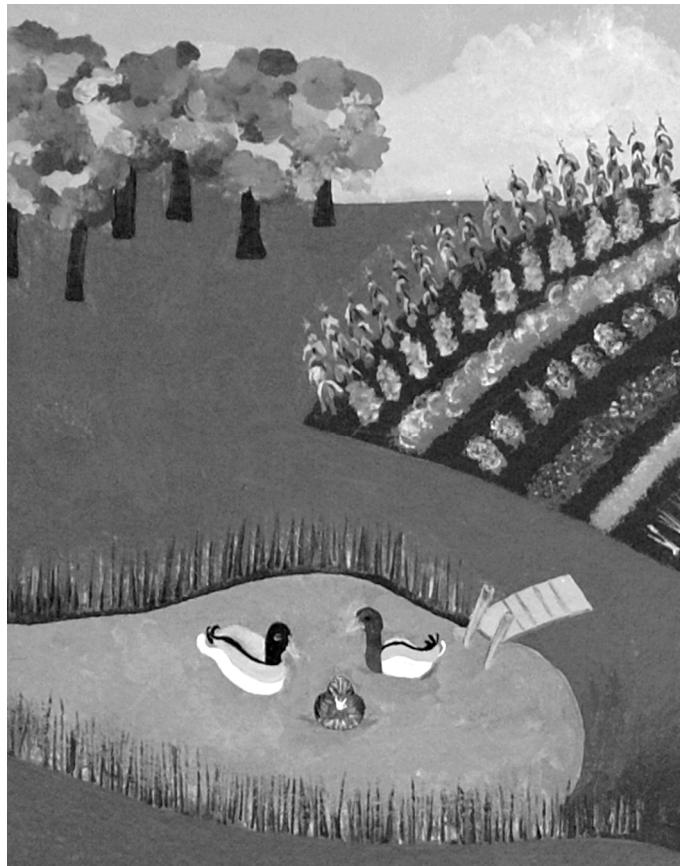


Illustration by Laurie Schammel, DATCP

Wisconsin became the top producing state of oats in 2006. Production increased by 5 percent to 14.5 million bushels. Acres harvested for grain rose 7 percent from the previous year, reaching 230,000 acres.

Potato harvested acreage decreased for the seventh straight year, with producers harvesting 66,000 acres in 2006. The average yield reached a new record of 445 cwt. per acre. Overall production rose 5 percent to 29.4 million cwt.

For processing vegetables, Wisconsin ranked third in harvested acreage as well as value and production. Wisconsin remained the top producer in the nation for snap beans, contributing 38 percent of the national production. Wisconsin also remained in third for production of processing sweet corn, peas, and carrots.

Cranberry production increased to record levels for the second straight year, and harvested acres increased by 100 acres to reach 17,500 acres. Yields averaged a record 225 barrels per acre, a 7 percent increase from 2005. Wisconsin remained the top cranberry producing state with 3.94 million barrels, 57 percent of the national production. Apple production increased to 65.0 million pounds with the second highest yield per acre on record. Cherries had a slight decrease in bearing acreage, and yields declined by 36 percent to 2,650 pounds per acre.