2021 Crop Year in Review

In general, the 2020/2021 winter was dry with above normal temperatures. The only measurable precipitation fell as rain on January 21.

The first couple of weeks in February were clear but a deep freeze and snow began on Valentine’s Day and continued for the week. Three to five inches of snow was reported across the county. The fourth week warmed up with a large rain late in the month. Gravel roads and animal feeding areas that were softened by the recent freeze/thaw cycle turned to mud in the first week of March.

Anhydrous Ammonia application began early in March as well as tobacco greenhouse preparation. A large rain in the third week of March dissipated quickly as warm, windy conditions continued, drying and warming soil providing optimum conditions for farms seeking to plant ultra-early soybeans.

April began hot and dry, perfect conditions for soybean and corn planting. The third week dropped lower in temperatures with light frost and snowfall on the 21st. Concern regarding the emerging corn and soybeans was minimal based on our experience of the May 2020 freeze events. Temperatures remained cooler late in the month with wet soils that slowed corn and
soybean emergence and provided optimum conditions for slugs to cause major feeding damage to no-till soybeans.

Hot and dry soil conditions through the latter half of May were ideal for decreasing slug activity and achieving rapid crop growth and herbicide activity on the post-emergence herbicide applications. Weather conditions provided an ideal opportunity for harvesting hay, tobacco growth, and finishing soybean planting. Despite the end of April being cool and wet, the crop was off to an ideal beginning. After several wet springs, it was so nice to plant through fields with no worry of wet areas that would have to wait for further drying.

June continued with dry conditions. Clouds and rain forecasts in the second week delayed herbicide application with rain appearing imminent on the horizon but it never came. Wheat harvest began in the fourth week with cooler temperatures and low humidity. The wheat crop was excellent, a result of a dry winter and May providing optimum growing conditions. By the end of June, many corn and soybean fields dried out as rapid growth and no rain dried topsoil moisture.

The concern of corn tasseling in hot, dry soil conditions was relieved as much of Daviess County received a slow and steady rain on July 1. The rain, following an extended hot period, could not have been better for the corn. Another two inches of rain fell on the 10th, pushing the early April corn to optimum potential and providing later corn again with ideal moisture for pollination.

August was hot, dry, and sunny. The only measurable rain fell on the 9th with most of the county reporting .5-.8 inches. Extreme heat dissipated later in the month but sunshine and heat caused early planted soybeans to begin coloring on slopes and thinner soils. Tobacco harvest was underway and most indicated harvesting the best tobacco they had grown in years. Limited
but well-timed rain in July was perfect for a crop that is not tolerant of excessive moisture after topping.

Labor day is the official beginning of harvest in this area. The 2020 crop was exceptional, so most were prepared for a crop of less. Despite corn getting a nice start and timely rain at pollination, a dry June and August were concerning and most producers expected final yield to be affected by it. Indeed, it was not! All of Kentucky experienced record-high yields of corn and soybeans. In addition to yield, prices for wheat, corn, and soybeans were well above the 5-year average, allowing producers the opportunity to market grain well above the cost of production throughout the year and even at harvest when the basis usually increases.

October continued with ideal, warm, dry harvest weather. An occasional shower slowed harvest only temporarily as no significant rain fell until the 25th. The first week of November was dry but colder, bringing the first killing freezes of the year. A warm-up in the second week provided a pleasant opportunity to clean harvest equipment.

Daviess County agriculture had an extremely successful year. For that, we are blessed and thankful.

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