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Rain Slows Planting Progress

If you ask someone: "How much corn is planted or how much Spring fieldwork has occurred in your area," the response is likely to vary, depending on where the person resides.

Frequent rainfall events during the last 10 days of April, along with saturated soil, have halted corn and soybean planting in many areas of the Upper Midwest. Some portions of the region have a significant amount of corn planted, while other areas have very little.

Producers in much of southcentral, southeast, and west-central Minnesota, as well as in the eastern half of Iowa, were able to get a significant amount of corn planted by May 1. It is estimated that 80-90 percent of corn planting is complete in many of these areas.

However, the situation is much different in southwest Minnesota, the western half of Iowa, and southeast South Dakota. Rainfall events during the final two weeks of April virtually stopped fieldwork. Many locations received 4-5 inches of rain or more during that period, resulting in a considerable amount of standing water in some areas. It will likely take several dry days before fieldwork can resume.

In addition to excess rainfall, cool soil temperatures have also slowed germination of planted corn. The weather has also deterred farm operators from planting soybeans where field conditions were fit. Soil temperatures at the two to four-inch depth averaged only 45-49 degrees during the last few days of April, after averaging 55-60 degrees in the preceding 10 days. Soil temperatures are expected to improve rapidly with warmer temperatures in the forecast.

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As of April 24, 30 percent of corn planting in the U.S. was complete, compared to a normal average of 16 percent by that date. Minnesota is well ahead of the national average at 45 percent, which equates to about two weeks ahead of normal for that level of corn planting.

Corn planting has progressed fairly well across Minnesota, except in the southwest and central portions of the state.

In Iowa, 40 percent of corn planting was completed by April 24, which is well ahead of normal. There was excellent planting progress in the eastern half of the state and very slow progress in the western half.

Some early-planted corn has emerged and a considerable amount of additional corn will emerge in the coming days with warmer temperatures in forecast. Once fields dry out, producers in affected areas will be scrambling to finish corn planting. At the same time, certain farmers will be taking advantage of warmer and drier conditions to begin soybean planting. With respect to corn fields affected by standing water, producers will need to determine if replanting is necessary. Fortunately, if replanting is required, it's early enough in the season, and there should only be a minimal effect on yield.

Based on University research, if growers in both southern Minnesota and Iowa can get their corn planted by May 10-15, there should be very little impact on final yields. The corn may pollinate and mature a bit later than corn planted in mid-April, but the yield should be satisfactory.

The planting window for soybeans is significantly wider compared to corn. In southern Minnesota and Iowa, full-season varieties of soybeans can be planted up to late May with only minimal reductions in yield potential. Weather conditions in the next ten days to two weeks will determine if planting delays in southwest Minnesota and western Iowa become more serious.

For more information, contact Kent Thiesse, Farm Management Analyst and Vice President, MinnStar Bank, Lake Crystal, MN. Thiesse is at kent.thiesse@minnstarbank.com or 507-381-7960.

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