

# Weather & Crop Conditions

**January** was moderately dry, with rain showers late in the month helping to replenish groundwater. At month's end topsoil moisture was rated at 90% adequate to surplus and subsoil moisture was rated at 71% adequate. The cold temperatures and dry weather slowed small grain growth and some producers began winter nitrogen applications. The moderate weather allowed the opportunity for laborious duties such as orchard pruning, fixing fences, equipment maintenance, and attending auction sales.

**February** was another dry month, which ended with a significant rain and snow event that brought welcomed precipitation across the state. Temperatures were normal to slightly above normal during most of the month, but became well below normal at month's end. Producers either started fertilizing small grains or made preparations to start fertilizing. Farmers were making plans for the spring planting season, and were buying seed and fertilizer. Other farm activities included attending meetings, doing taxes, and repairing machinery.

**March** showed improvements to soil moisture conditions throughout the state, as moderate rain and snow showers continued to accumulate precipitation. Both topsoil moisture and subsoil moisture showed a marked increase, with ratings at 70% and 64% adequate, respectively. Pastures and hayfields both demonstrated signs of new growth, and some of the hardest-hit regions began to recover from the previous year's drought. Row crop producers began to apply burn down applications to corn fields in preparation for early planting and field activities in small grain fields continued, with many producers applying spring nitrogen applications. Vegetable growers began planting early-season varieties, although wet fields in some areas delayed planting for several growers.

**April** can be described as a cool, wet month with intermittent warmer than average days, which farmers took advantage of for corn planting. The cooler temperatures took their toll on local strawberry crops and many farmers needed to utilize irrigation and fungicides to protect the crop from frost damage. Throughout much of the state, small grains continued to develop on schedule, and wheat fields benefitted from the precipitation and Nitrogen applications. Pastures and hayfields also showed significant improvement with new growth due to the wet weather conditions. By month's end, unseasonably warm temperatures and dry weather allowed for producers to catch up on previously delayed planting and field operations.

**May** was mostly dry, with sporadic rain showers delaying fieldwork occasionally throughout the month. Although the rain put a halt to field activities early on, producers took advantage of the subsequently dry weather to complete corn planting and make headway with soybean, cotton and peanut plantings as well. Grain producers remained diligent about scouting their fields, and with increased reports of powdery mildew in wheat and barley, the state saw a rise in chemical applications. The wet conditions delayed tobacco transplanting in some areas and the quality of greenhouse transplants showed some decline. A few frosty nights were felt throughout some areas of the State, with varying effect on vegetables, grasses and home gardens. Hay harvest began this month, as soon as fields were dry, and although some hay was a little mature, the first-cutting looked very good.

**June** began with additional rainfall, putting a halt to hay harvest and spring planting activities. A severe storm system mid-month created additional delays in hay harvest, the spraying and fertilizing of row crops, and affected the quality of wheat, barley and hay. The heavy rainfall caused lodging in some crop fields and trouble for producers struggling to get hay cut, cured and out of the fields. Producers across the state took advantage of clear, dry weather at the end of the month to advance the harvest of small grains and the planting of double-crop soybeans. As wheat harvest made good progress, producers quickly followed with double cropped soybeans to utilize the current surplus of soil moisture. Tobacco began to bloom and a topdressing of nitrogen occurred in some areas.

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## **-Weather & Crop Conditions, continued-**

**July** started with clear, dry weather, giving producers ample opportunity to complete small grain harvest, as well as, the planting of double-crop soybeans. Both hayfields and pastureland remained in good condition, and many producers were able to finish their first or second cuttings. The remainder of the month saw intermittent rainfall, which provided short term relief to crops that were starting to show signs of moisture stress. Moisture conditions remained variable largely dependent upon location. With soybean planting concluded, producers actively began scouting their fields for pests and weeds and applying post-emergent herbicide treatments where needed.

**August** brought scattered rain showers to the Commonwealth. Although several weather systems made their way through the state throughout the month, precipitation remained sporadic. While some areas received beneficial rains, others experienced signs of moisture stress in both crops and pastures. Most cattle producers had plentiful forage for grazing, and many were able to harvest a second cutting of hay. Soybean scouting was a primary activity, and while corn earworm, armyworms, and loopers all made an appearance, the overall insect pressure remained limited. Some fungicide applications took place. The harvest of corn silage, burley tobacco, and dark tobacco all progressed on schedule and the harvest of peaches, apples and potatoes continued, as well.

**September** could be characterized by overall moderate temperatures and dry conditions, with periodic scattered showers throughout the month. The early on cool weather was welcomed by field workers, who tended fields to make headway on tobacco and corn harvest. With tobacco harvest underway, producers were busy pulling, curing, and delivering their crop and anticipation for a good, quality harvest remained high. Occasional rainfall developed during the month and even though corn harvest was halted in some areas, the timely precipitation helped to improve peanuts, late planted soybeans, and fall pastures. Scouting activities in soybean fields were a frequent endeavor, and in general, corn earworm counts remained low and minimal fields required treatment. By month's end, grain farmers were preparing for the upcoming harvest of soybeans, peanuts and cotton, with the initial plantings of barley, rye and wheat already occurring.

**October** was a productive one for farmers, as clear, dry weather throughout the month allowed for the advancement of row crop harvest, as well as, the harvest of fall and winter apples and hay. Vegetable farmers remained busy harvesting pumpkins, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and winter squash. Although a mid-month rain shower delayed fall harvesting activities, producers welcomed the much needed precipitation as it was extremely helpful in replenishing soil moisture and benefitting pastures, field crops, and small grain germination. As the weather cleared, harvest activities resumed, as well as, the planting of small grains and cover crops. In addition, the harvest of fall fruits and vegetables progressed, with sweet potatoes, squash and pumpkins all being completed.

**November** continued the pattern of frequent precipitation, with rain showers delaying harvest activities for many producers. The harvest of corn and peanuts began to wind down at the beginning of the month, although unfavorable weather made it difficult for soybean and cotton harvest to move ahead full force. Small grain and cover crop planting continued as conditions were favorable for rapid germination. Fieldwork was further delayed as the remnants of Hurricane Ida made its way across the state in the middle of the month. The three-day storm system, which consisted of heavy rainfall and high winds caused damage and flooding in several areas, although no significant agricultural flood damage was reported. Although farmers were anxious to resume fieldwork following the storm, the several days of dry weather that were necessary for fields to dry out never transpired and soybean and cotton harvest remained behind schedule. The additional rainfall benefitted small grain and cover crops that were already seeded, but some fields were lost due to flooding and others showed signs of nitrogen deficiency due to the heavy rain.

**December** brought persistent cold, wet weather, which continued to keep farmers from making significant progress on the harvest of soybeans and cotton and the planting of small grains. Across the Commonwealth, cold temperatures, excess rainfall and even snowfall in some areas prevented fieldwork from advancing. Much of the soybean crop still remained in the fields and many producers were forced to delay harvest until the ground was frozen solid. At this point, the plans of additional wheat planting were diminished, as the recommended planting dates had passed. The snowy weather forced many cattle producers to begin supplemental feeding, despite the extended growing period seen in pastures during the fall. Furthermore, the excessive rain caused significant yellowing in barley and wheat fields due to the wet conditions and much of the wheat that was planted developed poor stands due to flooded fields.