

DARK TOBACCO

Since 2005, dark tobacco grown in Kentucky has been combined into two groups, dark fire and dark air. Dark tobacco is grown primarily in Western Kentucky, sells for a higher price than Burley tobacco and contracts almost all of the production sold to the tobacco companies.

The increase in dark fire-cured tobacco production resulted from an increase in harvested acreage. Production was 24.8 million pounds, an increase of 3.10 million pounds from the 2006 crop. Acreage was estimated at 8,000 acres, an increase of 1,800 acres from the previous year

and yield was estimated at 3,100 pounds per acre, down 400 pounds from the 2006 crop. Price received by growers was \$2.40 per pound, unchanged from the previous year.

Dark air-cured tobacco production was 11.8 million pounds, virtually unchanged from the 2006 production. Farmers harvested 4,200 acres of dark air tobacco with a yield of 2,800 pounds per acre. Harvested acreage was up 400 acres from 2006 while yield was down 300 pounds per acre. Price received by growers was \$2.20 per pound, the same as 2006.

CORN

Corn for grain was estimated at 175.4 million bushels, an increase of 16 percent from the 2006 crop and the largest corn crop on record. The previous high was 173.3 million bushels in 2004. Production was up due to the increase in harvested for grain acreage. Yield was estimated at 129 bushels per acre, down 17 bushels from last year's crop. This would be the lowest yield in five years. Acreage harvested for grain was estimated at 1.36 million acres, up 320,000 acres from the previous year. This was the largest harvested acreage since 1986. Union County was the leading corn production county with 14.8 million acres. Twelve counties had production of 5.00 million bushels or more.

Soil temperatures were warm this spring and by April 8, 26 percent of the intended corn acreage had been planted, ahead of 13 percent for both the previous year and the five year average. Temperatures then turned cold and planting progress slowed. By the end of April, 59 percent of the corn was planted compared to 72 percent for last year and 64 percent for the average. Twenty-one percent of the crop had emerged, well behind last year's 43 percent and the five year average of 37 percent. During early May precipitation slowed planting but by May 20, 96 percent of the corn had been planted with 86 percent emerged. Starting in mid-May temperatures started to increase and soil moisture started to dry. Planting was virtually complete by the end of May.

The first week of June the average emerged corn height was 20 inches, with the most advanced height 33 inches. With the hot dry weather much of the corn crop stopped growing as it waited for moisture. A few areas saw some twisting of the stalk and other signs of moisture related stress. During June most areas of Kentucky were very dry and corn and other crops were becoming stressed due to lack of

moisture. Going into July, condition of the crop was 9 percent very poor, 11 percent poor, 20 percent fair, 44 percent good and 16 percent excellent. As of July 1, 50 percent of crop had silked or was silking, ahead of both last year's 43 percent and the five year average of 37 percent. Soil conditions for Kentucky remained dry during July prior to receiving some widespread rain in late month. Ninety-one percent of the corn had silked or was silking on July 29. Fifty-six percent of the crop was in the milk stage or beyond, 32 percent was in the dough stage and 12 percent was in the dent stage.

Dry crop conditions continued during August. By the second week there were reports of the mature crop drying down fast. Condition of the crop had slipped and was rated 6 percent very poor, 14 percent poor, 26 percent fair, 45 percent good and 9 percent excellent. As the month progressed, mature corn fields continued to dry down ahead of schedule due to the extreme heat. On August 19, 25 percent of the crop was mature awaiting harvest. Harvesting of the corn crop began in late August with 9 percent harvested by August 26. This was ahead of 4 percent for the previous year and the five year average. A wide range of yields were reported for corn harvested for grain. Harvesting of grain and silage advanced at a rapid pace in early September. By September 2, 23 percent of the corn had been harvested. Yields were good in some places, while other areas yielded only half of their average production. Corn continued to dry quickly with 81 percent mature on September 2. This was almost two weeks ahead of schedule. Harvesting continued at a rapid pace through the month. By September 30, 82 percent of the crop had been harvested. This was well ahead of 50 percent harvested last year and the five year average of 59 percent. Reported yields varied widely depending on the amount and timing of rain received. Harvesting of the crop was virtually complete by late October.