

2009 Iowa Crop Summary

The 2009 crop season began with warm temperatures, variable winds, and occasional showers. The weather permitted 15.2 total days suitable for fieldwork during April. By the end of the month, 47 percent of corn and 93 percent of oats had been planted, both well ahead of the 5-year average.

May began with heavy rains that caused severe erosion and delayed planting. Once farmers were in the fields, corn and soybean planting progressed at a near normal pace during the month. Warm, windy conditions dried fields by the last week in May. The corn crop was 90 percent emerged by the end of May, while oats were virtually completely emerged. Soybeans were 91 percent planted and 59 percent emerged. Alfalfa first cutting was 13 percent complete, behind the normal 24 percent.

Frequent rain throughout the month of June maintained soil moisture supplies. Cooler than normal temperatures were abruptly replaced by much warmer temperatures by mid-June. Nearly half the state experienced severe weather during the third week of June. Hail and wind damage caused crop losses. By the end of June, topsoil moisture rated 77 percent adequate with subsoil moisture rated 74 percent adequate. The month ended with the corn stand rated 95 percent of normal, 86 percent of oats had headed, and soybeans were 97 percent emerged. Completion of first cutting of alfalfa, at 76 percent, was well behind the normal of 93 percent.

Temperatures during July averaged nearly 6 degrees below normal, ranking it as the coolest July on record. Wet weather prevailed during the first half, while some areas were drier in the second half. By the end of July, 82 percent of the topsoil rated adequate. By month's end, corn development was behind normal. Only 24 percent of the corn was at or beyond the milk stage, compared to the normal of 47 percent. Soybean development was also slightly behind normal. Soybeans setting pods were 61 percent compared to the five-year average of 66 percent. Alfalfa harvest was hampered by the cool wet July. Second cutting of alfalfa was 72 percent complete, compared to the normal of 90 percent. Oat harvest had reached 64 percent, which was 12 percentage points behind the 5-year average. Corn condition rated 78 percent good to excellent, while soybeans rated 77 percent good to excellent.

Above normal precipitation and below normal temperatures during August maintained soil moisture levels. August was the 10th coolest and 14th wettest August on record. Corn and soybean conditions were both rated 76 percent good to excellent. Disease and insect pressure was reported in corn and soybeans, along with concerns about an early frost. By the end of August only 28 percent of the corn was in or past the dent stage, well behind the normal 55 percent. Soybeans had just begun to turn color, compared to 18 percent for the

five-year average. Oat harvest was complete by the third week of August. The third cutting of alfalfa hay was slowed by the cool wet month of August. Fifty-five percent of the third cutting was complete, compared to 71 percent for the normal.

Temperatures during September were above normal and fluctuated very little. The eastern three-fourths of the state did not see any rain the first 3 weeks of the month. By the end of September, 23 percent of the topsoil moisture rated short to very short. The dry weather at the beginning of the month did help crops mature. Nearly half the corn crop was mature, or safe from harvest, compared to 74 percent for the norm. Nearly three-fourths of the soybeans were dropping leaves, compared to 84 percent for the five-year average. Corn and soybean harvest had just begun when widespread rain over the eastern half of the state delayed harvest. Moisture content of all field corn rated 32 percent, four percentage points higher than the five-year average. Soybean harvest reached 6 percent, well behind the normal 20 percent. Alfalfa third cutting was 93 percent complete.

Wet weather during the first few days of October and frequent precipitation for the remainder of the month slowed harvest. Unseasonably cold temperatures during the first half of the month were followed by above normal temperatures during the last half of October. Topsoil moisture rated 61 percent surplus by month's end. The first hard freeze the first week of October ended the growing season for most of Iowa. At the time, approximately three-fourths of the corn crop was safe from frost. Corn harvest, by month's end, was only 18 percent complete, 22 days behind the five-year average. Soybean harvest was 54 percent complete which was 26 days behind normal. High moisture content was a concern that also delayed harvest.

November began dry with warmer temperatures. Grain moisture issues started to bottleneck corn movement and impacted harvest; driers were running at full capacity. Some elevators were not accepting wet corn if their driers were full or if they had ran out of natural gas. Soybean harvest was nearly complete by mid-month except in southern Iowa where some fields still stood. The month ended with corn 87 percent harvested. Some corn fields would not get harvested until early 2010.