

2000 CROP HIGHLIGHTS

The 2000 crop year was very good for most Kentucky farmers. Production of tobacco, corn soybeans and winter wheat was very good with overall excellent yields. It was a welcome change

from 1999's drought and tobacco suffered little from blue mold and/or black shank. The usual summer drought didn't occur and drier crop growing conditions didn't happen until September.

BURLEY TOBACCO

Kentucky farmers produced 243.0 million pounds of burley tobacco, down 36 percent from the 380.1 million pounds produced in 1999 and the smallest crop since 1942. Problems with blue mold, black shank and drought were minor in contrast to the previous five years. The smaller 2000 crop resulted from a reduction in harvested acreage. Acreage harvested was down due to reductions in the basic and effective quota. The quota that an individual farmer has regulates the pounds of tobacco that the individual can sell. Harvested acreage at 120,000 acres was down 90,000 acres from the previous year and the smallest acreage since record keeping began in 1919. Yield per acre at 2,025 pounds was up 215 pounds from the 1999 crop and the largest yield in 6 years. Bourbon County was the leading producing county in the State with 7.91 million pounds.

Seeding of tobacco beds was active in early April and by April 9, 86 percent of the beds had been seeded, ahead of average and the previous year. Greenhouses and float beds continue to produce the majority of the plants set. For 2000 farmers got 82 percent of their plants from greenhouses and float beds. Setting of tobacco started the last week of April and rapidly advanced during May. By May 21, 45 percent had been set, up from 37 percent for 1999 and 20 percent for average. Slowed by rain in late May setting resumed in early June at a good pace. By mid-June tobacco setting was virtually complete with only minor disease and insect problems reported. The tobacco crop looked very good going into July. The most common disease reported was black shank. By mid-July tobacco development continued ahead of the previous year. On July 16th, 28 percent of the crop was blooming compared to 22 percent the previous year and 14 percent was topped compared to 9 percent in 1999.

By late July reports of blue mold were becoming a concern with concentration in the eastern part of the State. Black shank was also reported statewide but it was not a major concern.

Cutting of the mature tobacco started the first week of August. By August 13, 13 percent of the burley crop had been cut compared to 16 percent a year earlier and the average of 8 percent. Blue mold and black shank were a problem in some fields where continuous rain had been received. Reports of the severity of these problems varied from no problem to serious impact. No significant insect problems were reported. With the return of drier weather blue mold problems lessened. Cutting continued to be active except when slowed by wet weather. Labor shortages for tobacco work were reported in some areas of the State slowing harvest. Some houseburn was reported but it was considered generally light. Yields were good to excellent.

Harvest continued through September and by September 17, 83 percent was cut, behind 86 percent for 1999 while ahead of the 73 percent for the 5 year average. Housed tobacco continued to dry well and was in mostly good to fair condition but some farmers were concerned with the crop drying too quickly. Farmers started to strip their tobacco the first week of October. Housed tobacco continued to cure well for most producers with many reports of excellent color. Some producers however reported that weather conditions were not conducive for the best curing of burley in their area. For the 2000 crop there was an alternative in tobacco marketing. For the first time with the 2000 tobacco crop farmers were able to market their tobacco through the traditional auction system and also sell by direct contract. Average price received per pound was 196.8 cents, up 6.8 cents from a year earlier and the highest burley price on record.

DARK TOBACCOS

Production, yield and harvested acreage of dark tobacco was up from 1999 for all four types.

Type 22, Eastern Dark Fire-cured production at 12.9 million pounds was up 47 percent from the 1999 crop and was the largest crop since 1978.

Type 23, Western Dark Fire-cured production at 12.9 million pounds was up 40 percent from 1999 and the largest crop since 1956.

Type 35, One Sucker Dark Air-cured production totaled 9.30 million pounds, up 38 percent from the year before. It was also the largest crop since 1984.

Type 36, Green River Dark Air-cured production was up 36 percent at 4.93 million pounds and the largest crop since 1984.

CORN

Corn for grain production totaled 159.9 million bushels, an increase of 29 percent over 1999 and the largest corn crop in 8 years. The growing season for corn was excellent in 2000. Average summer temperatures and timely rains greatly helped yields. Yields averaged 130 bushels per acre, 25 bushels more than 1999 and the highest since 1992. Acreage harvested for grain averaged 1.23 million acres, 4 percent more than 1999. Union County continued to lead the State in corn production with 13.2 million bushels.

Corn planting got off to a good start in early April 2000. Rain and cool temperatures slowed planting and soil warm up thus slowing germination. Planting continued through April and by May 7, 75 percent of the corn acreage had been planted. This was ahead of 74 percent for the 1999 crop and 52 percent for average. Corn planting continued through May though slowed at times by rain. Some corn was replanted due to poor germination and army worm damage. Planting was virtually complete by early June.

By mid-June dry soil conditions caused much of the corn crop to show stress from lack of moisture. Rains at this time helped to spur plant growth and improve plant conditions. Due to generally early planting and good growing

conditions the corn crop on June 25 was 10 percent silked, compared to 2 percent in 1999 and 1 percent for the average. Condition of the crop was 2 percent poor, 17 percent fair, 47 percent good and 34 percent excellent. The crop continued to develop through the summer with few reports of stress due to lack of moisture, disease or insects. As of August 13, 82 percent of the crop was in the dough stage compared to 80 percent for 1999 and the 5 year average of 62 percent. About 55 percent of the crop was dented compared to 49 percent in 1999 and 31 percent for average. Some fields in Western Kentucky were drying down quickly and most growers were expecting above average yields. Farmers began harvesting silage in late August.

Corn harvesting started in late August in the western part of Kentucky. On August 27, 90 percent of the corn was dented and 45 percent was mature. Four percent had been harvested, behind 13 percent for 1999 and 3 percent for average. Average moisture level of harvested corn was reported at 19.7 percent with good to excellent yields. By September 24, 96 percent of the crop was mature and 50 percent of the crop had been harvested. Many producers in western area of the State were finished. Reports of excellent yields continued. Harvesting statewide continued through late October.

SOYBEANS

Soybean production was estimated at 46.0 million bushels in 2000 compared to 24.4 million bushels in 1999. This was the largest soybean crop since 1982. Yields were estimated at 39 bushels per acre, up 18 bushels from 1999. This was the highest yield on record. Harvested acreage at 1.18 million acres was up 2 percent from the 1.16 million acres harvested in 1999. Growing conditions were excellent compared to the 1999 drought. Timely rains and moderate temperatures had a big impact on the record yield. Second crop soybeans produced a variable but generally good yielding crop. Daviess County was the leading county in soybean production with 3.19 million bushels.

Planting of single crop soybeans began the last week of April. Farmers picked up their planting in late April as corn planting was nearing completion. As of May 21, 40 percent of the intended soybean acreage had been planted, ahead of 37 percent for 1999 and 18 percent for the 5 year average. In late May and early June planting slowed due to wet soils. Planting of double season crop soybeans following the small grain (winter wheat and barley) harvest

started in mid-June. By June 25, 83 percent of all soybeans had been planted, with 98 percent full season soybeans and 45 percent double crop beans planted. This was 6 percent behind 1999 while 16 percent ahead of the 5 year average.

As of July 9, 25 percent of the planted acreage was blooming, and 5 percent of the plants had set pods. Soybean development during the summer was either behind or equal to 1999 while ahead of the 5 year average. Some cases of sudden death syndrome were reported in a few areas. In late August, soybeans started to yellow. In early September expected yields ranged from good to excellent although some double crop soybeans needed rain. By September 24, 5 percent of the soybean crop had been harvested. As harvesting progressed a few producers reported abandoning or cutting their poorer yielding beans for hay. Freezing weather held off until mid-October resulting in only a few late season beans being damaged. By October 29, 77 percent of the State's soybean crop had been harvested.

OTHER CROPS

Farmers in Kentucky produced 23.9 million bushels of winter wheat. This was down 3 percent from the 1999 crop of 24.6 million bushels. Yield per acre at 57 bushels was down 3 bushels from 1999. Logan County continued to be the leading wheat producing county with 2.81 million bushels.

A relatively mild winter helped keep the winter wheat crop in mostly good to excellent condition. Producers reported less than 3 percent of the wheat acreage lost to winter kill. Frost in mid April caused concern among growers in some areas of the State. Generally cool spring temperatures slowed soil warm up and in turn wheat growth. In early May farmers were concerned about the effect cool damp weather was having on the crop and its potential for disease. By May 7, 78 percent of the wheat was headed or heading, ahead of 73 percent for 1999 and 58 percent for average. Yields for the season looked very promising. Only scattered disease problems and lodging had been reported. Rains in late May resulted in scattered lodging and blow down. By June 11 harvest for grain was underway with some wheat severely lodged. Yields varied considerably

and some low test weights were reported. Most farmers reported good yields. Low grain prices and lodging encouraged some growers to cut wheat for hay. By early July harvest was virtually complete.

Alfalfa hay production totaled 975,000 tons, up 34 percent from 1999. All other hay production was estimated at 5.28 million tons for the year 2000, up 29 percent from 1999 and the largest production on record. Harvested acreage at 2.20 million acres was a record high, 50,000 acres above 1999.

Alfalfa and other hays came through the winter with minimal winter damage. First cutting of alfalfa hay started in late May. Alfalfa weevil damage to the crop was minimal. Haying was delayed in late May in many areas by rain. Good soil moisture levels resulted in good yields but rain resulted in some reduction in quality. Acreage cut for other hay tends to increase in a dry summer. The 2000 crop year was an exception to this as acreage was up 50,000 acres from 1999.