

Delays in planting and harvesting summarized the 2002 growing season. With colder than normal temperatures during April and May, crops started off slowly, and seeding of small grains and row crops lagged behind 2001's and the five-year average. The late start caused the stages of maturity for many crops to stay behind normal for most of the year. Hay harvest began late, and harvesting of corn and soybeans was delayed due to wet fall weather.

Precipitation for the year was above normal in northern Wisconsin, but below normal in the south. Dry conditions were most evident from July through mid-August. Crops in the southeast suffered the most from the lack of rain. Showers from late August into the fall saved the crops, but delayed the later hay cuttings and row crop harvest. Very little rain occurred in November, which brought ideal conditions to finish the corn and soybean harvest.

Temperatures averaged below normal from March through May, but above normal during June through September. Growing degree days finished above normal for the season, as the hot summer more than offset the cool spring weather.

Corn yields for grain and silage improved from the previous year in all areas of the state, except for south central and southeastern Wisconsin. Statewide, corn averaged 135 bushels per acre for the 2.90 million acres harvested for grain. Acres harvested for silage declined 6 percent, but the higher silage yields caused total production of silage to rise. Acres planted to corn totaled 3.65 million acres, up 250,000 acres from 2001. The market year price for corn is expected to average \$2.20 per bushel, the highest since 1997. Total value of the grain production climbed to \$861 million.

Soybeans averaged 44 bushels per acre, a jump from the yields of 37 and 40 in 2001 and 2000, respectively. Better weather and less damage from soybean aphids contributed to the higher yields. Soybean planted acreage dipped slightly to 1.54 million acres, but production of 66.9 million bushels and value of \$351 million set record highs for Wisconsin.

Small grain yields fell, while acreage increased from the previous year. Yields declined as the delayed planting, cool spring temperatures, and then the dry, hot July weather all contributed to a poorer growing season. Higher grain prices helped offset the lower yields as the value of the small grains increased.

Forage acreage and production held steady from the previous year, but remained at historically low levels. Winterkill damage was slight, but the cool weather lower yields and delayed first cutting of hay. Second and third crop yields were low in most areas due to lack of rain, however, quality was good. Fall crops of forage had higher yields with the heavier precipitation.

The vegetable industry continues to be significant, as Wisconsin ranks first in production for snap beans processing, third for processing sweet corn and peas, and potato production. Growers of snap beans and sweet corn for processing set record-high yields, but green pea yields fell from the previous year. All three of the major processing vegetables had lower values per ton. Potato production declined slightly, as localized flooding and heavy rains caused lower yields and abandonment of some fields.

Cranberry production rebounded as the restrictive marketing order from 2001 and 2000 was removed. Wisconsin ranks as the top producing state with 56 percent of the national production.

Apple production totaled 58 million pounds, down 6 percent from a year earlier. Tart cherry production fell to 4 million pounds, the smallest crop since 1986, as the late May frost severely damaged the cherry blossoms. Strawberry production decreased 7 percent to 43,000 hundredweight.