

Delaware Growing Season Summary: 2006

WEATHER

The fall of 2005 was favorable for producers to complete their seeding of the winter wheat and barley crops in a timely manner. Adequate moisture was received after planting for excellent germination and early growth before the small grain crops went dormant for the winter.

The 2006 growing season was a good one for most crops. Below normal precipitations during the month of April and May allowed farmers enough dry periods to till land and get acreage planted on time. Harvest of wheat and barley occurred without major weather delays and yields were average. Weather was generally favorable for production of vegetable crops.

Adequate moisture in September resulted in high yields on non-irrigated, double-crop soybeans. No major weather problems were reported at the time of harvest for soybeans and corn.

The weather following the harvest of the soybean and corn crops was favorable for timely plantings of the 2007 wheat and barley acreage.

SOYBEANS are planted to more land in Delaware than any other field crop. In 2006, 180,000 acres of soybeans were planted statewide, including 83,800 acres in Sussex County, 68,700 acres in Kent County, and 27,500 acres in New Castle County. From the 180,000 acres planted, growers successfully harvested 177,000 acres. Soybeans yielded an average of 31 bushels per acre, slightly less than the previous five-year average of 33.6 bushels per acre. This resulted in a total production of nearly 5.49 million bushels. At an average market price of \$6.00 per bushel, the 2006 crop is valued at \$32.9 million.

CORN in Delaware was valued at \$81.7 million in 2006, the highest on record. This was due to the rare combination of good prices for grain, good yield, and an increase in acres harvested. Delaware farmers produced 23.3 million bushels of corn in 2006, the third largest crop on record. This corn was harvested from an estimated 161,000 acres which yielded an average 145 bushels per acre. This compares with 22.0 million bushels harvested from 154,000 acres in 2005, at an average yield of 143 bushels per acre. Prices for corn were up from an average \$2.25 per bushel in 2005 to an average \$3.50 per bushel. As a result of increased production and price, the total value of the corn crop rose 65% from 2005. Delaware farmers also harvested 8,000 acres of corn for silage, producing 160,000 tons as livestock feed. This was a significant increase from the 95,000 tons produced in 2005, when silage was harvested from 5,000 acres.

WHEAT There were 45,000 acres of wheat harvested from the 48,000 acres planted. Yield per acre at 67 bushels, was down 3 bushels per acre from 2005. Wheat production in 2006 at 3,015,000 bushels was down 16 percent from 2005. The value of the wheat crop decreased 10 percent from 2005 to \$9.6 million, due to the decrease in production. Price per bushel was \$3.20, up from 3.01 in 2005.

BARLEY acres planted in 2006 at 27,000 was down 7 percent from 2005. Acreage harvested decreased 3,000 from 2005 to 24,000 acres. The crop wintered over in good condition. Yield per acre decreased 1 bushel from 2005 to 80 bushels. The acreage harvested decrease of 3,000 coupled with the yield decrease of 1 bushel resulted in production of 1,920,000 bushels, down 12 percent from 2005. Value of the crop decreased 1 percent from a year earlier to \$2.9 million. The season average price received in 2006 at \$1.50 per bushel compared with \$1.33 in 2005.

VEGETABLES Growing conditions for vegetables during the 2006 crop year were not as favorable as 2005 in some areas. High temperatures early in the season followed by excessive rainfall during June and July disrupted field work and affected crop development. The value of all vegetable production in 2006 was \$42.1 million, down 11 percent from 2005.

Vegetable acreage planted for fresh market utilization in 2006 at 12,070 was down 320 acres from 2005. Harvested acreage, at 10,260, was 13 percent below 2005. Total production of crops for the fresh market in 2006 was 182.8 million pounds, down 18 percent from 2005. The value of fresh market vegetable production was \$26.6 million, down 7 percent. Acreage planted to processing vegetable crops, in 2006 at 33,400 acres, was down 4,400 from 2005. Vegetable acreage harvested for processing at 32,900 was down 4,900 acres from 2005. Processing vegetable yields were below average in 2006 for lima beans and sweet corn, but above average for green peas. Production of processing vegetable crops totaled 80.5 thousand tons in 2006, down 27 percent from 2005. Prices received for the major processing vegetable crops were below average for sweet corn and green peas, and average for lima beans. The value of production at \$15.5 million in 2006 was down 18 percent from 2005.