

2011 Iowa Agricultural Overview

Crops and Weather Summary

The 2011 crop season began with very changeable weather followed by cold, damp conditions. The weather permitted a total of 9.5 days suitable for fieldwork during April. By the end of the month, only 3 percent of corn had been planted, well below 61 percent in 2010. Oats were 72 percent planted and 25 percent emerged, both below the previous year's percentages but near the five year average.

May began with cool, wet weather that kept farmers out of the field. The month ended with rain and warmer than usual weather that helped advance crop progress. The corn crop was 90 percent emerged by the end of May, while oats were completely emerged. Soybeans were 87 percent planted and 52 percent emerged. Alfalfa first cutting was 6 percent complete; well behind the average 23 percent.

Rainfall was frequent throughout June and permitted only 14 days suitable for fieldwork throughout the month. By the end of the month, topsoil moisture rated 63 percent adequate with subsoil moisture rated 64 percent adequate. Oats just began to turn color, with 76 percent of oats headed. Completion of first cutting of alfalfa, at 79 percent, was slightly ahead of the previous year's 77 percent but behind the normal 83 percent.

Farmers endured dry, humid and hot conditions throughout July, but adequate moisture levels helped crops come through the extremes. Flooded acreage along the Missouri River stabilized in many areas. July ended with 72 percent of the topsoil moisture rated adequate. Three-quarters of the corn crop is silking, behind last year's 82 percent but ahead of the average 65 percent. Seventy-nine percent of the soybean crop bloomed, slightly ahead of the five year average 78 percent. Second cutting of alfalfa was 79 percent complete 11 points ahead of 2010 and 9 points ahead of normal. Oat harvest had reached 43 percent, behind the previous year's 54 percent but ahead of the normal 38 percent. Corn and soybeans conditions rated 80 percent good to excellent.

August received timely rainfall and normal temperatures. Southwest Iowa received the heaviest rainfall while southeast Iowa reported less than an inch of rain since the end of June. Missouri River flood waters receded and allowed recovery efforts to begin for some affected producers. Corn and soybeans continued to progress quickly during the month of August.

By the end of August, 92 percent of the corn had entered dough stage and 70 percent of the crop was at or beyond the dent stage, 20 percentage points ahead of the normal. Four percent had reached maturity, behind the previous year's 10 percent and the normal 5 percent. Nearly all the soybean crop had pods set and 4 percent had turned color, trailing 2010's 15 percent and the five-year average 11 percent. The third cutting of alfalfa hay was 71 percent complete, ahead of the normal 60 percent.

Iowa enjoyed two statewide showers early in September and remained dry for the remainder of the month. Cool and cloudy weather slowed the drying of the crops. Temperatures fluctuated between low eighties during the day to freezing temperatures overnight in some areas. By the end of September, 80 percent of corn acres had reached maturity with 5 percent harvested. Soybeans had turned color in 94 percent of the crop. Leaves were dropping in over half of Iowa's soybean field's, but still lagged 6 days behind normal. Soybean acres harvested increased to 3 percent complete, behind 2010's 7 percent. Alfalfa third cutting advanced to 96 percent complete.

Dry and windy weather throughout the state created ideal harvesting conditions during October. Precipitation averaged less than an inch statewide and windy conditions resulted in numerous field fires. The month ended with temperatures that averaged 1.3 degrees above normal. By the end of October, corn was 87 percent harvested, 5 days behind 2010 but 19 days ahead of the five-year average. Soybean harvest advanced to 98 percent complete, slightly behind 2010 but 2 weeks ahead of the normal pace.

November began with above normal temperatures. Fall tillage and fertilizer applications continued. Some farmers delayed anhydrous applications due to concerns of the dry conditions prevented sealing and caused nitrogen losses. A blanket of snow covered Iowa mid November. Days of dry weather followed helping farmers complete fertilizer applications and tillage. Most harvest and fall field work was completed by the end of the month. Grain movement was slow by the end of the month, with only 20 percent of the State seeing moderate to heavy grain movement from farm to elevator. Hay supplies were considered adequate to surplus across 76 percent of Iowa with only 10 percent considered to be in poor condition.