

2005 CROP HIGHLIGHTS

Kentucky crop production for 2005 was limited by a hot dry early summer. Moisture was adequate for planting corn and soybeans and setting tobacco. It turned dry in June and remained dry through July.

Spotty storms during August brought rain to scattered areas of the State. The August rains helped with soybean pod fill.

BURLEY TOBACCO

Kentucky farmers produced 143.5 million pounds of **burley** tobacco. This was down 31 percent from the 206.7 million pounds produced in 2004 and the smallest crop since 1927. The smaller 2005 crop resulted from a 36,000 acre decrease in harvested acreage even with a 100 pound increase in yield per acre. Many farmers quit raising burley as a result of the burley buyout in the fall of 2004. Harvested acreage was estimated at 70,000 acres, the smallest acreage on record since records started being kept in 1919. Yield was estimated at 2,050 pounds, an increase of 100 pounds from the 2004 crop and the largest yield in four years. Barren County was the leading production county with 5.15 million pounds. For 2005, 11 counties had production of 3.50 million pounds or more.

Sowing of burley plant beds started slow in early April due to wet weather. Seeding was completed by the last week of April with 5 percent of the plants grown in traditional plant beds and 95 percent were seeded in greenhouses and float beds. Burley setting started slowly the first week of May and by May 8, 3 percent of the transplants had been set in the fields. Ninety-five percent of the producers reported adequate plants for setting in their area. Setting was slowed by cool temperatures and wet soil conditions but by the end of May, setting was 52 percent complete, ahead of both 2004 and average. Burley transplanting continued through June at a faster pace than the previous year and average. It was virtually complete by the third week of June, earlier than 2004 and average. The set tobacco on June 17 was rated 3 percent poor, 26 percent fair, 58 percent good and 13 percent excellent. No disease or pest problems were reported during setting except some pythium problems in eastern Kentucky float beds during mid-May.

At the start of July most of the tobacco crop had limited disease presence. The most commonly reported problem affecting tobacco was black shank. Some blue mold was reported. Soils dried in July until much needed rain occurred mid-month.

On July 17, 22 percent of the burley was blooming and 3 percent of the crop had been topped, both behind the previous year and average. During late July soils again turned dry but tobacco continued generally in good to fair condition. Black shank continued to be the most commonly reported disease.

In early August dry conditions continued with crop development behind last year and average. As of August 7, 66 percent of the burley crop was blooming or beyond, behind 78 percent for 2004 and 76 percent of the five year average. Forty-eight percent of the crop had been topped, compared to 50 percent for last year and 54 percent for average. By mid-August 11 percent of the burley had been cut, behind 20 percent for 2004 and 14 percent for average. Concerns regarding black shank were mixed, from severe to minimal damage.

By September 4, 50 percent of the burley crop had been harvested and housed, behind 2004 and average. Only 12 percent of the housed tobacco showed some house burn, due to high moisture. Most reports indicated that curing was going well with a few concerns that some tobacco might be curing too fast due to lack of moisture. By October 2, 94 percent of the burley had been cut, slightly behind 2004 and average. A week later 29 percent of the crop was ready for stripping and 5 percent had been stripped. Farmers continued cutting late burley through late October due to a lack of a killing frost. During late October and early November, stripping was slowed in many areas of the State due to low humidity levels that delayed tobacco going into case. Some farmers had excellent growing conditions and harvested a good crop. Other farmers had a lower yield due to black shank, dry soil conditions, hail, and flooding and/or wind damage. Burley tobacco was sold primarily by direct contract with some sold through the auction market. Average price received for burley was \$1.56 per pound, down from \$2.00 a year earlier when tobacco was priced under federal standards.

DARK TOBACCO

Beginning in 2005, four dark tobacco types produced by Kentucky farmers were combined into two groups. Type 22 and Type 23 were combined into **dark fire-cured**. One Sucker Type 35 was combined with Green River Type 36 into **dark air-cured**. Production of dark tobacco grown in Kentucky was up from the 2004 crop and sold by direct contract to the tobacco companies.

The increase in **dark fire-cured** tobacco production resulted from both an increase in harvested acreage and yield. Production was 20.4 million pounds, an increase of 2.41 million pounds from the 2004 crop. Acreage was estimated at 6,000 acres, up 700 acres from 2004 and yield at

3,400 pounds per acre was up 6 pounds from the 2004 crop. Prices received by farmers were \$2.35 per pound, down 18.3 cents from the 2004 crop.

The increase in **dark air-cured** tobacco production resulted from a larger harvested acreage. Production at 10.4 million pounds was up less than 1 percent from a year earlier. The increase in production resulted from a 50 acre increase in harvested acreage. Harvested acreage was estimated at 3,700 acres with a yield of 2,800 pounds per acre. Prices received by farmers averaged \$2.13 per pound, down 7.5 cents from 2004.

CORN

Corn for grain was estimated at 155.8 million bushels, down 10 percent from the 2004 crop. The smaller production resulted from a decrease in yield brought about by the dry summer. Yield was estimated at 132 bushels per acre, down 20 bushels from the 2004 crop and the smallest yield in three years. Acreage harvested for grain was estimated at 1.18 million acres, the largest in five years. Union County was the leading corn production county in the State with 13.6 million bushels.

Cool soil temperatures and wet conditions in early April slowed the start of corn planting. By April 10, only 8 percent of the State's acreage had been planted. This was behind the 36 percent for 2004 when ideal planting conditions were present and 17 percent for the five year average. Temperatures warmed and soils dried and by April 24, 60 percent of the corn acreage had been planted with 20 percent emerged. Planting continued through May into the first week of June hampered at times by rain and cool temperatures. The cool temperatures slowed growth and germination. Nearly 97 percent of the planted corn had emerged and was rated 1 percent very poor, 3 percent poor, 25 percent fair, 53 percent good and 18 percent excellent.

Corn development and condition of the crop during June was good but started to deteriorate the last week of the month due to dry soil conditions. Some corn started to twist due to

the lack of moisture. Dry conditions continued until mid-July when rain was received. Most farmers felt their corn would produce a normal yield barring any future problems. On July 22 the crop was rated 2 percent very poor, 7 percent poor, 30 percent fair, 40 percent good and 21 percent excellent. Corn was 94 percent silking or beyond, 57 percent in the milk stage and 22 percent in the dough stage. Areas of the State that received needed rain improved in yield while quality and yield potential of areas that received no rain declined.

By early August most of the early corn was made. As of August 21, one quarter of the crop was mature, ahead of 21 percent for 2004 and 22 percent for average. Ninety percent of the crop had reached the dough state with 63 percent dented. Mature acreage was ahead of 2004 and average while dented was behind 2004 and average. Corn harvesting got under way the last week of August. Variable yields were expected due to dry summer conditions. Some fields suffered lodging from wind and heavy rain during early September. Harvesting advanced steadily during the month aided by dry weather. As farmers harvested their corn, some commented that yields were better than anticipated. Harvesting continued to be active into late October except when slowed by rain. Corn combining was nearly complete in early November. Yields were better than expected in many areas of the State.

SOYBEANS

Production of soybeans was estimated at 53.8 million bushels. This was down 6 percent from the 2004 crop and the smallest crop in three years. The smaller crop resulted from a decrease in harvested acreage and yield per acre. Yield at 43 bushels per acre was down one bushel from the previous year and harvested acreage estimate at 1.25 million acres was down 50,000 acres from 2004. Daviess County was the leading production county with 3.57 million bushels.

Soybean planting started in late April. On May 1, 7 percent was planted, the same as both the previous year and the five year average. Growth was slowed during late May by cool temperatures. Planting of full season soybeans was winding down in early June. On June 12, 85 percent of the soybean acreage was planted with 76 percent emerged. Both were ahead of the 2004 crop and the five year average. Average height of the emerged soybeans was 6 inches as of June 10. Planting of double crop soybeans got underway after the winter wheat harvest started in mid-June. Planting of double crop soybeans finished the second week of July. On July 10, 42 percent of soybeans were blooming, well ahead of 2004's 24 percent and the average 20 percent. Even with the dry weather the soybean crop was in mostly

good to fair condition. The soybean crop had been least affected by the dry weather. Much needed rain finally occurred mid-month. By the end of July, 72 percent of the soybeans were blooming and 51 percent were setting pods or beyond, both ahead of the 2004 crop and the five year average.

The month of August started dry and rain was needed for pods to fill properly. Rains that occurred with the hurricanes in August helped fill soybean pods as three quarters of the soybeans were setting pods. Rain through the first week of September improved pod fill conditions for late season soybeans. On September 4, 87 percent of the soybeans had set pods, 26 percent of the plants were turning yellow and 11 percent were shedding leaves. Harvesting of soybeans started around mid-month. Farmers were actively harvesting their beans from late September into late October with the warm dry fall weather. As of November 13, 96 percent of the soybeans had been harvested. This was significantly ahead of 2004 with 76 percent complete and the average with 86 percent. Yields were good and many farmers indicated better than expected yields on both single and double crop soybeans. There was no appreciable rust damage to the soybean crop.

OTHER CROPS

Kentucky farmers produced 20.4 million bushels of winter wheat, down less than 1 percent from 2004. Yield per acre at 68 bushels was up 14 bushels from the 2004 crop and the highest on record. Acreage harvested for grain at 300,000 acres was down 80,000 acres from a year earlier.

Despite a relatively wet winter, the winter wheat crop this spring was in mostly good to excellent condition. On May 1, 30 percent of the crop was headed. Farmers reported little lodging from the heavy May rains. Cool temperatures in late May were beneficial for wheat filling and dry weather in early June was beneficial for maturing of the crop and drying the wheat for harvest. Wheat harvest started in mid-June with 3 percent harvested on June 12. Wheat harvest went smoothly in June and was virtually complete on July 10 when 98 percent of the crop had been harvested. The 2005 winter wheat crop was excellent with good quality and one of the best crops in recent years.

Alfalfa hay production was estimated at 832,000 tons, down 6 percent from a year earlier. Yield was estimated at 3.20 tons per acre, down 0.5 ton from a year earlier. Harvested acreage was 260,000 acres, up 20,000 from a year earlier. Other hay production was estimated at 4.95 tons, down 2 percent from 2004. Yield per acre at 2.30 tons was down 0.1 ton from a year earlier. Harvested acreage at 2.15 million acres was up 50,000 acres from 2004.

Some of first cutting and baling of hay was affected by rain that delayed cutting and slowed curing rates. Overall conditions were adequate for a good spring hay cutting. Hot dry weather from early summer through mid-autumn reduced the summer hay yield and production.