

2004 Iowa Crop Summary

The 2004 crop year began with warm temperatures that allowed farmers to get a good start on field work. While dry conditions by mid-April did cause some concern, much needed rain came near the month's end. April ended with ideal weather conditions for planting and favorable soil moisture ratings. All oats were planted before the end of April, ahead of the 5-year average, while 74 percent of all corn was planted, 31 points above normal. Oat emergence was also occurring ahead of the norm, and the majority of oats were considered to be in good or excellent condition.

At the start of May, weather conditions continued to permit farmers to plant at an accelerated rate. However, mid-month brought heavy rains throughout the state. The average rainfall for the month was the highest May amount since 1908. The rain slowed field work again at the end of month. In spite of this, corn planting was virtually finished by mid-May. Soybean planting was 92 percent complete and 78 percent emerged, both ahead of the 5-year average, for the end of May.

The first week of June brought drier weather that allowed farmers to get back to the field. The next couple of weeks brought more rain and humid conditions. The wet conditions hindered field work, stressed crops, and caused approximately 8 percent of all corn and soybeans to be replanted. By end of June, drier weather and warmer temperatures prevailed. The 1st cutting of alfalfa was 91 percent complete. Oat acreage headed was 93 percent. The corn stand was reported as 93 percent normal. The majority of corn, soybeans, oats, and hay were all considered to be in good or excellent condition.

Weather in July varied throughout the month from dry and sunny to wet and humid conditions. Temperatures were consistently below normal during July. Oat harvest for grain was 78 percent completed by the end of July. Corn development was normal. Soybean acreage blooming and setting pods was at 95 percent and 66 percent, respectively, both ahead of the 5-year average. The 2nd cutting of Alfalfa was almost completed by month's end. The majority of corn, soybeans, oats, and hay were all considered to be at good or excellent condition, virtually unchanged from June.

August began and ended with rain, but the middle of the month was dry. Like July, the temperatures throughout the month were cooler than normal causing some concern pertaining to crop maturity. In fact, corn and soybean development fell behind the norm, but the majority of both were in good or excellent condition. Oat harvest was completed by mid-August and the 3rd cutting of alfalfa hay was 72 percent complete by the end of August.

Warmer temperatures finally came in September, allowing the corn and soybeans to mature. Corn maturity progressed but was still behind the norm, while soybeans developed rapidly during September and finished ahead of the 5-year average. Mid-month brought some rain, but the rest of the month was dry. Corn and soybean harvest began about the 3rd week of September. During the last week of September Iowa experienced the season's first freeze. By the end of September, corn harvest, at 8 percent complete, was about 10 percentage points behind the norm, while soybean harvest, at 49 percent complete, was well ahead of the norm. Silage chopping also started, while the 4th cutting of alfalfa was put up.

The first half of October was cool and dry allowing for corn and soybean harvest to progress rapidly. The second half of October brought showers that slowed corn harvest progress. By the end of the month soybean harvest was basically complete and corn harvest was reportedly 62 percent completed, nearly 20 percentage points behind the 5-year average. Fall tillage and application of fall fertilizer also got underway. The record corn crop and rapid soybean harvest caused a large shortage of grain storage availability both on- and off-farm.

As November began, the 2004 harvest was coming to a close. The shortage of grain storage on- and off-farm was still a problem. Corn harvest was nearly complete and fall fertilizer application was 49 percent complete. Temperatures were consistently above normal and light rain fell throughout the month.