

2006 CROP HIGHLIGHTS

Crop production in Kentucky benefited from a good growing season with adequate rainfall and moderate temperatures. Corn, soybean and burley yields were very good. Soybean harvested acreage

for 2006 was up 130,000 acres from the 2005 crop while corn for grain acreage was down 140,000 acres.

BURLEY TOBACCO

Farmers in Kentucky produced 153.3 million pounds of **burley** tobacco, an increase of 7 percent from the 2005 crop. The larger production was brought about by both an increase in harvested acreage and yield per acre. Harvested acreage at 73,000 acres was up 3,000 acres from the 2005 crop. Yield per acre was estimated at 2,100 pounds, an increase of 50 pounds from the previous year. Barren County was the leading production county with 5.45 million pounds. For 2006, 13 counties had production of 3.50 million pounds or more.

In the spring (late March and early April) farmers were actively sowing their tobacco plant beds. By late April sowing was virtually complete. Tobacco plants were produced in both greenhouses and conventional beds on the ground. Greenhouse plants made up 96 percent of total plants grown while conventional plants made up 4 percent. Setting of both burley and dark tobacco started in early May. Ninety-seven percent of farmers reported adequate tobacco plants for setting. Setting was slowed in mid-May by wet field conditions and in late May cold temperatures injured some tobacco plants. Planting continued during June with blue mold detected in a few eastern and central counties. By June 11th, 81 percent of the burley crop had been set, slightly behind 88 percent for 2005 but ahead of the five year average of 78 percent. Dark tobacco was 82 percent set. Setting of both burley and dark tobacco were completed as of late June. There were reports of black shank in western Kentucky and blue mold in east-central Kentucky. Most of the blue mold problems seemed to stem from transplants received from out of state.

As July started most of the tobacco crop through the State had limited disease presence. Blue mold was reported in some eastern and central counties. Black shank and flea beetles were also reported in eastern Kentucky. The crop was rated 1 percent very poor, 3 percent poor, 18 percent fair, 59 percent good and 19 percent

excellent. By mid-July 43 counties had confirmed blue mold sightings with most of the counties in the middle to eastern portion of the State. As of July 16, 20 percent of the burley crop was blooming or beyond with 7 percent topped. Dark tobacco was 31 percent blooming or beyond. By month's end, the blue mold presence was widespread. Spraying by many producers along with hot dry weather helped keep the blue mold threat somewhat in check. During the first week of August a few fields of early set tobacco were cut and housed. At this time blue mold still remained active in the State and there were a few reports of black shank. As of August 13, 11 percent of the burley had been cut along with 4 percent of the dark tobacco. During the first week of September, as rains permitted, farmers were topping, spraying, cutting and housing tobacco. By September 3, 54 percent of the burley crop had been cut and housed along with 37 percent of the dark tobacco. Some farmers were experiencing difficulty finding enough labors to cut and house their tobacco. Housed tobacco continued to cure well with adequate humidity to bring the housed crop in and out of case. Some houseburn was reported, but considered minor. Above normal rainfall in late September combined with a shortage of labor contributed to a slower tobacco harvest.

On October 1, 90 percent of the burley crop had been cut, behind both 2005 and the five year average. Dark tobacco was 90 percent cut. As of October 1, two percent of the burley crop was stripped, 14 percent ready to be stripped with 84 percent still curing or uncut. Some farmers reported problems with tobacco curing due to wet weather and houseburn. Farmers reported above average tobacco quality, but were still concerned about the wet weather received during the growing season affecting weight and high humidity during stripping. Burley tobacco was sold primarily by direct contact with some sold through the auction market. Average price received was \$1.65 per pound, up nine cents from the 2005 crop.

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 tobacco**. One Sucker Type 35 was combined with Green River into **dark air-cured tobacco**. Dark tobacco production by Kentucky farmers for 2006 was up from 2005 and almost all production was 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 per acre. Production was 21.7 million pounds, an increase of 6 percent from 2005, and harvested acreage was 6,200 acres, up 200 areas from the previous year.

Average yield per acre was 3,500 pounds, up 100 pounds from 2005. Average price received by farmers was \$2.40 per pound, up 5 cents from the \$2.35 received in 2005.

Larger **dark air-cured tobacco** production for 2006 also resulted from an increase in acres harvested and yields per acre. Production for 2006 was 11.8 million pounds, 14 percent above 2005. Acres harvested totaled 3,800 acres, an increase of 100 acres from the previous crop. Yield per acre was 3,100 pounds, up 300 pounds from 2005. Average price received was \$2.20 per pound, up seven cents from the \$2.13 received in 2005.

CORN

Production of **corn for grain** was estimated at 151.8 million bushels, down 3 percent from the 2005 crop. The smaller crop was brought about by a reduction in acreage harvested for grain as yield per acre was the second highest on record. Yield was estimated at 146 bushels per acre, an increase of 14 bushels from the 2005 crop. Acreage harvested for grain was estimated at 1.04 million acres, down 140,000 acres from the 2005 crop and the smallest harvested for grain acreage since 1983. Christian County was the leading corn production county with 10.9 million bushels. Nine counties had production of 5.00 million bushels or more.

Corn production got off to a promising start with warm soil temperatures in the spring. By April 9, planting was ahead of schedule with 15 percent of the intended acreage planted. This was ahead of 7 percent for 2005 and 14 percent for average. Planting rapidly advanced during April and by May 7 was 85 percent planted, ahead of 2005 and the five year average. Planting slowed after mid-May due to wet soils and was complete by the first week of June. On June 4, about 94 percent of the corn had emerged and was rated 1 percent very poor, 4 percent poor, 14 percent fair, 55 percent good and 26 percent excellent. The average emerged corn height was 19 inches tall with the most advanced fields 32 inches in height.

By mid-June the corn crop in many areas would have benefited from rain. Corn was just starting to tassel and silk. In early July some corn began twisting from lack of moisture prior to receiving a general rain after 5 weeks of below normal rainfall. Rain helped relieve dry soils but more rainfall was needed for good crop development. Potential yields on early corn looked good. On August 6, corn was 75 percent in the milk stage, 51 percent in the dough stage and 27 percent in the dent stage. All development stages were behind or equal those of 2005 and the five year average. Eighty-seven percent of the corn crop was in good to excellent condition. Farmers were optimistic regarding their corn crop.

In late August a few early maturing fields were harvested for grain. On September 3, 11 percent of the corn had been harvested, just behind the average of 12 percent while ahead of 2005 with 8 percent. Sixty percent of the crop was mature and drying down prior to harvesting. Excellent yields were expected by Kentucky farmers. Corn harvesting was slowed after mid-September due to frequent rain and wet field conditions. Excessive rainfall caused flood damage in low lying areas. A generally wet fall continued to limit corn harvesting that was virtually complete in early November. Farmers report harvesting a very good yielding corn crop.

SOYBEANS

Soybean production was estimated at a record high 60.3 million bushels, up 13 percent from the 2005 crop. The previous high of 57.2 million bushels occurred in 2004. The increase was brought about by a larger harvested acreage and record tying high yield per acre. Yield was estimated at 44 bushels per acre, up one bushel from 2005 and tying the 2004 record. Harvested acreage was estimated at 1.37 million acres, an increase of 130,000 acres from 2005. This was the largest harvested acreage since 1984. Henderson County was the leading soybean production county with 3.74 million bushels. Four counties produced over 3.00 million bushels.

Soybean planting started in late April and continued through May though slowed at times by wet field conditions. Some farmers had to replant their beans due to wet soils. On June 4, soybeans were 68 percent planted, trailing 2005 with 80 percent but ahead of the five year average of 55 percent. As of June 18, virtually all of the single crop soybeans had been planted with 41 percent of the double crop soybeans planted. Double crop soybeans are planted following the winter wheat harvest. Condition for the emerged crop was 3 percent poor, 32 percent fair, 50 percent good and 15 percent excellent. As of the first week in July all soybean planting was 97 percent complete, ahead

of both the 2005 crop with 82 percent and the five year average of 81 percent. As soils were drying in late June the soybean crop was affected less than corn but still needed addition rain. Rains during July were very beneficial to double crop soybean development and growth and single crop bloom and pod development

By August 6, 74 percent of the soybeans were blooming and 50 percent were setting pods. During August rainfall was generally received as soils dried. On September 3, 86 percent of the soybeans were setting pods, 13 percent had leaves yellowing and 5 percent were dropping leaves. Crop condition was rated as 2 percent poor, 18 percent fair, 44 percent good and 36 percent excellent. Harvesting of soybeans started in late September with 4 percent harvested by September 24. Excessive rainfall caused some flooding in low lying areas. Rainfall in October slowed soybean harvest. Farmers were concerned about double crop soybeans not maturing before a killing frost occurred. Harvesting in late October was half a week behind average due to wet field conditions. As of November 12, 72 percent of the soybeans had been harvested. Farmers continue to harvest their record yielding crop as weather permitted.

OTHER CROPS

Farmers harvested 22.7 million bushels of **winter wheat** in the summer of 2006. This was up 11 percent from the 2005 crop and the largest wheat crop in five years. Yield averaged 71 bushels per acre, a record high. The previous high of 68 bushels was set in 2005. Despite a relatively wet winter, the wheat crop emerged in mostly good to excellent condition. On May 7, 85 percent of the wheat crop was heading or headed, ahead of 50 percent for 2005 and 66 percent for the five year average. Very little disease or insect problems were reported in small grains in spite of the cool, damp conditions of May. Lodging became a concern in early June as the wheat harvest was starting. Showers during June slowed harvesting of the crop, combining was completed in early July. The mild winter and favorable spring created conditions for excellent winter wheat yields and grain quality.

Alfalfa hay production was estimated at 1.04 million tons, up 25 percent from 2005. Yield was estimated at 3.7 ton per acre, up 0.5 ton from 2005. Harvested acreage at 280,000 acres was the largest in four years. **Other hay** production was estimated at 5.28 million tons, up 7 percent from the 2005 crop. Yield was estimated at 2.4 tons per acre, an increase of 0.1 ton per acre.

First cutting of alfalfa hay started the first week of May. Frequent showers benefited growth but delayed harvest, and slow curing in some areas hurt quality. Farmers generally harvested and baled their hay during 2006 as weather permitted. Quantity was up while quality was hurt by rain and delayed harvesting. Most farmers had an adequate supply of hay to feed their livestock going into winter.