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Late Season Crop Challenges Remain

Even though we are getting fairly late into the growing season, some crop challenges remain.

The very wet and warm growing season in much of the Midwest has been very favorable for the development of corn and soybean diseases. Some of these diseases that occur before plants reach maturity can cause plants to die-down earlier than normal, which can ultimately reduce yields. Root-rot diseases also occur more frequently when crops are continually in saturated soil conditions. This can cause more frequent lodging, as crops reach maturity.

Another issue in portions of Minnesota and surrounding states has been severe weather. These storms can lead to late season crop-yield loss, in addition to yield losses from late planting and drown-out damage earlier this year. The severe storms have also caused property damage to houses, buildings, and grain bins on farms and in rural communities.

As of July 31, the USDA rated 76 percent of the nation's corn crop at "good-to-excellent," compared to 72 percent of the U.S. soybean crop.

The July 31 crop ratings this year for corn were the highest since 2014 and the highest for soybeans since 1994. These were the crop ratings that were used for the important August 12 USDA Crop Report, which projected record national yields for both corn and soybeans. As of August 15, the USDA still had 74 percent of the U.S. corn crop rated "good-to-excellent," along with 72 percent of the soybean crop. These figures compare to 72 percent for corn and 63 percent for soybeans in mid-August of last year.

Based on the August 12 USDA Report, the 2016 U.S. corn yield is estimated at 175.1 bushels per acre, which is an increase of 7 bushels per acre from the July estimate, and 4.1 bushels per acre above the previous record corn yield in 2014. The 2016 U.S. soybean yield is now estimated at 48 bushels per acre.

Minnesota's 2016 corn yield is estimated at 184 bushels per acre, which would be the second highest in history, trailing only last year's state average of 188 bushels per acre.

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Minnesota's soybean yield for this year is projected at 47 bushels per acre, which trails only the 2015 record average yield of 50 bushels per acre.

Iowa is estimated to have record yields in 2016 for both corn and soybeans, with the corn yield estimated at 197 bushels per acre, and the state soybean yield at 57 bushels per acre.

Some private crop experts are questioning whether these lofty 2016 corn and soybean yields (both nationally and in some individual states) can reach these high expectations. As mentioned earlier, there have been some late-season weather and crop disease challenges in portions of the Upper Midwest, while some other areas of the Corn Belt turned quite dry this month.

Apparently, grain traders at the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) somewhat agree with this analogy. There was an expectation that corn and soybean futures prices would drop sharply following the projected record crop yields in the August 12 USDA Crop Report. However, CBOT grain futures basically traded in a "sideways" manner following the August 12 reports, which would seem to indicate that the grain trade is somewhat skeptical of the forecasted high yields.

History has shown that the final U.S. corn and soybean yields can vary considerably from the mid-August USDA report to final yield results (which are usually released in January, following the completion of harvest). The USDA uses plant population counts, crop conditions, crop maturity, ear counts, kernel rows, pod counts, etc., as of August 1 to make the U.S. crop yield estimates for the mid-August Crop Report.

Since 1990, the average variation in the U.S. corn yield (from the August USDA report to the final yield reading the following January) has been over 5.5 bushels per acre. In 15 years, the final yield was higher than the August yield, and in 10 years it was lower, with one year being the same.

The average variation in the final U.S. soybean yield from the August report has been close to 2 bushels per acre. Very similar to corn, the August yield was too low in 16 years and too high in 10 years. It will be interesting to see how this year's final yields compare to the August 12 USDA report.

State Fair 4-H Beef Championship and 4-H Auction Scheduled

This year will mark the 37th anniversary of the Purple Ribbon 4-H Livestock Auction at the Minnesota State Fair.

The 4-H Auction will be held on Saturday, August 27 at 5:45 p.m., in AgStar Arena. The premiums on over 100 purple ribbon 4-H exhibits will be sold in the 4-H auction. Approximately 35 4-H

scholarships (totaling over \$50,000) will be awarded at the auction to outstanding 4-H junior leaders in the Minnesota 4-H Animal Science Program.

Twenty percent of auction proceeds are used to help fund scholarships and special 4-H livestock programs across Minnesota. More details on the Purple Ribbon 4-H Livestock Auction and the 4-H Scholarship Program can be found [here](#).

The 4-H Beef Championship Event will be held at the Minnesota State Fair on Friday, August 26 at 1:30 p.m. in the Coliseum at the State Fairgrounds.

The championship event this year will include a selection of: Grand and Reserve Champion Market Beef, Dairy Steer, Breeding Heifer, Cow/Calf, and Prospect Market Calf from the 4-H Beef Cattle Show at the 2016 State Fair. The event will also include the selection of: the Top 5 Overall Breeding Heifers, Top 5 Overall Market Beef, and Top 3 Overall Cow/Calf Pairs.

4-H beef interview champions and Minnesota State Fair Youth Scholarship recipients will also be recognized on August 26. The Championship event will represent the "best of the best" from over 600 4-H members who are exhibiting beef projects at the 2016 Minnesota State Fair, according to Kent Thiesse, Minnesota State Fair 4-H Beef Show Coordinator.

Nearly 3,000 4-H members will be exhibiting beef, dairy, swine, sheep, poultry, rabbits, dairy goats, and llamas at the 2016 Minnesota State Fair, August 25-28.

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