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Harvest Season Progressing in Many Areas

Above normal temperatures during the month of September in the Upper Midwest allowed most of the 2016 corn and soybean crops to reach (or be very close to) maturity by month's end.

Most corn hybrids that were planted in late April and the first half of May have now matured and are drying down in the field, while some corn may need a bit more time for drying purposes. Most soybeans are ready to harvest, with full-scale soybean harvest proceeding across the region.

Most farm operators took advantage of favorable weather during the last week of September and the first few days of October to harvest soybeans. Some producers have also started harvesting corn. Harvest progress across the region varied considerably, depending on the amount of rainfall. Generally, harvest progress was more advanced in west-central and southwest Minnesota, as compared to the south-central and southeastern portions of the state. At the University of Minnesota's Southern Research and Outreach Center (SROC) in Waseca, no precipitation was recorded for eight straight days, from September 27 through October 4, which is the longest period with no precipitation during the 2016 growing season.

Two rainfall events from October 4-7, greatly slowed harvest progress in many areas of southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. Rainfall amounts in many portions of the region totaled 1-2 inches, which was particularly harmful in some extremely wet areas of south-central and southeast Minnesota, along with adjoining areas of eastern Iowa and western Wisconsin. Some farms in that region have yet to dry out adequately, following the heavy rainfall event on September 21 and 22.

As of October 5, the SROC at Waseca had accumulated a total of 2,919 growing-degree units (GDUs), which is only the third time since 1950 that the GDUs during the growing season at Waseca have topped 2,900. The 2016 GDUs reported at Waseca are more than 17 percent above normal. The higher than normal GDU accumulation in 2016, especially later in the growing season, has greatly enhanced the maturity process for crops.

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The early yield reports from the soybean harvest across southern Minnesota and northern Iowa have been surprisingly good, especially considering some of the weather challenges during the 2016 growing season. Many yield-monitor, weigh-wagon, and test plot soybean yields of 60-70 bushels per acre, or even higher, have been reported across the region, with soybean yields of 50-60 bushels per acre being quite common. Of course, it should be pointed out that "whole field" yields are determined by dividing total bushels harvested by total acres in a field.

There are many farms or fields with significant drowned-out areas, or portions of fields that are not harvestable. The crop acres that are not harvestable need to be factored into the final "whole-field-yield" calculations. In some cases this will significantly lower the final "whole field" yields. For example, a soybean field with a weigh wagon yield of 60 bushels per acre, measured in an area with no drown-out damage, would see the "whole field" yield reduced to 48 bushels per acre, if 20 percent of the field is not harvestable. There will be numerous soybean fields across the region that will have 10-20 percent of non-harvestable acres this year.

Corn harvest has also been initiated in many areas of western Minnesota, now that corn has reached maturity and is drying down in the field. Once corn reaches physiological maturity, it begins to dry down naturally in the field. On very warm days, corn will naturally dry down and lose nearly one percent of moisture per day in the field. Field dry-down rates of one third to one-half percent per day are more typical for corn during the first half of October, with normal temperatures.

One piece of good news for farm operators is that the above normal temperatures in the early Fall allowed most corn to dry down naturally in the field to 16-23 percent moisture. This greatly reduces corn drying costs, which will be a big plus in a year with very tight profit margins. Ideally, corn needs to be dried down to about 15-16 percent moisture.

Stalk quality and strength have been major concerns with the 2016 corn crop in many areas of the Upper Midwest. Significant stalk breakage and ear droppage incidents are already occurring in some fields. A higher-than-normal incidence of corn diseases late in the growing season, together with the rapid maturation process for corn, has likely lead to the weakening of corn stalks in some hybrids. The consistent standing water in some areas in recent weeks is likely to result in weaker stalks, as well as more development of stalk rot, which can also result in additional corn lodging.

Fall tillage and manure applications could also be a bit challenging in many areas this Fall, due to extremely saturated soil conditions. This type of soil situation makes it difficult for quality tillage and may require leaving portions of fields without Fall tillage or manure applications. Producers are also reminded that soil temperatures should be 50 degrees or lower for applications of anhydrous ammonia nitrogen fertilizer for the 2017 crop year. Soil temperatures

in Waseca were still above 60 degrees, as recently as October 5.

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.

Ag Network Launching

The inaugural meeting of ICBM's Ag Network is set for October 19, 2016, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the ICBM office in Bloomington.

The new Network will provide a forum for ag lenders to learn from guest presenters, tackle challenging industry issues, and share best practices.



The group is open to all ICBM bank members. There is no charge to attend and lunch will be provided.

Interested in participating? Contact Doug Krukowski at dkrukowski@icbm.org or 651-789-3981.