

2008 CROP WEATHER SUMMARY

JANUARY - APRIL: January was a month of varying weather conditions complete with snow storms, record highs, frigid arctic air and rain. A snowstorm which produced between 8.5 to 12.7 inches of snow ushered in the New Year. New record high temperatures were set mid-January with temperatures ranging from the mid-50s to mid-60s. Heavy rain accompanied the unseasonably warm air. Several additional inches of snow accumulated later in the month. Much cooler air moved into New England during the end of January with the arrival of frigid arctic air and wind. Temperatures dipped down into the negative teens. February was marked by temperatures of one to two degrees above the normal monthly average. Snow or heavy rain fell each week in February resulting in precipitation totals of half an inch to nearly six inches above average. Wet conditions continued into March however, several nice warm days kept New England maple syrup producers kept busy collecting and boiling sap. Rainfall totals were once again above average across the region. By mid-April, drier conditions replaced the three month trend and temperatures were above average. Spring-like conditions allowed many farmers to get into their fields to begin planting preparations. Maple syrup activities were complete by this time due to high daytime temperatures that reached up into the low 80s.

MAY: May began with heavy rains and below average temperatures. Warmer daytime temperatures arrived the second week. However, below average nighttime temperatures caused heavy frosts throughout New England that damaged fruit blooms and early planted vegetables. The latter half of the month saw variable weather conditions throughout the region, with some areas very wet, while others received no precipitation at all. Farmers in these areas were forced to irrigate to promote seed germination. High temperatures for the month averaged in the mid-60s and low temperatures ranged from the upper 30s to upper 40s. Total precipitation for the month ranged from 1.85 to 6.02 inches. Vegetable producers planted early season vegetables throughout May, while also harvesting asparagus, rhubarb, spinach, and lettuce. All fruits, except cranberries, were in full bloom to petal fall across the region by the end of the month. The lack of significant rain in some areas provided excellent pollinating conditions. Orchardists and berry growers kept busy throughout the month monitoring for pests and spraying protective fungicides and pesticides. While the rain at the beginning of the month delayed field work, planting of field crops had exceeded last year and normal by month's end. Planting of field corn and sweet corn surpassed the halfway mark by the end of May. Shade tobacco transplanting was close to completion at the end of the month while Broadleaf transplanting was just getting underway. The first cut of grass for dry hay and haylage began near the end of the month. The hay crop condition was extremely variable throughout the region due to sporadic rainfall and cooler temperatures.

JUNE: The first half of June was marked by strong thunderstorms, gusty winds and hail with localized flash flooding. Several locations broke record high temperatures during this time with temperatures in the upper 80s to over 100 degrees. Temperatures were below average during the last week in June with highs in the low 60s to upper 70s and lows in the mid-50s. Reports of tree fruit, vegetable, and corn crop damage were numerous throughout the month due to the severe storms. Field corn and strawberry crops showed signs of stress due to the abundance of rain. Total rainfall for June ranged from 2.75 to 7.79 inches throughout New England, well above average in most areas. Strawberry harvest had just passed the half way mark by the end of the month. Highbush and Maine wild blueberries reached petal fall mid-month with both in good to excellent condition. Massachusetts cranberries were in early bloom to full bloom by the end of the month with good condition reported. Rhode Island and Massachusetts potatoes were all emerged by the end of June while Maine potato emergence averaged 95 percent at month's end. Maine barley and oats had all emerged by the end of June with both rated in good condition. Field and sweet corn planting neared completion by the end of June and most of the crop had emerged. Shade tobacco transplants were all set out by first week of June. Broadleaf tobacco transplanting was nearly complete by the end of the month. Shade tobacco was rated in good to excellent condition while Broadleaf condition ranged from good to fair. The first cut of grass for dry hay was 60 percent complete at the end of June, behind last year and normal due to the lack of good drying weather. Second cut hay harvest had just begun.

JULY: The start of July saw scattered showers and thunderstorms across New England. The following week was breezy, warm, and mostly sunny providing excellent fieldwork and growing conditions. Daytime temperatures ranged from the mid-70s to the low 90s with above average nighttime temperatures in the mid-50s to mid-60s. The last two weeks in July brought very wet and stormy conditions to New England, severely limiting most fieldwork. On July 24, a tornado with wind speeds ranging from 86 to 135 miles per hour ripped through New Hampshire and left a path of destruction nearly 40 miles long and 1/3 of a mile wide. Total rainfall for July ranged from 3.02 to 11.67 inches throughout New England, well above average in most areas. Strawberry harvest was complete by the end of July. Highbush blueberry harvest began mid-July and was rated in good to excellent condition in response to abundant moisture. Maine wild blueberry harvest was just getting underway at the end of July with fruit size and set average to above average. Peach harvest began mid-month; frost damage earlier in the season kept condition in the good to fair range. Potato late blight was identified mid-July at two locations in Aroostook County, Maine. Frequent showers and wet conditions created an ideal setting for the spread of the disease, and by month's end growers in northern and central areas of the county were also combating the

disease. Potato condition in Massachusetts was also rated good to fair at month's end in response to excessive moisture. Rhode Island potatoes remained in good to excellent condition. Sweet corn harvest began the second week of July and crop was rated in good to excellent condition. Field corn was all emerged by the second week of July and rated in good condition throughout the month. Shade tobacco harvest began mid-July and was 30 percent harvested by month's end while Broadleaf tobacco harvest was just getting underway. The Broadleaf tobacco crop was rated in good to fair condition due to damage from hail and high winds. The first cut of grass for dry hay was 90 percent complete at the end of July, behind last year and normal due to the lack of good drying weather. The second cut was 45 percent harvested, behind last year but on par with normal.

AUGUST: The first half of August was marked by daily rain showers and cool temperatures while sunny skies, warm temperatures and minimal rain dominated the second half of the month. Severe thunderstorms on August 7 and 8 produced dime-size hail which damaged fruit, vegetable, and tobacco crops. Some areas experienced severe weather on August 16 with up to five inches of rain falling in a two hour time period. Damage to corn and apple crops from these storms was reported. Abundant rain severely limited harvesting as many fields were too wet to bring in equipment and many crops showed signs of damage and disease pressure due to excessive moisture. Partly cloudy skies dominated the weather pattern for the rest of the month providing excellent weather for making hay and harvesting other crops. August ended with light rain showers on Saturday and partly cloudy skies and wind on Sunday. Total rainfall for August ranged from 3.15 to 4.92 inches throughout New England. The highbush and lowbush blueberry harvests were active during the month, with both crops rated in good condition. Peaches were rated in good to fair condition with 90 percent of the crop harvested at the end of August, ahead of last year and normal. Pear harvest began mid-August and was 25 percent harvested by month's end, ahead of last year and normal. At month's end, Massachusetts cranberries were reported in good condition with average to above average sized berries. The apple harvest began by the end of the month, on par with last year and normal. Maine potato growers were gearing up for harvest at the end of August and vine desiccation was underway. Farmers were also active spraying to control late blight. Both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island potato harvest were active during August, with great progress being made. Harvesting of Maine's oats and barley crops began during August and were 35 percent and 15 percent harvested at the end of August, respectively. Sweet corn harvest was 80 percent harvested by month's end, ahead of last year and normal. The crop was rated in good to excellent condition. Field corn harvest was just getting underway at the end of the month and was rated in good to excellent condition. Broadleaf and Shade tobacco harvests were 90 percent harvested at month's end. Broadleaf tobacco was rated in fair to good condition due to early crop damage from hail while Shade tobacco was rated in good to fair condition.

The first cut of grass for dry hay was 95 percent complete at the end of August, behind last year and normal and rated in fair condition. The second cut was 80 percent harvested, behind last year and normal and rated in good condition. The third cut harvest began by mid-August and was 30 percent harvested by month's end, behind last year but on par with normal and rated in good to excellent condition.

SEPTEMBER: September began partly cloudy with average to above average high temperatures ranging from the mid 70s to low 90s. A tropical storm, a summer nor'easter and two hurricanes moved through New England during the month. No significant flooding occurred and wind gusts were minimal. On days where warm tropical air was absent from the region, cool temperatures made their way in causing frost warnings to be issued in some states. By the end of the month, many of the northernmost areas experienced killing frosts while much of the south remained frost free. Total rainfall for September ranged from 1.82 to 12.03 inches, well above average in most areas. Highbush blueberries, Maine wild blueberries, and peaches were completely harvested by the end of the month. Pears were 75 percent harvested by the end while apples surpassed the halfway mark. Massachusetts cranberry harvest began towards the end of September and the crop was 10 percent harvested at month's end, behind last year and normal. Maine potato harvest got underway during the first week in September. The crop was 45 percent harvested at month's end, ahead of last year and on par with normal. Massachusetts potatoes were 65 percent harvested at month's end, ahead of last year and on par with normal. Rhode Island potatoes remained in good to excellent condition and were 95 percent harvested by the end of September, on par with last year and ahead of normal. Maine's grain harvests were nearly complete at the end of September. Sweet corn was 95 percent harvested by month's end, on par with last year and normal. Field corn harvest began to pick up speed mid-month and was 60 percent harvested at the end of September. Broadleaf and Shade tobacco harvests were complete by mid-September. The first cut of grass for dry hay was finally complete by mid-September and was rated in fair condition. The second cut was 90 percent harvested at month's end, behind last year and on par with normal. The third cut was 50 percent harvested at month's end, behind last year but on par with normal and rated in good to excellent condition.

OCTOBER: Warm, wet weather marked the first half of the month of October. Highs during Columbus Day weekend were in the upper 50s to low 70s. Sunny skies drew people to farm stands and apple orchards to take advantage of late season crops. The second part of the month was cool with lows dipping down into the upper teens in the north bringing further hard freezes to areas. Southern New England experienced their first hard frost, officially ending the growing season. Heavy rain and strong winds ended the month of October. Areas reported seeing up to four inches of rain fall at one time and wind gusts up to 60 mph. Some of the higher elevations saw a dusting to eight inches of snow. Total rainfall for October

ranged from 3.12 to 4.80, below average in the southern states but average to above average in the north. The pear harvest was complete by the end of October. The Massachusetts cranberry harvest continued in full swing during the month. Maine's oat and barley harvests were complete by mid-October. Potato harvests in Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island were all complete by month's end. Sweet corn harvest was complete mid-October, ahead of last year and normal. The second cut dry hay was complete by the end of October, behind last year and on par with normal. Third cut dry hay harvest continued throughout October.

NOVEMBER: Unseasonably warm temperatures marked the month of November. Areas experienced periods of high temperatures ranging in the low 50s to low 70s. In between periods of heavy rain totaling up to two inches, farmers were busy with their fall clean up activities. November ended with cooler temperatures with lows in the upper teens to mid-20s and a few snow flurries in southern New England with 4 to 6 inches of accumulation in the north. Total precipitation for the month of November varied between 2.5 to 5.0 inches. The apple harvest was complete by the end of the first week, slightly ahead of last year and normal. The Massachusetts cranberry harvest ended mid-month, on par with last year and ahead

of normal. Field corn was complete during the beginning of November, on par with last year and slightly ahead of normal. Third cut dry hay harvest was complete by the end of the month, behind last year but on par with normal.

DECEMBER: December began quiet, with little precipitation and below average temperatures. On December 11 and 12, areas of southern Vermont and New Hampshire as well as northern Massachusetts experienced devastating ice accumulations. States of Emergencies were issued for both New Hampshire and Massachusetts as a result of widespread downed trees and power outages. Power was restored to some areas within days, but other areas were without power for a week or longer. Livestock farmers struggled to care for their animals under these challenging conditions while many orchardists and maple producers suffered damage to their trees and tubing. Temperatures were in the single digits during this time, making the clean-up effort more difficult. Snowstorms on December 19 and 21 brought heavy snow and wind to New England where areas saw anywhere from 6.0 to 15 inches of accumulation. Temperatures were in the 50s towards the end of the month with rainy skies. A New Year's Eve snowstorm ended the year with snowfall accumulations up to 6.5 inches. Total precipitation for the month was 0.5 to 3.4 inches above average in most areas.



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