2008 CROP SUMMARY

January of 2008 began with normal or slightly warmer than average temperatures throughout the state while precipitation was below normal. Temperatures were at or above average across Minnesota, but precipitation levels fell below normal through much of the state. Although feed consumption increased as average temperatures were colder, feed supplies were mostly adequate and livestock were reportedly in good to excellent condition. During **February**, the average temperatures fell and were well below normal for the month. Precipitation increased as much of the state was covered in 4 to 12 inches of snow cover. However, despite the snow, precipitation was slightly below average for the month. Feed availability and livestock conditions remained good. Several snow falls were recorded in **March,** but, by month's end, warmer temperatures reduced snow cover. Producers were monitoring the calving season and preparing machinery for spring planting.

Average temperatures climbed into the 70's by the middle of **April** but late April rain and snow delayed the start of fieldwork. Topsoil moisture levels were rated 37 percent surplus in late April. Producers were able to get started with spring tillage, but progress was well behind 2007 and the 5-year average. Small grain planting was underway but at a pace well behind the 5-year average.

Cool temperatures and additional precipitation in early **May** continued to slow fieldwork and planting progress. Less than 2 days were suitable for fieldwork the first week of the month. Although temperatures continued below normal, producers were able to continue fieldwork and make significant progress on small grain, corn, sugarbeet and potato planting through mid-May, and, by month's end, planting of most crops was nearly complete. Topsoil moisture supplies were rated mostly adequate through May, while pasture conditions were rated mostly fair to good.

Below normal temperatures continued into early **June.** Crop development progress was below average due mostly to the delayed planting season. Spring wheat was entering the jointing stage, and most corn and soybean acreage was emerged by mid-June. Topsoil moisture was rated mostly adequate, and small grain conditions were rated mostly good or excellent. First-cutting alfalfa was just 28 percent complete by mid-June, well behind average. In the second half of the month, dry weather prevailed. Topsoil moisture supplies fell slightly but remained mostly adequate. Crop development advanced with the warmer weather but remained behind the 5-year average pace. Corn reached an average height of 20 inches while small grains progressed from jointing into the heading stage.

July was notable for cooler than normal average temperatures despite reaching highs in the low 90's in mid-July. Topsoil moisture supplies continued mostly adequate, but areas in central Minnesota were short or very short of topsoil moisture. Small grain crops progressed from heading to ripening stage of development, and, by the end of July, the harvest of oats and barley was just getting underway. Corn was silking and soybeans were blooming; however, both continued to progress behind average pace. Crop conditions remained in mostly good condition throughout the month.

Topsoil moisture levels fell during **August**. By month's end, a large portion of central Minnesota was rated very short or short for topsoil moisture. Although temperatures were not unusually warm, precipitation was several inches below normal for the month.

The small grain harvest was in full swing and progressed rapidly through the month and eventually caught up to the 5-year average harvest progress. The potato and sweet corn harvests were in full swing, both only slightly behind average. Corn progressed into the denting stage, and the silage harvest was underway. Crop conditions for corn and soybeans held steady through the month while the higher temperatures and lack of precipitation stressed pastures.

September temperatures continued below normal for the first half of the month but were well above average at the end of the month. Limited precipitation allowed producers to complete the small grain harvest at a rapid pace by mid September. Soybeans were turning yellow and beginning to drop leaves while corn matured. The harvest of dry edible beans, potatoes, canola and sweet corn progressed at a good pace, all slightly behind average. The sugarbeet harvest was also underway by mid-September. Soybeans matured rapidly during the month, and harvest was underway by month's end.

In early **October,** the first frost was recorded in northern and central Minnesota. By that time, nearly half of the soybean crop was harvested while the corn harvest was slowly picking up momentum. Statewide average moisture of harvested corn continued high as producers pushed to make progress harvesting corn. By mid-October, frequent rain kept the moisture content of corn for grain high and in the northwest, fields were saturated. Despite the slow dry down of corn, producers continued to harvest. By the end of October, the corn harvest was one-third completed with average moisture levels still well above average. Persistent precipitation continued to make the harvest difficult.

The sugarbeet harvest was progressing rapidly despite muddy field conditions and was nearly completed by the end of the month. The soybean, potato, dry bean, and sugarbeet harvests were wrapping up and good progress was being made on the sunflower harvest. By month's end, corn was 54 percent harvested – falling further behind average. Average moisture content of corn continued to be well above last year and the five-year average. A significant amount of the crop required drying before storage. Topsoil moisture supplies remained mostly adequate, although topsoil in the northwest continued to be saturated and further limited harvest progress.

Soil moisture supplies in the northwest and west central continued to be rated surplus into **November**. Access to standing crops was hampered due to the muddy conditions. Some operators were forced to wait for the saturated ground to freeze in order to enter some fields. By the end of the month, the corn and sunflower harvest was virtually complete. However, in some areas, a considerable amount of standing corn was still being reported and in those areas, little fall tillage was completed in preparation for the next spring.

December temperatures cooled off considerably and were well below average for the month. Frequent snow events provided a significant early snow cover of several inches to over 2 feet in some locations.