

## 2004 CROP HIGHLIGHTS

Kentucky farmers benefitted from frequent rain during the summer of 2004. Corn and soybean production for 2004 were record highs. Planting of corn and soybeans and setting of tobacco was slowed in late May and early June by excessive

moisture. However, during the summer adequate to surplus soil moisture produced good yielding crops. Harvesting in late fall was slowed by frequent rain but farmers eventually completed combining their fields.

### BURLEY TOBACCO

Kentucky **burley** tobacco production during 2004 was estimated at 206.7 million pounds, an increase of 4 percent from the 2003 crop. The larger production was brought about by both an increase in harvested acreage and yield per acre. Harvested acreage at 106,000 acres was up 3,000 acres from the previous year. Yield was estimated at 1,950 pounds per acre, an increase of 25 pounds. Shelby County was the leading production county with 6.06 million pounds. For 2004, 16 counties had production of 3.50 million pounds or more of tobacco.

Sowing of plant beds in late March and early April advanced at a faster rate than in 2003. Sowing of greenhouse and conventional tobacco beds was virtually complete by the third week of April. Farmers obtained 93 percent of their tobacco transplants used in 2004 from greenhouse and float beds with only 7 percent from traditional plant beds. Setting of burley and dark tobacco started the first week of May. Farmers reported 96 percent had adequate tobacco plants. Farmers were actively setting their tobacco during May as field conditions permitted. However, setting slowed at times with cool temperatures and wet soil conditions. By May 30, 53 percent of the burley and 50 percent of the dark tobacco had been set, both ahead of the previous year. Blue mold was active in Central Kentucky, mainly in greenhouses. Setting continued through mid-June although slowed at times by wet soil conditions. At the end of June the majority of the tobacco crop was in good to excellent condition with a few areas in the State reporting blue mold or black shank problems.

By the first week of July farmers were actively spraying, side dressing and topping their tobacco. Blue mold and black shank had become a problem in some of the central and northeastern portions of the State due to wet weather conditions prevalent during the spring and summer. By mid-July blue mold had been confirmed in 40 counties. There

was also widespread variability in crop maturity. Some tobacco fields were nearly ready to be cut while some had just been set in the fields.

Another concern was early blooming in short fields. Rains brought weed growth and some low lying fields were flooded. In late July blue mold concerns were easing in all but the eastern part of the State due to aggressive control spraying by farmers. By month's end 52 percent of the burley was blooming or beyond and 23 percent had been topped, ahead of 31 percent blooming and 14 percent topped in 2003. Dark tobacco was reported as 36 percent in the topped stage. Blue mold and black shank continued to be a problem in fields where it frequently rained during the season. Disease severity varied from minimal to severe. Tobacco height was short in areas where replanting had been done in the fields. Wet soil conditions continued into August. Blue mold continued to stress fields to various degrees with black shank a secondary concern. Even as cutting and housing got into full swing in mid-August, concern still remained regarding blue mold and black shank that ranged from minimal to severe. Yields correspondingly varied from good to poor. At the end of August early yields looked average to good. Quality of housed tobacco was good, though weight was a little light.

Harvesting was virtually complete the first week of October. Stripping of housed burley tobacco was slowed in early October by low humidity, but rainy weather later in October brought tobacco into case and allowed farmers to strip their tobacco. Blue mold damage was prevalent but severe only in scattered areas of the State. Most farmers indicated that they would make their production quota. Burley tobacco continued to be sold by two methods, auction market and direct contract. Average price received per pound was 200.0 cents per pound, up 1.8 cents from 2003 and a record high price.

## DARK TOBACCO

Production of three of the four types of dark tobacco were up from the 2003 crop. The types that showed larger production were due to increased harvested acreage and larger yields. Prices for all four types were up from the 2003 crop. Producers sold most of their crop on the farm without taking it to the auction market.

**Type 22, Eastern Dark Fire-cured** production at 8.37 million pounds was up 5 percent from the 2003 crop.

**Type 23, Western Dark Fire-cured** production with 9.62 million pounds was up 9 percent from the 2003 crop.

**Type 35, One Sucker Dark Air-cured** production at 6.93 million pounds was up 7 percent from the 2003 crop.

**Type 36, Green River Dark Air-cured** production at 3.38 million pounds was down 1 percent from the 2003 crop. The production decrease was due to a smaller yield per acre.

## CORN

Production of **corn for grain** was estimated at 173.3 million bushels, up 17 percent from the good 2003 crop and a record high production. The previous high of 171.6 million bushels occurred in 1992. Yield was estimated at 152 bushels per acre, a record high. The previous record occurred in 2001. Acreage harvested for grain was 1.14 million acres, up 60,000 acres from 2003 and the largest in four years. Union County was the leading corn production county in the State with 13.2 million acres.

Corn planting got off to a good start in April with 40 percent of the intended acreage planted by April 11. This was ahead of both 18 percent for 2003 and 13 percent for the five-year average. Farmers continued to plant corn as temperatures and soil moisture permitted and by May 16, 92 percent of the crop had been planted with 80 percent emerged, both ahead of the previous year and 5-year average. During mid-May, farmers were replanting corn damaged by cooler April temperatures or flooding. Corn planting was virtually complete by May 30. As some farmers were completing planting of previously flooded fields, height of the most advanced fields was 31 inches statewide while the average height was 19 inches. The emerged corn was in mostly good to fair condition. In early June some farmers were still trying to replant flooded fields but were slowed by wet soil conditions. During early through mid-June, farmers had almost four weeks of consecutive rainfall. Planting of flooded fields finished the last week of June. As June progressed emerged corn started to look better as

the fields dried. On June 27 the corn condition was 1 percent very poor, 6 percent poor, 18 percent fair, 49 percent good and 26 percent excellent. Corn was 51 percent tasseling, ahead of 19 percent for 2003 and 32 percent for the five-year average. Silking was 36 percent complete, ahead of 8 percent for 2003 and 16 percent for the average. Farmers during the growing season were very optimistic with regard to both quality and yield due to the adequate to surplus rainfall. By the last week of July, 27 percent of the crop was in the dough stage, ahead of 24 percent for the previous year while behind 31 percent for the five-year average.

In early August corn was in excellent to good condition with 20 percent of the corn dented, ahead of 13 percent for 2003 and 10 percent on average. By late August, a few fields of corn had been harvested for grain in southern Kentucky. About 23 percent of the crop was mature and ready for harvest. This was up from 14 percent the previous year and 19 percent for the five-year average. Farmers were waiting for the corn to dry down naturally prior to harvesting. By early September the crop had dried down and harvesting gained momentum in most areas of the State. One-tenth of the crop had been harvested compared to 11 percent for 2003 and 21 percent for average. Corn yields were reported good to excellent. By October 3, 95 percent of the corn crop was mature and 69 percent of the crop was harvested. Harvesting the crop was slowed after mid-October by rain. Corn harvest was completed by the second week of November.

## SOYBEANS

**Soybean** production for 2004 totaled a record high 57.2 million bushels, up 6 percent from the good 2003 crop. Yield per acre was estimated at a record high 44 bushels per acre, up .5 bushels from the revised previous high 2003 crop. Harvested acreage was 1.30 million acres, an increase of 60,000 acres from the 2003 crop. Henderson County was the leading production county with 4.0 million bushels.

Soybean planting started in late April with 3 percent planted on April 25, very similar to previous years. Planting continued to advance and by May 16, 20 percent of the intended acreage had been planted. Even with frequent rain during the remainder of May planting advanced and by May 30, 45 percent of the acreage had been planted and 36 percent had emerged in the fields. Both were more advanced than the 2003 crop (21 and 12 percent respectively) while very similar to the average. Condition of the emerged crop was mostly good to fair. Planting of single crop soybeans continued though June. Rains in mid-June delayed the wheat harvest and thus delayed the planting of double crop soybeans. In late June farmers were busy planting double crop soybeans following the winter wheat harvest. Planting of second crop soybeans was completed the second week of

July. Soybeans were 26 percent blooming compared to 7 percent in 2003 and 22 percent for the five-year average. The beans were in mostly good to fair condition. During July farmers were spraying for weeds.

On August 1, 63 percent of the soybeans were blooming and 41 percent were setting pods. During the month frequent rain provided good plant growth and producers were making early predictions for a good to excellent crop. By August 29, 87 percent of the acreage was setting pods, 15 percent turning yellow and 5 percent shedding leaves. As the crop entered early September, double crop soybeans were in need of rain for filling beans in the pods. By mid-September some early soybean fields were being harvested with mostly good to excellent yield indications. Only a few disease problems were being reported. As of October 3, 77 percent of the soybean crop was dropping leaves and the soybean harvest had reached 22 percent complete. Harvest was ahead of the previous year's 11 percent and the average of 21 percent. Soybean harvest was active until mid-October when slowed by wet weather. On November 14, 78 percent of the soybeans had been harvested, down from 89 percent in 2003 and 90 percent for average. Yields were good to excellent with good quality.

## OTHER CROPS

Kentucky farmers produced 20.5 million bushels of **winter wheat**, down 5 percent from the upward revised 2003 crop of 21.7 million bushels. Yield was estimated at 54 bushels per acre, down eight bushels from the 2003 crop.

Reports of damage to winter wheat were minimal as a relatively mild winter helped keep the crop in mostly good to excellent condition. On May 2, 31 percent of the wheat crop had headed, 7 percent behind 2003 and 17 percent behind the five-year average. Most farmers were expecting good to excellent yields. Wheat harvest started the first week of June. There was considerable concern among farmers that disease might reduce yield and test weight. At harvest, yields and test weights were lower than expected due to the earlier rain delays in harvesting, head scab and

blight. Harvest was complete by mid-July. In some cases winter wheat delivered for sale was refused at delivery due to light test weight.

**Alfalfa hay** production was estimated at 888,000 tons, up 13,000 tons from the previous year. Yield was estimated at 3.7 tons per acre, up .2 tons from a year earlier. Harvested acreage at 240,000 acres was down 10,000 acres from 2003. **Other hay** production at 5.04 million tons was down 8 percent from the 2003 crop. Yield per acre at 2.4 tons was down .1 ton from the previous year. Harvested acreage estimated at 2.10 million acres was down 100,000 acres from 2003. Harvesting during 2004 was difficult due to the wet spring and yield was then reduced by the dry fall. Production of most hay was plentiful while quality was down due to poor curing conditions and advanced maturity of the crop.