United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

Wisconsin Crop Progress

December 2012

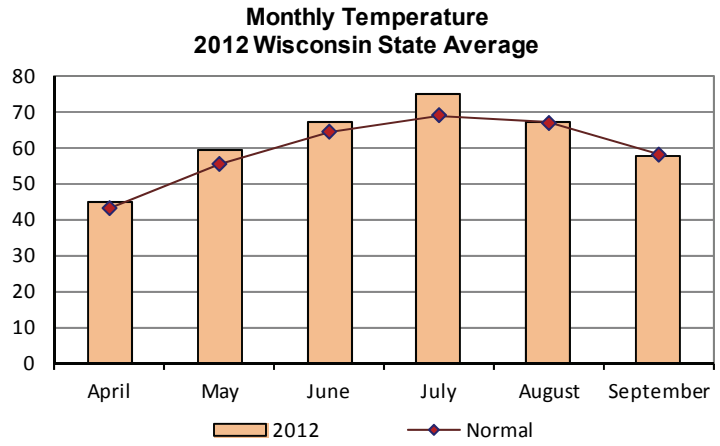
REVIEW OF THE 2012 CROP YEAR

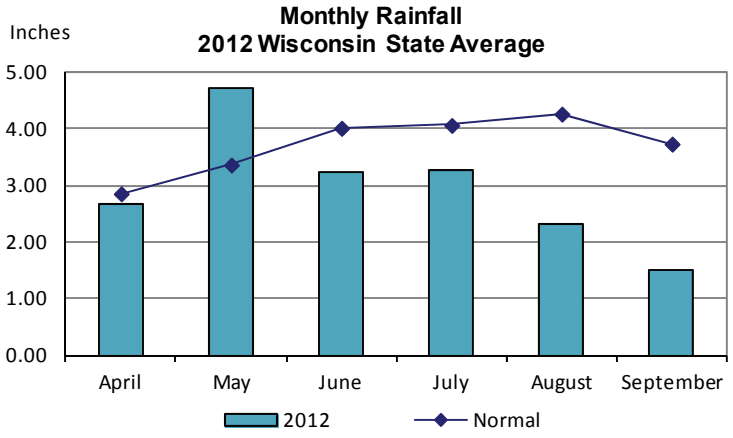
2012 – Drought, Record-Breaking Heat Impact Crops

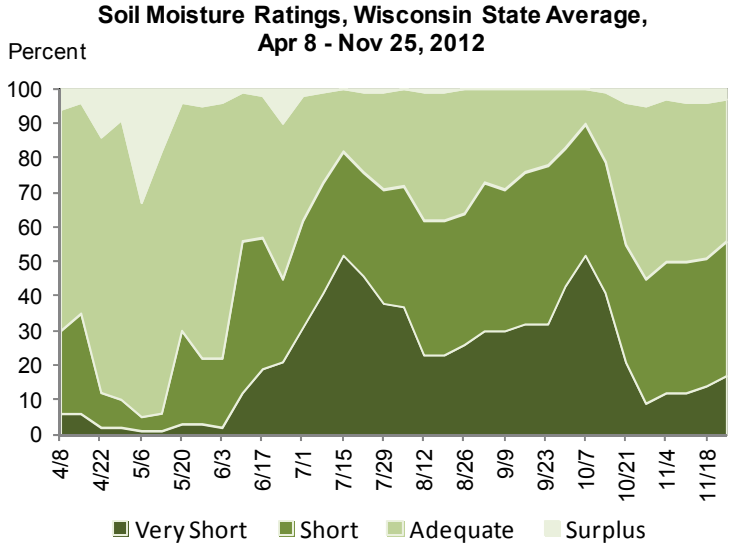
An unusual year from the start, 2012 opened with a much warmer than normal winter. Temperatures in March were 14 to 16 degrees above average, prompting early growth in fruit trees, pastures and hay fields. April's multiple frosts damaged apples, cherries and other budding fruit crops, though the unfrozen ground allowed tillage and planting to start several weeks early. The beginning of May saw heavy rains and a record early start to haying around the state. Temperatures remained above normal and soil moistures declined throughout June as drought conditions set in across the southern parts of the state; the Madison weather station observed the driest June ever recorded there, with only 0.35 inches total precipitation for the month. The first week of July brought a record-breaking heat wave, exacerbating dry conditions. On July 15, soil moistures were 82 percent short to very short statewide, and topped 90 percent very short in the south-central and southeast districts. However, the end of the month and the beginning of August brought some much-needed rain. Precipitation was patchy and light throughout August and September, producing wide variations in crop condition and allowing the drought to spread northward. Heat and moisture stress pushed crops into early maturity well before the first widespread frost of the year hit in the end of September. Dry field conditions allowed harvest to progress quickly throughout September and October. On October 7, drought conditions peaked a second time, with 6 of the 9 districts reporting soil moistures at 90 percent or more short to very short. Fall tillage was hampered by the extreme dryness and emergence of fall crops was poor until late October and early November, when widespread rains and warm days improved conditions. In spite of this, the earliness of the harvest allowed tillage to proceed at a record pace; on November 11, tillage was 72 percent complete, 20 percentage points above the five year average.

Statewide temperatures from June to September were 2.0 degrees above normal in 2012, compared to 1.0 degrees above normal in 2011. September had slightly below normal temperatures, averaging 0.4 degrees below normal. April through August had above normal temperatures, with July averaging 5.6 degrees above normal. The month with the greatest departure from normal was March, which averaged 15.3 degrees above normal.

Precipitation totals for April through September were below normal across the state, with a statewide total of 17.73 inches. This was 3.66 inches below the total for 2011 and 4.60 inches below normal. Total precipitation in the northern third of the state was 2.89 inches below normal for April through September, the central third of the state was 4.33 inches below normal, and the southern third of the state was 8.16 inches below normal precipitation. Statewide, May was the only month this season with above normal precipitation.







MONTHLY TEMPERATURES: 2012 GROWING SEASON AND NORMAL*

District	April 1/		May 1/		June 1/		July 1/		August 1/		September 1/	
	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal
	Degrees Fahrenheit											
NW	44.3	41.7	57.5	54.4	65.2	63.1	73.0	68.1	65.9	65.9	56.8	56.6
NC	42.2	40.4	56.5	53.2	64.6	61.8	71.7	66.4	64.4	64.2	54.6	55.3
NE	43.1	41.3	57.3	53.6	65.1	62.5	72.1	67.0	65.7	64.8	55.7	56.0
WC	47.4	45.2	61.9	57.4	69.1	66.4	75.8	70.8	67.7	68.3	59.0	59.3
C	45.7	44.5	60.7	56.7	68.3	65.8	76.3	70.2	68.4	67.7	58.5	59.0
EC	44.1	42.8	58.0	54.6	67.2	64.1	74.9	69.5	68.4	67.9	58.9	59.8
SW	47.9	46.1	62.5	57.9	69.7	67.2	78.6	71.4	70.1	69.0	60.4	60.5
SC	46.8	45.8	62.3	57.8	70.1	67.2	78.4	71.3	69.5	68.9	60.0	60.6
SE	45.2	45.0	60.0	56.3	68.6	66.0	77.4	71.2	69.4	69.4	60.3	61.4
STATE	44.9	43.2	59.2	55.5	67.1	64.5	74.7	69.1	67.2	66.9	57.7	58.1

1/Preliminary estimates, 2012. *Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist

MONTHLY RAINFALL: 2012 GROWING SEASON AND NORMAL*

District	April 1/		May 1/		June 1/		July 1/		August 1/		September 1/	
	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal	2012	Normal
	Inches											
NW	2.64	2.39	6.44	3.29	5.42	4.19	3.05	4.29	1.74	4.44	1.23	3.89
NC	2.21	2.40	4.76	3.31	4.48	4.01	3.64	4.06	1.93	4.36	1.81	4.03
NE	1.69	2.65	3.67	3.29	3.58	3.69	4.81	3.70	1.91	3.81	1.87	3.74
WC	2.93	3.05	5.27	3.69	4.06	4.24	2.32	4.45	2.50	4.54	1.11	3.82
C	3.26	3.02	5.39	3.52	2.09	3.88	1.89	4.13	3.35	4.22	1.43	3.72
EC	2.65	2.81	4.24	2.95	2.30	3.51	4.41	3.38	2.89	3.86	1.12	3.42
SW	3.68	3.55	3.74	3.60	1.19	4.35	2.89	4.33	2.56	4.46	1.95	3.42
SC	2.94	3.47	3.31	3.40	0.48	4.19	3.39	4.07	2.34	4.24	1.52	3.51
SE	2.49	3.48	3.25	3.13	0.75	3.76	3.26	3.82	2.44	4.22	1.81	3.48
STATE	2.68	2.86	4.71	3.37	3.23	4.02	3.28	4.07	2.31	4.27	1.52	3.74

1/Preliminary estimates, 2012. *Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist

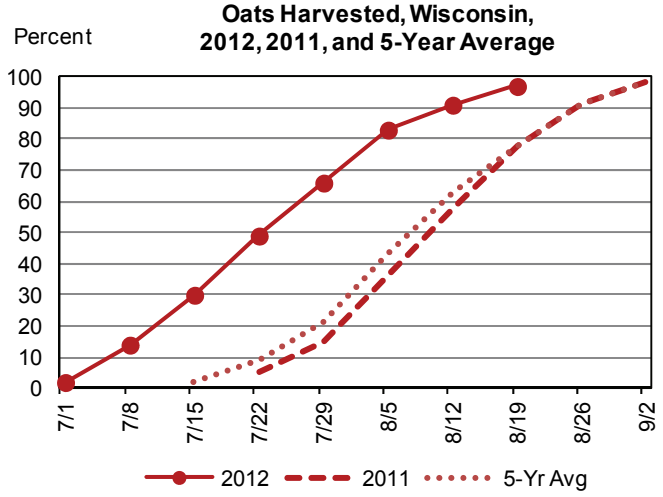
COMPARATIVE TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION DATA

District	Average Temperature June - September						Total Precipitation April - September					
	Normal*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 1/	Normal*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 1/
	Degrees Fahrenheit						Inches					
NW	63.4	63.5	62.7	64.7	64.6	65.2	22.49	21.46	13.35	29.80	21.96	20.52
NC	61.9	62.4	60.6	63.2	63.2	63.8	22.17	18.50	16.07	32.26	20.79	18.83
NE	62.6	63.3	61.5	64.3	63.7	64.7	20.88	17.82	15.71	27.09	20.46	17.53
WC	66.2	66.3	64.6	67.8	67.4	67.9	23.79	23.84	20.82	34.18	22.61	18.19
C	65.7	65.7	64.1	67.3	66.5	67.9	22.49	24.71	17.91	32.84	22.38	17.41
EC	65.3	65.8	63.7	66.9	66.1	67.4	19.93	21.56	15.92	27.57	21.31	17.61
SW	67.0	67.1	65.2	68.9	68.0	69.7	23.71	31.25	21.16	36.37	20.69	16.01
SC	67.0	67.5	65.5	69.2	68.2	69.5	22.88	30.32	21.74	31.96	20.21	13.98
SE	67.0	67.1	64.8	68.8	67.2	68.9	21.89	27.55	20.53	28.46	22.47	14.00
STATE	64.7	64.9	63.2	66.2	65.7	66.7	22.33	23.18	17.53	31.36	21.39	17.73

1/Preliminary estimates, 2012. *Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist

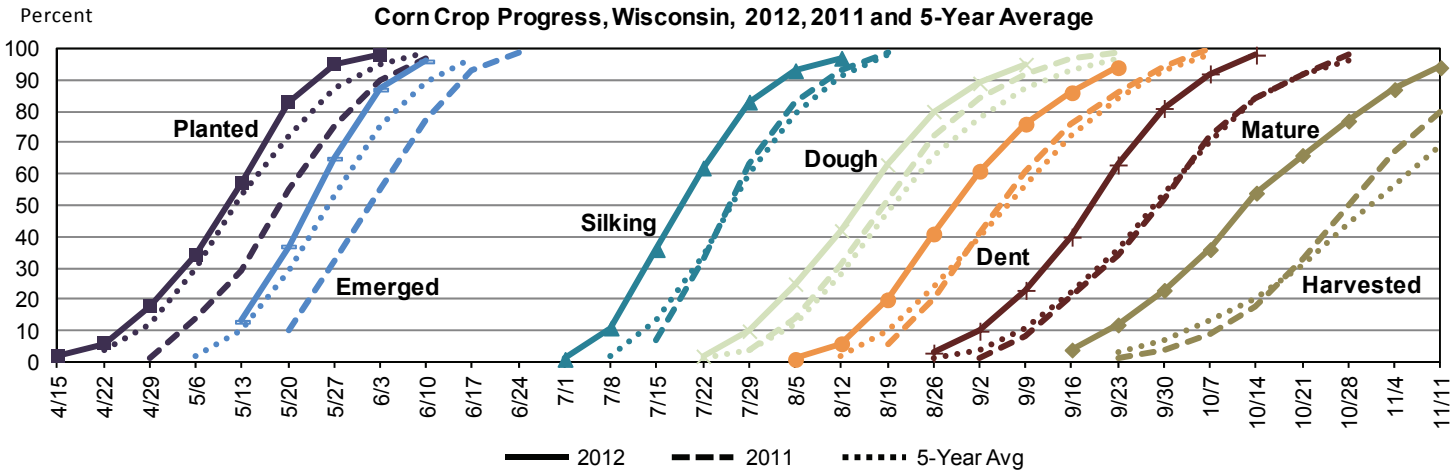
OATS

Oat planting began extremely early this year, with many seeding in mid-March. On April 8, oats were 26 percent planted statewide, 18 percentage points above average. Planting and emergence progressed well ahead of normal throughout April and May. The crop reached 97 percent emergence on May 27 with 73 percent in good to excellent condition statewide. Oats heading progressed quickly throughout June. The harvest began in early July and wrapped up August 19, with 97 percent harvested compared to a five-year average of 78 percent. Though the drought had a smaller impact on oats condition than on other crop conditions, producers in southern Wisconsin saw a wide variation in yields due to inadequate and patchy precipitation. There were numerous reports of producers double-cropping oats for fall forage.



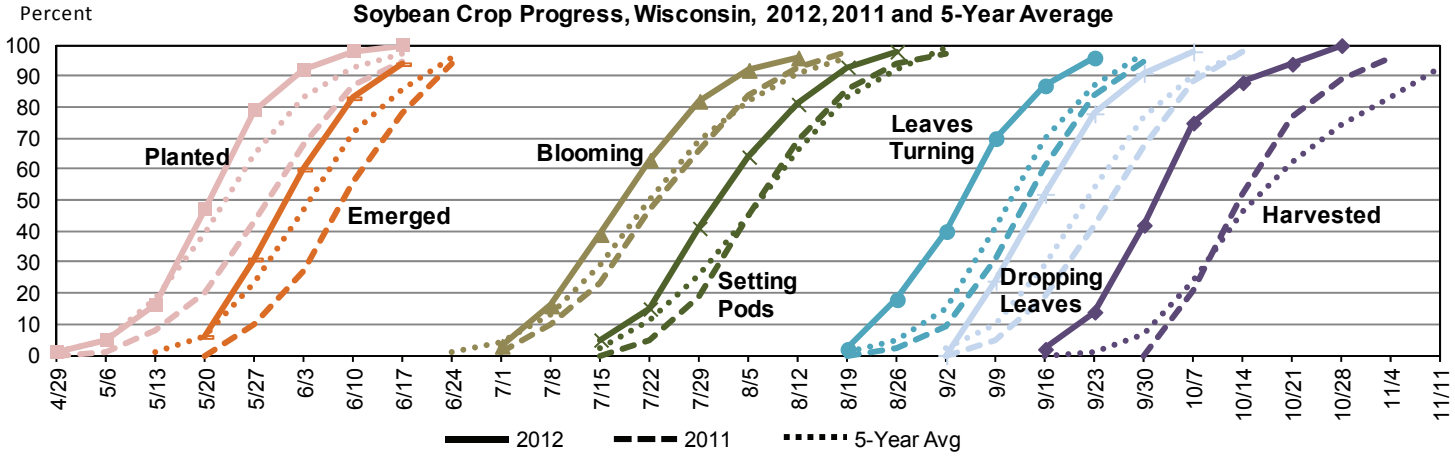
CORN

This year's warm winter reportedly prompted corn planting to begin in mid April. Heavy rains in May damaged planted fields in central portions of the state and soil crusting hampered emergence in those areas. Planting, emergence and corn height progressed well ahead of average throughout May and early June. By mid-June, corn in southern Wisconsin was beginning to show signs of moisture stress as drought set in. Months of patchy precipitation produced wide variations in corn condition and maturity. Corn condition hovered around 40 percent poor to very poor statewide for most of the season. In the driest areas, corn tasseled without producing silks, prompting farmers to begin chopping silage as early as mid-July. Corn progressed through its maturity stages well ahead of normal, drying down enough for grain harvest to begin in mid-September, about one week early. Harvest was hampered in some areas by weak stalks and dropping ears caused by the drought. Silage harvest proceeded well ahead of average, wrapping up with 99 percent harvested on October 7, 16 percentage points above the five-year average. The corn for grain harvest ended about two weeks earlier than normal, reaching 94 percent complete on November 11, 25 percentage points above the five-year average. Yield reports were typically poor throughout southern Wisconsin, where drought conditions began earlier in the season. Northern Wisconsin reported near normal yields due to timely precipitation. Reporters noted that more corn stalks were harvested and baled than usual, to supplement short feed supplies.



SOYBEANS

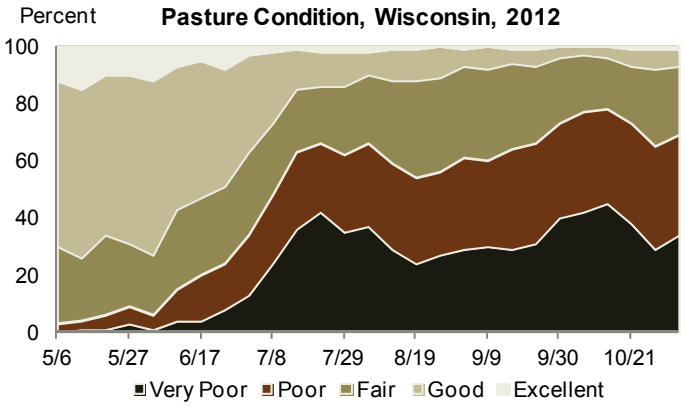
Planting and development of this year's soybean crop were consistently above average. On June 10, 98 percent of the crop was planted, 5 percentage points above average, and 83 percent of soybeans had emerged, 11 percentage points above average. On that date, 67 percent of soybeans were in good to excellent condition statewide. As the drought set in across southern Wisconsin, soybeans condition began to decline. In some areas, growth and development of soybeans halted in early July due to the lack of moisture, causing pod set in the north to exceed that of in the south. On July 23, Soybeans averaged 27 percent setting pods across the three northern districts, but averaged only 14 percent across the other six districts. This pattern persisted throughout the rest of the season, as soybeans in the south and central portions of the state contended with moisture shortages, weeds and insect pressure. Rains in August helped the crop bounce back. Soybeans began turning leaves with 2 percent turned on August 19, in line with the average. Drought conditions forced soybeans to dry down rapidly, and harvest began about a week earlier than normal. Yields were highly variable depending on moisture received. Some reporters noted that pod and bean shatter was a major problem during combining. The soybean harvest wrapped up on October 21, with 94 percent harvested, 32 percentage points above the five -year average.

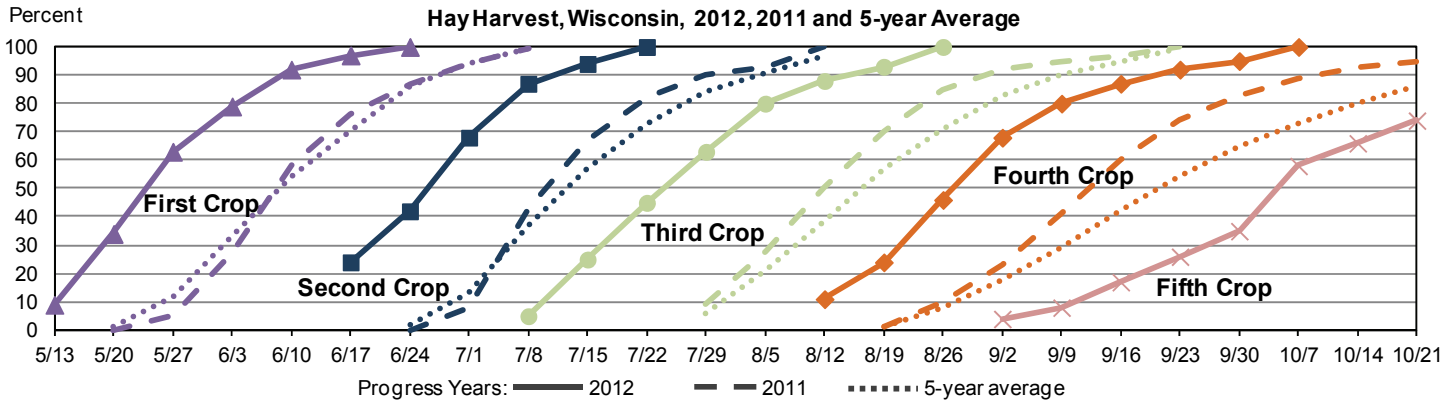


HAY & PASTURES

Wisconsin's hay stands came out of dormancy early due to the unusual heat of March. The lack of snow cover and the freeze events of April caused minor damage in some areas, with winter freeze damage reported as 92 percent none to light statewide on May 13. Because of this early growth, 2012 proved a record breaking early haying season, with all four cuttings running one to three weeks earlier than average. As the second cutting wrapped up and the third cutting began in early July, drought and high insect pressure caused low yields and poor quality across affected areas, even stalling regrowth completely for some. The spotty rains of August helped perk up hay stands where received. The second dry spell of September allowed good haying conditions, and the fourth crop cutting reached 95 percent complete on September 30, a full 30 percentage points above the five-year average. The earliness of the harvests allowed producers in Northern Wisconsin to take more cuttings than usual, and a fifth crop cutting was unusually widespread. In spite of this, low yields and poor pasture condition throughout the season led to feed shortages. Statewide, hay and roughage supplies were 50 percent short, 44 percent adequate and 6 percent surplus on November 4.

Though pastures started out the season in good condition, the drought proved tough on pastureland and livestock alike. Statewide average pasture condition hit 66 percent poor to very poor on July 22 in the wake of early July's heat wave. Conditions improved slightly before falling a second time, with 78 percent of pastures in poor to very poor condition on October 14. There were widespread reports of livestock producers in the southern and central portions of the state feeding herds this year's hay and grain when dried out pasturage proved inadequate.





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