

2002 CROP HIGHLIGHTS

Kentucky crop production for 2002 was limited by a hot, dry summer from early June through September. Adequate to surplus moisture was received prior to turning dry in early June. Crop

yields were down statewide from 2001 but varied greatly depending on when and how much rain was received during the growing season.

BURLEY TOBACCO

The final 2002 **burley** tobacco production estimate for Kentucky was 197.2 million pounds, down 11 percent from the 220.5 million pounds produced in 2001 and the smallest crop since 1936. Drought and disease problems were the major reasons for the smaller burley crop. Harvested acreage was estimated at 103,000 acres, down 2,000 acres from 2001 and the smallest on record. Burley tobacco acreage records started in 1919. Yield per acre was estimated at 1,915 pounds per acre, down 185 pounds from 2001. Barren County was the leading production county with 6.32 million pounds. For 2002, 14 counties had production of 3.50 million pounds or more.

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 mid-April. Farmers obtained 85 percent of their tobacco transplants used in 2002 from greenhouses and float beds with only 15 percent from conventional beds. Setting of burley tobacco started the first week of May with an adequate supply of plants reported by 96 percent of the growers. Setting during May was slowed by wet soil conditions, until fields started to dry the last week of May. Farmers had to mow their transplants in greenhouses and beds due to their height and their inability to set plants. Disease and pest problems were minor except in a few areas. Tobacco setting continued at a good pace in June due to good field conditions. By mid-June setting was nearing completion.

In early July, the tobacco crop was looking good overall; however, there were some scattered reports of black shank. It was the most prevalent disease problem reported. In some areas the late set tobacco was showing stress due to heat and lack of soil moisture. By mid-July top dressing was the major tobacco activity reported along with some early blooming of the crop. Increased black shank problems continued to be reported statewide. By the end of July, 55 percent of the burley crop was blooming compared

to 61 in 2001 and the five year average of 52 percent. Twenty-two percent of the burley crop had been topped. Black shank was reported everywhere and blue mold was also prominent in eastern Kentucky. In general, July was a dry month, which left many areas of the State needing a good, soaking rain.

Potential for yield varied depending on rain received and whether the crop was set near the normal setting time. By mid-August some farmers had started to cut their burley. Black shank severity was highly variable with the most severity seen in eastern Kentucky. Blue mold had been held in check by the dry weather. For some later planted fields, yield could increase if rain came soon. As of August 25, 35 percent of the burley had been cut compared with 39 percent for 2001 and 36 percent for average. Scattered showers during late August aided some tobacco fields, while other fields remained dry.

Farmers harvested their crop quickly as possible due to the lack of rain. The crop looked fair to good. Farmers were spraying, topping, cutting and housing their tobacco, all at the same time. Tobacco harvesting in early September continued with some reports of houseburn. Housing of tobacco continued through September with cutting virtually complete by the end of September. As a result of weather conditions, housed tobacco was reported in mostly fair to good condition. Some tobacco cured too fast and just dried out.

Rain in late September and early October arrived too late to help the tobacco crop. Only a few fields remained to be cut in early October. Stripping of cured tobacco started in late September and by October 13, 13 percent had been stripped, the same as 2001 and ahead of the average by 3 percent. Some farmers reported lighter than expected weights during the stripping process.

Tobacco continued to be sold by two methods, auction market and direct contract. Average price received per pound was 198.0 cents per pound, up .3 cents from 2001, a new record high price.

DARK TOBACCOS

Production of all four types of dark tobacco was down from 2001. Reduced production was brought about by a large reduction in the acreage quota that farmers can set and harvest. The prices received for all four dark tobacco types were up from 2001. Producers sold most of their crop right out of the barn with very little going to the auction market.

Type 22, Eastern Dark Fire-cured production at 7.74 million pounds was down 31 percent from the 2001 crop. The market year average price for Type 22 was 239.8 cents per pound, up 20.3 cents from the 2001 crop.

Type 23, Western Dark Fire-cured production with 8.76 million pounds was down 18 percent from 2001. Type 23, at 236.2 cents per pound, increased 26.1 cents from the 2001 crop.

Type 35, One Sucker Dark Air-cured production at 6.30 million pounds was down 20 percent from the 2001 crop. Type 35, at 213.5 cents was up 30.0 cents.

Type 36, Green River Dark Air-cured production at 2.94 million pounds was down 32 percent from 2001. Type 36, at 206.1 cents per pound was 23.9 cents above the 2001 average.

CORN

Production of **corn for grain** was estimated at 106.1 million bushels, down 32 percent from the 2001 crop. This was the smallest crop since 1988. The smaller production resulted from both a decrease in harvested acreage and yield. Corn for grain yield was estimated at 102 bushels per acre, down from 2001's record high 142 bushels. This was the lowest yield in 12 years. Corn yields were down across the State and varied greatly depending on when and how much rain was received during the growing season. Acreage harvested for grain was 1.04 million acres, down 60,000 acres from 2001.

Corn planting was off to a slow start in April with cool temperatures and excess moisture. Planting increased during mid-month with warmer weather. At times planting was slowed by thunderstorms that caused some washouts which needed to be replanted. By April 28, 43 percent of the intended corn acreage had been planted compared to 71 percent in 2001 and 49 percent for the five year average.

Rain continued to slow planting and fieldwork during May. By mid-May only 55 percent of the intended corn acreage had been planted, down from 97 percent for 2001 and the five year average of 84 percent. Planting continued well into the first two weeks of June. Normally, very little corn is planted after June 1st.

During the first half of July, corn condition continued to be good to fair but many fields need rain. In the second half of the month, conditions

deteriorated due to the stress resulting from a shortage of rainfall and hot temperatures. Soil moisture was mostly in the adequate to short ranges. As of July 21, 70 percent of the corn was silking compared to 88 percent in 2001 and 75 percent for the five year average. Corn expectations varied based on the amount of rainfall received. Areas that had received rain fared better than areas that had little since early June.

By early August, farmers were anxiously hoping for rain. Rains during the latter part of August arrived too late to aid the corn crop in the State. Parts of the State that received adequate rain during the growing season were expecting a decent crop while drier areas got a lower yield. In late August corn harvest had already begun in Western Kentucky. There were reports of poorer corn being harvested for silage rather than for grain. The crop as of August 25 was 85 percent dented and 35 percent mature. Corn harvested was reported at 8 percent, up from both 2001's figure of 4 percent and the average of 3 percent. Yields varied widely depending on rainfall received.

By September 1st, corn harvest was in full swing with 61 percent of the crop mature and 20 percent harvested. During harvest reports of varying yields continued to be received. Harvesting continued through October and by the first week of November, harvesting was virtually complete in the western and middle section of the State. Ninety-six percent of the corn crop was harvested as of Sunday, November 3.

SOYBEANS

Soybean production in 2002 totaled 41.0 million bushels, 16 percent below 2001. The average yield per acre in 2002 was estimated at 32.5 bushels per acre, 7.5 bushels below 2001's record high yield. Harvested acreage was estimated at 1.26 million acres, up 40,000 acres from the 2001 crop.

Planting of soybeans got off to a very late start due to the very wet field conditions. By May 12, only 3 percent of the crop had been planted, down from 41 percent in 2001 and the five year average of 16 percent. Planting during May advanced slowly due to wet field conditions. In June, planting progress increased quickly as drier conditions allowed farmers into the fields. By June 23, 88 percent of the intended acreage was seeded, slightly behind the 90 percent for 2001 and ahead of the 72 percent for the five year average. During the first week of July planting of soybeans was completed with planting of double crop soybeans following the small grain harvest. By July 14, soybeans were 19 percent blooming and 5 percent had set pods with the crop in good to fair condition. As of July 21, 41 percent of the soybeans had bloomed or

were blooming and 10 percent were setting pods. Spraying for weeds were reported in many areas.

During the summer both early and later planted soybeans were hurt by dry soil conditions. Pod fill depended on rainfall received. By August 25, 83 percent of the soybean crop had set pods or were setting pods, 13 percent had turned yellow or were turning yellow, and 1 percent had begun to shed its leaves. No major disease or insect problems were reported. During late September rain helped to lessen dry conditions in some parts of the State. Double crop and late planted beans got a little help for their pod fill from the rain. A few fields of early beans were harvested in Western Kentucky in late September and by September 29, 9 percent of the acreage had been harvested. When the soybeans were planted and if they got rain at critical times had the biggest impact on yields. Harvest was slowed in October due to periodic rain showers and wet field conditions. By November 10, only 70 percent of the crop had been harvested, compared to 94 percent in 2001.

OTHER CROPS

Kentucky farmers produced 18.0 million bushels of **winter wheat**, down from 23.8 million bushels in 2001. Yield per acre at 53 bushels was down 13 bushels from 2001.

A relatively mild winter helped keep Kentucky's winter wheat crop in mostly good condition. Producers reported 3 percent of the wheat lost due to winter kill. As of April 21, 85 percent of the crop was in good to excellent condition. Wet conditions led to some damage from crop stress early in the season. As of June 16, 20 percent of the crop had been harvested and early yield reports indicated an average to below average crop with test weights variable but on the low side. Head scab, water damage and lodging affected the yield and quality of the crop in some areas. The wheat harvest was nearly completed by June 30, with 95 percent of the crop harvested. Reports of wheat quality and yields were varied.

Alfalfa hay production was estimated at 900,000 tons, down 3 percent from the 2001 crop. Yield averaged 3.00 tons per acre, down .70 ton from 2001. Harvested acreage at 300,000 acres was up 50,000 acres from 2001.

Other hay production at 4.62 million tons was unchanged from 2001. Yield per acre at 2.20 tons per acre and harvested acreage at 2.10 million acres were both unchanged from 2001. Early in the alfalfa harvesting season farmers were unable to harvest their alfalfa due to rainy weather. Harvesting in May and early June was slowed by rain and poor curing weather. As farmers delay harvesting their hay or had it rained on, prior to baling and storing, quality deteriorated. Quantity of alfalfa hay harvested early in the growing season was good but quality was hurt due to excessive moisture. During the dry summer, hay growth slowed and farmers were looking for hay to cut and bale for winter feed.