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Farm Update

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EDUCATION

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2023 Crop Year in Review

In an industry whose wins or losses are determined by weather, it is interesting to look back on events that influenced the planning, production, and results of our crops. Temperatures rebounded from a frigid December to normal averages and set some warming records in January. No rain or snow fell during the month.

Light snow canceled school on the first day of February, but the dry weather trend established in January continued. Cold nights and warmer days were typical weather for the month. March arrived with the first of several storms that would affect Daviess County in 2023. Heavy rain on March 3rd and 4th coupled with fierce wind from the south destroyed hundreds of barns and trees. Nice weather did follow, allowing work to restart at the end of the second week. Heavy rain fell across much of the county on the 24th with up to 5 inches reported in some areas. Fair weather with warm sunshine and calm wind returned in the final days of the month.

Early April was beautiful. Some of the first crops were planted at the end of the first week and planters ran across the entire second week. The third week remained dry but was colder, with some farms choosing to slow planting down and wait until warmer air returned before planting more.

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The first week of May was beautiful. Corn planted in mid-April was emerging in 14-16 days and thousands of acres were planted that week. On Saturday, May 7, a severe storm dumped 2 inches of rain across the whole county, some areas reported more. As much as 5-8 inches fell south of Green River in Mclean and Muhlenberg Counties. Fields planted just before the storm encountered severe erosion and ponding in tilled fields. Emergence was disappointing, especially for crops planted in May, when excellent emergence is expected. Dry weather returned and planting continued, but the decision would be made by many to replant several thousand acres planted in the last days of April and the first week of May.

June arrived with typical hot, dry weather. Most finished planting early in the month. Excessive soil moisture was never a problem in 2023 and people began to notice it in June. Several above-normal days of heat in mid-month and no rain since early May revealed where thin soil was beneath corn across the county. By the end of the month, the lack of growth on droughty soils was evident as the plant height was noticeably shorter than corn in deeper soils of the same fields. A nice rain fell over some areas on the 19th followed by a rain with some light hail reported on the 25th. Wheat harvest continued that week. The dry, cool April and dry, early June provided conditions for optimum wheat yield. The month ended with a mega rain on the 29th and 30th. Enormous rain and violent wind were received across the county with some estimating 10 or more inches may have fallen in the Knottsville and Philpot areas. A large flood was about to occur across the mid-section of Daviess County.

The first two weeks of July were spent estimating the amount of seed needed to replant the Panther and tributary creek bottoms. It was estimated that 6-8,000 acres were completely

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lost. Scattered rain fell twice late in the month with heavy rain and hail stretching from Masonville to Philpot.

By August the corn crop was rapidly completing the grain fill stages and soybeans were also looking good. A nice rain came across most of the county on the 14th, followed by extreme heat in the fourth week. The latest planted corn was filling and there was concern about it regarding the heat and return to dry conditions.

Corn and soybean harvest was well underway by mid-September. No rain and dry soil allowed the crop to dry and harvest to continue at a rapid pace. Only one rain came in September to slow progress. Heavy rain fell across the county on the 28th. Damaging hail in that storm affected the area from Masonville to Whitesville for a second time in the same growing season.

Dry, warm weather continued during the entire month of October and November. The dry fields were ideal for grain harvest but terrible for forages, reducing the success of stockpiling fescue growth and reseeding grasses.

Looking ahead to the winter and 2024, there will be much discussion pertaining to marketing, interest rates, and the cost of production. But overall success in crop production is determined by the weather.

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