

MESSENGER-INQUIRER



December 31, 2022

2022 Daviess County Crop Year in Review

2022 began with historic net farm revenues from 2021 and with the expectation of reduced input supply availability, increased production expense, and anticipation of a dry summer as 10 years had passed since the last drought.

Weather conditions were typical for January, one light snow in the first week, mild temperatures most of the month, and a sharp cool down in the last week and the first week of February. A light ice event in early February gave way to warmer weather and a lot of rain. Three heavy rain events in the last two weeks of February reversed concerns about dry subsoil moisture. Panther Creek overflowed as rivers rose to moderate flood stages.

March came in with warmer, drying weather, and world attention on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. World grain, fertilizer, and energy markets shuttered, then prices shot higher as export of Ukraine corn and wheat, and Russian wheat and fertilizer suddenly stopped. By the third week, field activities had begun before a cool fourth week delivered an inch and a half of rain. The last week of March was clear but cool, keeping activities paused. April was not productive either. Heavy rain in the first two weeks stopped all activities. Temperatures were below normal, but clearing began in the third week. Some of the first corn was planted Sunday the 24th.

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May was hot and dry providing optimum conditions to plant the corn and soybean crop, set the limited amount of tobacco still grown, and cut the first hay. Many complained about reduced hay yields, blaming the results on limited growth during the cool wet April. Crops were growing great. Wheat yields were good, and more acres were harvested than in recent years. Temperatures climbed higher in June. Adequate soil moisture and hot sunshine is the perfect recipe for optimum plant growth, but by late in the month rain was needed. Those with irrigation put it to work but the rest were hoping for a rain in the first weekend of July.

No rain fell on our July 4 holiday weekend. The heat climbed, early planted corn began to tassel and people began to worry. We had a much better crop growing than in 2012 but we all know that pollination fails when extreme heat and lack of soil moisture coincide. The western and central areas of the county did receive some light rain late in the first week of July, but it was not received east of highway 231. Finally, nearly all of the county received between 2 and 3 inches of rain early in the third week of July followed by a huge storm in the fourth week.

August came in like a lion for a few unlucky farmers near West Louisville who encountered severe wind and hail on tobacco, corn, and soybeans. In general, the weather for most of August was clear and cool. Adequate soil moisture was great for soybean pod fill and corn kernel development but the effects of the lack of rainfall were evident in the corn. The most severe fields failed to pollinate, others expressed tip-back and zipper ear pollination problems. Many fields expressed stunted height but did somehow manage to pollinate an ear. No one expected the record-breaking yields of recent years.

Corn dry-down seemed to take an extra week. Moisture did not drop below 20% until the third week of September. Rain was absent most of the month with exception of a deluge west of

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Owensboro on the 3rd and again on the 19th That would be the last rain until October 25. In general, corn yields were better than anticipated. Soybean yields were good, a benefit of a much wider range to set and fill pods. The greatest cost was the lack of rain in September across the mid-west. The Mississippi river level decreased to unnavigable depths, pushing the prices buyers could pay for corn and soybeans as much as \$1.50 less than market price when barge freight price skyrocketed. Also, the dry conditions dropped soybean harvest moisture to 10% or less for three weeks, resulting in a loss of 2-3 bushels per acre on tens of thousands of acres of harvested soybeans.

Prices resulting from reduced U.S. yields and the loss of Ukraine supply will keep corn and soybean prices above normal in 2023. It, too, is certain that fertilizer prices will remain at levels well above normal, reducing profitability. Forecasts are for continued inflation of chemical, fuel, labor, and repair expenses in 2023.

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