CROP HIGHLIGHTS

ACREAGE: Indiana's principal field crops totaled slightly under 11.9 million acres for harvest during 2015, down about three percent from 2014. All major crops saw decreases with the exception of soybeans which rose 60,000 acres to an even 5.5 million. Corn acreage for harvest fell to 5.48 million acres, down five percent from a year ago, and the lowest level since 2009. Winter wheat acreage fell for a second year, down to 260,000, just over 22 percent. Oat acreage for harvest fell 50 percent, to 5,000 acres. Alfalfa hay dropped 10,000 acres and other hay fell 30,000 acres. Peppermint acreage rose 1,500 acres to an even 10,000 while spearmint dropped 200 acres to 3,500 total. Other crops showing harvested acreage decreases were tomatoes for fresh market, down 15 percent and tomatoes for processing acreage was down 28 percent. Cantaloupe acreage for harvest decreased 100 acres, or six percent, and watermelon harvested acreage decreased 700 acres, or nine percent. Sweet corn fell 200 acres to 5,100. In addition, snap beans for processing decreased 1,100 acres, or 23 percent from 2014.

YIELDS: Indiana's 2015 growing season was split between extremes that were unfavorable for crops and conditions suppressed yields overall. A stormy April kicked off the season with warmer than normal temperatures. Cumulative precipitation was below normal in the north but much heavier in the south. The planting of corn got off to a slow start, with only three percent in by the 26th of April. May continued the warm trend, soils began to get dry in the north, but precipitation picked up during the latter half of the month and soil moisture surpluses began to increase. Soybeans were only four percent planted by the 4th of May. The majority of the corn crop, or 52 percent, was planted between May 4th and the 17th, and planting was 95 percent done by the end of the month. The busiest part of soybean planting was not far behind, with 63 percent of the acreage planted in a three week span from May 11th to the 31st. Wheat was 88 percent headed by the end of May, about a week ahead of the average. North and central Indiana saw twice normal precipitation and the ratio was slightly higher than that in the south. Temperatures were still warmer than normal. About half the wheat crop was mature by the third week of June and harvest was underway between the heavy rains. A record rainfall fell in June contributed to the damage and disease that significantly reduced the quality of the grain. Corn and soybean conditions began to drop in mid-June, as standing water started to drown plants and muddy soils prevented the application of fertilizers and herbicides. Soil moisture levels crested at the end of June, with topsoil moisture rated 66 percent surplus for the week ending the 28th. Heavy rains continued through the first three weeks of July, and Indiana posted its 2nd wettest June – July since 1895. Corn and soybean condition bottomed out by the week ending July 19th, with corn rated 45 percent good to excellent and soybeans rated at only 40 percent. The season began to change its complexion during August. Temperatures remained cooler and precipitation decreased substantially. Crops began a very modest rebound in terms of condition. Northern Indiana saw 85 percent of normal rainfall, while central saw just 55 percent and the south saw 70 percent. `However, by the 2nd of that month, 57 percent of soybeans had podded and began the pod fill stage under the drier conditions. September brought warmer than normal temperatures but the dry trend continued. While northern Indiana saw normal levels of precipitation, the central portion of the state saw 80 percent and the south received 65 percent. Drought conditions began to take hold in some southern counties. Corn harvest got underway during the second week of the month, and soybean harvest kicked off about a week after. A dry spell continued until the last few days of October, when southern Indiana received rain from the remnants of a Pacific hurricane. Corn and soybean harvest progressed slowly but steadily through the fall. By the 25th, topsoil moisture was rated 58 percent short to very short. November was warmer than normal but near normal precipitation wise. Winter's first appearance came on the 21st and 22nd with the first snowfall in the state. The season's adversities were evident in the yields. The statewide average corn yield of 150 bushels per acre was 38 bushels below 2014's record yield. Yields were generally better in the south, which was the opposite of most years. South central Indiana, which usually has the lowest yield, posted a higher yield than central Indiana, typically the highest yielding district. This has happened only two other times since 1929. The average soybean yield of 40 bushels per acre was very respectable, but 5.5 bushels less than the previous year. The wheat yield, at 68 bushels per acre, only seemed low compared to last year's 76, but quality issues were significant. Alfalfa and other hay yield came in at 3.9 and 2.3 tons per acre respectively.

PRODUCTION: Indiana corn production in 2015 totaled 822 million bushels, 24 percent below last year's total of 1.08 billion bushels. Indiana's soybean production totaled 275 million bushels, down 9 percent from last year's 301.9 million bushels. The increase in harvested acres helped offset the decrease in yield. The decrease in wheat harvested acres combined with lower yields led to a 31 percent decrease in production at 17.7 million bushels. Oat production dropped 60 percent to 295,000 bushels, the result of a drop in yield as well as harvested acreage. All hay production at, 1.66 million tons, was down 15 percent from the previous year.

"Corn Leaves"
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