

Delaware Growing Season Summary: 2007

WEATHER

The fall of 2006 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.

Drought, in one word, summarizes the 2007 growing season. While good yields were realized on the barley and wheat crops, the corn and soybean crops were hurt by the lack of precipitation. From May through September 2007, precipitation totals were 7 inches below normal in New Castle county, 9.5 inches below normal in Kent county and a whopping 12 inches below normal in Sussex county. This was the worst statewide drought since 2002.

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 - historically. In 2007, 150,000 acres of soybeans were planted statewide, including 72,500 acres in Sussex County, 57,000 acres in Kent County, and 20,500 acres in New Castle County. This is the first year since 1972 that there were more corn acres planted (195,000) than soybeans as Delaware's and the nation's farmers reacted to high corn prices due primarily to corn demand for ethanol. From the 150,000 acres planted, growers harvested 145,000 acres. Soybeans yielded an average of 24 bushels per acre, down 7 bushels from 2006 and 13 bushels below the previous five-year average of 37.2 bushels per acre. This resulted in a total production of nearly 3.5 million bushels. At an average market price of \$11.50 per bushel, the 2007 crop is valued at \$40.0 million. The 2007 price was by far at a record high level exceeding the previous record high of \$7.36 in 1983.