# Crop Production, 1999

*By Eric D. Stout*

***1999 Crop Summary:*** The winter of 1998-1999 was very mild and had very little snowfall. In early January, precipitation fell in the form of snow, sleet and freezing rain, but the frozen ground prevented any precipitation to alleviate the continuing drought conditions. Average temperatures were mostly in the teens and 20s. By mid-January temperatures rose. Much of the accumulated snow and ice melted and the Commonwealth received some precipitation, but again frozen ground prevented the snow melt and any precipitation to have any significant effect on groundwater level.

During the first few weeks of February, temperatures in most areas were above normal. Some operators began plowing. By mid-February temperatures remained above normal in many areas. Total precipitation for February was below normal in 55 of the 67 counties. Most counties remained under a drought warning and 14 counties remained under a drought emergency. This decision is based upon stream flow, ground water and long-term precipitation condition.

By early March total precipitation was above normal in most counties. By mid-March the Governor lifted the drought emergency for 14 counties under drought emergency and the 50 counties under the drought warning. Precipitation over the last few months provided enough moisture to alter the state drought conditions. By the end of March, late winter snows and heavy rain caused the soil to be too wet to plow or plant in several areas. But for most of the State, field work has just begun.

Soil moisture was mostly adequate to surplus from the beginning of April to early May. After a warmer-than usual early spring, growth came to a halt with a period of cold, wet weather. By mid-April planting schedules were delayed by wet and cold conditions. A warmer, dryer May allowed spring field activities to progress rapidly, and by the end of May most field crops were ahead of the five-year average. So far it had been a season of ups and downs for weather conditions.

June was hot and dry. The unfavorable conditions caused declines in corn and soybean conditions and slowed hay growth. Wheat and barley matured rapidly due to the weather conditions. Barley harvest began mid-June and was completed near the end of July. Wheat harvest began early July and was completed near the end of August. Oat planting was ahead in early spring, the crop harvested ended fairly close to the average and was completed by the beginning of September.

From July through the end of August soil moisture was mostly very short to short. Weather conditions were favorable for fieldwork. Corn height by mid July was 42 inches, 4 inches above normal and 5 inches above the previous year. Potato harvest began in late July and proceeded slightly ahead of normal until early November. Tobacco harvest began in mid-August and was completed by mid October. Corn silage harvest started in mid August, just ahead of the average. Corn silage harvest reached completion by the end of October. Corn for grain harvest began by mid-September about 7 percent above normal. By the end of October corn was 92 percent mature, slightly behind the average. Corn harvest moved ahead of normal until completion in early December. Soybean harvest was underway in most areas by the end of September and was completed by the end of November. Fall plowing and seeding of wheat and barley progressed around the five-year average.

***Small Grains:*** Production of winter wheat was 10,260,000 bushels, 6 percent above 1998. Acreage harvested was 190,000 acres in 1999, same as 1998. Yields were 54 bushels per acre, compared to 51 bushels per acre in 1998. Oats production was 7,975,000 bushels, down 6 percent from last year. Oats acres for harvest was 145,000 in 1999, 15,000 less than 1998. Oat yields were 55 bushels per acre, up 2 bushels from 1998. Barley production for 1999 was 4,970,000 bushels, down 1 percent. Acreage harvested was 70,000, down 7 percent from 1998. Barley yield was 71 bushels per acre. Rye production was 600,000 bushels in 1999, up 21 percent from 1998. Acreage harvested was 15,000 acres, the same as last year. Rye yield increased 7 bushels to 40 bushels per acre.

***Hay:*** Production of all hay in 1999 was 3,360,000 tons, 14 percent below 1998. Total acres harvested was 1,900,000, up 50,000 from 1998. Yield was 1.77 tons per acre, down from 2.12 tons in 1998. Alfalfa hay production was 1,680,000 tons, 14 percent below 1998's production. Alfalfa acreage harvested was 700,000, the same as last year. Yield was 2.40 tons per acre, the same as 1998. Other hay production was 1,680,000 tons, down 14 percent from the 1,955,000 tons produced in 1998. Other hay acreage harvested was 1,200,000, up 50,000 from 1998. Yields of 1.4 tons per acre were down 18 percent from 1998. Haylage production for 1999 was 2,301,750 tons. Haylage harvested acreage was 495,000 with an average yield of 4.65 tons per acre.

***Row Crops:*** Corn for grain production was down 47 percent to 61,600,000 bushels. Corn acres harvested for grain amounted to 880,000 acres, down 16 percent. Yield was 70 bushels per acre, down 41 bushels from 1998. Corn silage production was 6,195,000 tons, 21 percent below 1998. Acres harvested for silage totaled 590,000 acres, up 20 percent from last year. Average yield was 10.5 tons per acre, down 5.5 tons from last year. Soybean production for 1999 was 10,150,000 bushels, 36 percent less than 1998. Soybean acres harvested was 350,000, down 45,000 acres from last year. Yield per acre was 29 bushels, down 11 bushels from 1998. Potato production was 3,080,000 cwt., 8 percent less than 1998. Acres harvested remained the same at 14,000. Yield decreased 20 cwt. to 220 cwt. per acre. Total production of tobacco was 11,170,000 lbs., down 29 percent from 1998. Total acres harvested was 6,200, 1,600 less than last year. All tobacco yield was 1,802 lbs. per acre, down 213 pounds from last year.