

# Crop Summary

**2008 Crop Summary:** Utah producers entered the 2008 crop year with snow packs above normal. Soil moisture was adequate in most areas of the state due to the abundant snow cover during the winter. Farmers and ranchers were very optimistic about the upcoming season. Some producers around the state did not have any grain to sell at the high prices and did not benefit from the spike in the market because they had sold earlier.

In early April, livestock producers began to worry about hay prices being too high. There were some concerns about irrigation shortages as well as hay shortages. Hay supplies in Utah were short, but range grasses began to grow. Some fields around the state had suffered damage due to snow mold and winter kill. Some farmers were unable to work their fields because of the late melting snow.

Late April and early May brought reports of frost damage to blooming and budding fruit trees around the state. Fruit trees such as apricots were seriously damaged by frost with temperatures dipping into the mid teens and low 20s. Utah County reported that apples, tart cherries, peaches and pears were about 2 weeks late due to cold temperatures. Strong persistent winds also dried out some of the soils in southern Utah. Alfalfa progress was projected to be slow because of the cooler than normal temperatures. There were some concerns, around late May, about falling livestock prices and high feed costs. Some producers were looking for hay to feed their livestock because the grasslands hadn't started growing yet. There were some reports of livestock producers having voiced concerns about the Black Grass bug. The Black Grass bug feeds on the chlorophyll of grass plant and turns the grass white. Information was being gathered on how to control this pest and what control measures would be economically feasible.

During the early summer months farmers received a mixture of warm weather and scattered rain showers. Reports were that the first cutting of hay was about 10 to 14 days behind normal due to cooler weather. Corn struggled to grow in many fields. Corn height was about a foot shorter than a year earlier. Livestock producers had moved their cattle and sheep to summer ranges. Pastures were still behind due to the cold spring and dry weather. USDA announced the availability of Conservation Reserve Program Acreage after the nesting season ended (July 15<sup>th</sup> to November 10<sup>th</sup>). This may have helped some producers, with the price of feed being so high.

At the end of June warm and dry weather aided crop progress around the state. Dry land farmers reported a heavy crop of grain resulting from cool spring weather and timely rains earlier this season, however, they were concerned about heat stress because of recent dry hot weather. Warm temperatures really increased plant growth and there was good irrigation water still available around the state.

The hot and dry continued during the month of July. Producers cut second crop alfalfa in mid July and the crops looked good. Demand was high and hay prices ranged from \$150 to \$250 per ton depending on quality. High prices were concerning to livestock producers. A Temporary Restraining Order was issued against USDA for the Critical Feed Use allowance of certain CRP acres. Irrigation water, at that time, was adequate in most irrigation systems. Irrigated acreage was expected to yield extremely well. In some higher elevations, ranges were getting dry and conditions were deteriorating.

Early fall brought mild temperatures with plenty of moisture in some areas. Continuing rain throughout the central and southern parts of the state downgraded the quality of the alfalfa hay. Feed prices remained high and several cattle producers were planning to cull heavily that fall because of the high feed prices. Some livestock and dairy producers expected to sell part of their herds because of the economic hardship caused by high prices for feed.

## Crop Production Index (1977=100):Crops, by Commodity Grouping Utah, 2001-2008

| Year | Small Grain<br><i>Percent</i> | Hay<br><i>Percent</i> | Fruit <sup>1</sup><br><i>Percent</i> | Other Crops<br><i>Percent</i> | Total Crops<br><i>Percent</i> |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2001 | 86                            | 140                   | 56                                   | 77                            | 115                           |
| 2002 | 48                            | 125                   | 20                                   | 72                            | 96                            |
| 2003 | 72                            | 135                   | 93                                   | 72                            | 112                           |
| 2004 | 79                            | 134                   | 87                                   | 74                            | 112                           |
| 2005 | 78                            | 143                   | 104                                  | 82                            | 120                           |
| 2006 | 72                            | 138                   | 84                                   | 87                            | 115                           |
| 2007 | 63                            | 140                   | 70                                   | 90                            | 115                           |
| 2008 | 68                            | 143                   | 62                                   | 99                            | 118                           |

<sup>1</sup> Fruit production index is derived from total production.