2001 CROP HIGHLIGHTS

An early spring, good soil moisture during most of the growing season, a relatively cool spring and good harvesting weather all combined to produce a good crop production season for Kentucky farmers. Corn, soybean and tobacco yields were generally good. Some areas of the State however experienced dry conditions that limited crop yields.

BURLEY TOBACCO

Kentucky farmers produced 220.5 million pounds of **burley** tobacco. This was down 9 percent from the 243.0 million pounds produced in 2000 and the smallest crop since 1936. The smaller crop was brought about by a reduction in quota. A farmer's quota regulates the amount of tobacco than can be sold. Harvested acreage was estimated at 105,000 acres, down 15,000 acres from the previous year and the smallest on record. Yield per acre was estimated at 2,100 pounds per acre, up 75 pounds from the previous year and the largest yield in 7 years. Fayette County was the leading production county with 6.38 million pounds.

Farmers were actively sowing their plant beds and greenhouses in late March and early April. Sowing of float and conventional tobacco beds was virtually complete by late April. Farmers got 83 percent of their tobacco transplants used in 2001 from greenhouses and float beds with only 17 percent from conventional beds. Setting of both burley and dark tobacco started the last week of April and a good supply of plants was available. Setting during May was slowed at times by dry soil conditions. Minimal insect and disease damage problems were reported. In late May much of the State needed rain as farmers continued to set tobacco. In late May setting slowed due to receiving much needed rain and wet soils across the State. Tobacco setting continued slowly in early June due to wet soil conditions. Some reports of tobacco plants getting too big and a few reports of cold damage at this time were even received on early set tobacco. Soils dried out by mid-month and by late June setting was nearing completion.

In early July, the tobacco crop was looking good overall; however, there were some scattered reports of black shank and blue mold. Most areas of the State reported premature blooming of tobacco. By mid-July topping was the major tobacco activity reported. Blue mold and black shank continued to be reported. By the end of July, 63 percent of the burley crop was blooming compared to 67 the previous year and the five year average of 48 percent. Thirty-five percent had been topped. Seventy-nine percent of the dark tobacco had been topped. By the first week of August some farmers had started to cut their tobacco while others continued to spray and top their crops. Blue mold and black shank continued to cause problems in some areas of the State. In early August some farmers lost part of their stands due to drowning in low areas and increased disease activity. As the month progressed farmers were spraying, topping, cutting and housing their tobacco at the same time in various fields. As of August 26, 41 percent of the burley had been cut compared with 46 percent for 2000 and 35 percent for average. Dark tobacco was 38 percent cut compared to 35 percent in 2000 and 41 percent for average. Some light houseburn on housed tobacco was reported. Curing of tobacco in early September continued with few reports of houseburn. Cutting and housing of tobacco continued through September with cutting virtually complete by the end of September. Housed tobacco was reported in mostly good to excellent condition with minimal houseburn.

Only a few fields remained to be cut in early October. Curing conditions during October were mostly good with few problems reported. Stripping of cured tobacco started in early October and by October 14, 14 percent had been stripped, ahead of 2000 and average. Stripping during October continued to outpace the previous year and average. Most farmers felt that they would make their quota with good quality tobacco even as quality of late tobacco varied. Contract receiving stations started receiving tobacco on October 29 with the auction sales starting on November 13. Growing conditions for the 2001 crop year were very good, while some areas of the State experienced dry weather that limited yields. Even with blue mold and black shank reports during the growing season, few problems from blue mold and black shank were experienced. Average price received per pound was 197.7 cents per pound, up 0.9 cents from 2000 and a record high price.

DARK TOBACCOS

Production of all four type of dark tobacco was down from the previous year. Reduced production was brought about by a reduction in the acreage quota that farmers can set and harvest.

Type 22, Eastern Dark Fire-cured production at 11.2 million pounds was down 13 percent from the 2000 crop.

Type 23, Western Dark Fire-cured production with 10.7 million pounds was down 17 percent from 2000.

Type 35, One Sucker Dark Air-cured production was down 15 percent for the 2000 crop at 7.91 million pounds.

Type 36, Green River Dark Air-cured production at 4.30 million pounds was down 13 percent from a year earlier.

CORN

Production of **corn for grain** was estimated at 156.2 million bushels, a decrease of 2 percent from the large 2000 crop. Harvested acreage was down from 2000 while yield was a record high. Yield was estimated at 142 bushels per acre, a record high and up 12 bushels from the 2000 crop. Harvested for grain acreage at 1.10 million acres was down 130,000 acres from the previous year. Union County continued as the leading corn production county in the State with 12.3 million bushels.

Corn planting got off to a good start in early April and showed good progress, but then slowed at mid-month due to cool temperatures. Dry conditions across most of the State the last week of April and first week of May accelerated planting of corn. By May 6, 88 percent of the intended corn acreage had been planted compared to 72 percent in 2000 and 52 percent for the five year average. Planting continued through late May. Going into June, corn was in mostly good to fair condition and an average 23 inches tall.

During June corn growth continued to be good to excellent. Soil moisture was in the mostly adequate range and few insect and disease problems were reported. As of June 24, 32 percent of the corn was tasseling compared to 20 percent in 2000 and 9 percent for average. By early July spotty rain contributed to drying soil conditions. In western Kentucky corn was starting to show signs of stress due to heat and lack of rain. Corn during mid-July looked generally promising. The crop as of July 20 was in mostly good to excellent condition. Corn was 89 percent in the silk stage or beyond, 60 percent in the milk stage or beyond and 32 percent in the dough stage, all ahead of the previous year and average. In late July nearly the entire State received varying amounts of rainfall. Recent rains have helped improve the corn crop, in spite of the early dry weather in Western Kentucky and recent flooding in Eastern Kentucky. Condition of the crop as of August 3 was 2 percent poor, 17 percent fair, 53 percent good and 28 percent excellent. Corn in the milk stage or beyond had reached 91 percent, dough stage or beyond had reached 67 percent and 30 percent of the crop was in the dent stage. Rains during August helped the corn crop develop. Some farmers in mid-August were getting ready to start harvesting their early corn for grain. Some corn silage was being chopped for silage.

Corn harvesting started in late August with 5 percent harvested on August 26. On that date 89 percent of the crop was dented and 48 percent was mature. As harvesting progressed good to excellent yields were reported. By mid-September the grain harvest was underway in southern and western Kentucky while just starting in Central Kentucky. Most areas reported corn was drying down well with moisture levels averaging 19.5 percent in harvested grain. By September 23, corn harvest was in full swing with 50 percent harvested and nearly all of the remaining crop mature. In some areas moisture levels in the harvested corn were high enough to require drying. During harvest reports of good to excellent yields continued. By the first week of November harvesting was virtually complete in the western and middle section of the State. Farmers in eastern Kentucky were still harvesting corn.

SOYBEANS

Soybean production was estimated at 48.8 million bushels, up 8 percent from 2000, the largest crop since 1982 and the third largest crop on record. Yield per acre was estimated at 40 bushels per acre, a record high yield. Harvested acreage was estimated at 1.22 million acres, up 60,000 acres from the 2000 crop. Daviess County continued as the leading production county with 3.38 million bushels.

Planting of soybeans started in late April and by April 29, 7 percent of the crop had been planted. In early May soybean planting saw good advancement with the generally dry weather. By May 13, 43 percent of the intended acreage was seeded, ahead of 16 percent for 2000 and 9 percent for the five year average. Farmers continued to plant soybeans but by mid-May planting had slowed due to dry soils. Rainfall in late May permitted farmers to again plant soybeans. By May 27, farmers had planted 67 percent of their soybeans. By mid-June almost all of the single crop soybeans had been planted and seeding of double crop beans was underway after the small grain harvest was complete. By the first week of July planting of double crop beans was virtually complete. During July soybeans were doing well where rainfall had been received. As of July 29, 72 percent of the soybeans had bloomed or were blooming and 42 percent were setting pods, both ahead of the previous year and average.

By August 19, 90 percent of the soybean crop had bloomed or were blooming and 74 percent of the crop was setting pods. Soybeans fields could have generally used some more rain, especially double crop beans. Some cases of Sudden Death Syndrome were reported. By late August some soybeans were shedding leaves. In early September double crop bean development was aided by continued rain showers. In mid-September a few fields of early beans were harvested in southern Kentucky and by September 23, 8 percent of the acreage had been harvested. Early yields were mostly good to excellent. Harvest continued to be active during October. Only a few reports of damage to second crop beans due to frost in late October were received. Even with the generally early season crop, harvesting in October was slowed due to rainfall.

OTHER CROPS

Kentucky farmers produced 23.8 million bushels of **winter wheat**, down less than 1 percent from a year earlier. Yield per acre at 66 bushels was up 9 bushels from a year earlier and a record high. Logan County continued as the leading production county with 3.16 million bushels of winter wheat.

Snow cover during extreme cold periods of winter helped the wheat crop to come through in mostly good condition. As of April 15, 84 percent of the crop was in good to excellent condition. Cool spring temperatures kept wheat damage to a minimum but slowed soil warm up and wheat growth. As of May 6, 85 percent of the wheat crop was headed or heading. Dry conditions during the spring limited any disease pressure. Condition of the crop as of May 18 was mostly good to fair. The dry spring resulted in short stalks and early headed wheat. May rains caused some lodging and some of the crop was cut for hay due to damage from an earlier freeze and poor development in some areas. Farmers started to harvest their winter wheat for grain the first week of June. Wheat harvest was in full swing on June 17 with 43 percent of the wheat for grain harvested, ahead of 36 percent for the previous year and 17 percent for average. In early July wheat harvest was nearing completion with most areas reporting better than expected yields and good quality.

Alfalfa hay production was estimated at 925,000 tons, down 50,000 tons from 2000. Yield at 3.70 tons per acre was down 0.2 tons per acre from the previous year. **All other hay** production was estimated at 4.62 million tons, down 12 percent from 2000. Harvested acreage at 2.10 million acres and yield at 2.20 were both down from the previous year. Fleming County was the leading producer of alfalfa hay and Warren County was the leading all other hay producer. **Alfalfa seeded** acreage was estimated at 30,000 acres.

Production of hay was down from the previous year due to both a decrease in acreage harvested and yield. Farmers with good soil moisture were able to harvest several cuttings while other farmers harvested only one cutting. Hay quality at times was hurt by rainy weather while hay harvest for the season was better than expected in many areas of the State.