Corn and Grain Sorghum Weekly Update – Final Update

2015 Update No 25

Corn and Grain Sorghum Update – Dr. Jason Kelley (Wheat and Feed Grains Specialist)

Corn and grain sorghum harvest is nearly complete with just a few fields in Northeast Arkansas still needing to be harvested. Corn yields in general were less this year than the last three years, although the last three years have been the highest yielding years on record for Arkansas, so 2015 will likely end up being only average compared to previous years. Corn yields are less this year for multiple reasons, but too much rain early in the season and resulting saturated soils slowed early-season growth and likely contributed to nitrogen loss in some soils. In general sand and silt loam soils had better yields than clay soils, which would be expected. Warm temperatures (not record) also coincided with grain fill, possibly further reducing yield potential. Overall state average corn yield is estimated to be 188 bushels per acre by the Arkansas Agriculture Statistics Service, but yield estimates may be reduced in later reports. It is estimated that 470,000 acres of corn will be harvested this year. Weather for harvest has been excellent this year with above average temperatures and below average rainfall for the month of September.

Arkansas Agriculture Statistics Service estimates that the grain sorghum state average yield will be 100 bushels per acre. If realized this would be the second highest state average yield. Grain sorghum acreage greatly expanded in 2015 with nearly 500,000 acres planted, compared to only 165,000 acres in 2014. Increased grain prices were the driving factor for increased grain sorghum acres in 2015. Overall, grain sorghum yields have been somewhat variable much like corn with lower yields generally being reported from fields with poor or less than ideal drainage. Early planted grain sorghum struggled with cool temperatures in April and saturated soils added more stress leading to slow growth and most likely nitrogen loss in some fields. Sugarcane aphid was a problem statewide this year and most fields were treated at least once to control aphids. Headworms were also a problem in most fields after heading, especially later planted fields.

Corn and Grain Sorghum Research Verification – Kevin Lawson (Corn & GS Verification Coordinator)

The 2015 corn and grain sorghum research verification program averaged 191 and 106 bushels per acre respectively. Over the last five years (2010-2014), the corn verification program averaged 213 and the grain sorghum verification program averaged 115 bushels per acre. That’s a 22 bushel decrease in corn and a 9 bushel decrease in grain sorghum, which has commonly been reported by producers all across the state this year. The following table gives final yields and comments on the challenges that each field faced this year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Corn Hybrid</th>
<th>Yield (adj to 15.5%)</th>
<th>Harvest Date</th>
<th>Final Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clay - Woolverton</td>
<td>Terral REV 23BHR55</td>
<td>206 bu/ac</td>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>Field was planted April 12 and had a wet start which led to a low plant stand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay - Yount</td>
<td>DKC 63-87 VT3P</td>
<td>198 bu/ac</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Field planting was delayed until May 1 due to wet weather. Southern rust came in late and required a fungicide application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Armor 1616PRO2</td>
<td>181 bu/ac</td>
<td>August 24</td>
<td>Even though zinc was applied in the preplant fertilizer, the wet weather early slowed root growth and a zinc deficiency occurred. A foliar application of zinc was required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>DKC 64-69 VT3P</td>
<td>229 bu/ac</td>
<td>August 11</td>
<td>Field was planted timely and didn’t go through much stress throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonoke</td>
<td>Pioneer 1319</td>
<td>145 bu/ac</td>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>Field was a non-GMO hybrid and was hit with a glyphosate drift which required a replant. The replant was on May 4, and the non-GMO hybrid struggled being planted that late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pope</td>
<td>DKC 62-06</td>
<td>23 tons/ac</td>
<td>August 5</td>
<td>Field was growing well when a storm came in and caused approximately 50% greensnap. Producer made the call to harvest field for silage instead of grain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Francis</td>
<td>Pioneer 2089YHR</td>
<td>185 bu/ac</td>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Field was planted no till on rolling field and experienced a sulfur deficiency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Grain Sorghum Hybrid</th>
<th>Yield (adj to 14%)</th>
<th>Harvest Date</th>
<th>Final Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Armor Maverick</td>
<td>113 bu/ac</td>
<td>September 17</td>
<td>Field planting was delayed until May 2 due to wet weather. A glyphosate drift damaged the middle of the field but didn’t destroy the complete stand. Headworms and aphids were both present in the field and required insecticide applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>Pioneer 84P80</td>
<td>98 bu/ac</td>
<td>August 26</td>
<td>Field was planted on 38 inch twin rows, and some of the rows came off the side of the bed during planting which led to a lower plant population. The field had some sand blows that were hard to keep irrigated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Southeast Arkansas Update – Wes Kirkpatrick (Desha County)

Corn harvest has been basically complete for nearly two weeks. Yields overall were lower by about 15-20 bushels per acre compared to the previous couple of seasons. Higher heat and lower rainfall amounts likely contributed to the lower yields. Yields ranged from 170-240 bushels per acre in corn. Grain sorghum harvest is also complete. Yields ranged from 100-140 bushels per acre, which is about average for the area.

Central Arkansas Update – Anthony Whittington (Jefferson County)

Corn and grain sorghum harvest in the area is all but over. Yield numbers in corn ranged from 190-250 bushels per acre, and grain sorghum ranged from 90-145 bushels per acre. With the very wet spring and late planting, the yields in corn and grain sorghum were down some in places especially those farms around the river. Insect pressure in grain sorghum was moderate with some places having to treat for midge, worms, and for the sugarcane aphid. The grain sorghum verification field only had one application for head worms and a late application for the sugarcane aphid. The late application of glyphosate in some grain sorghum fields didn’t have the effectiveness that it has had in previous years.

Northeast Arkansas Update – Stewart Runsick (Clay County)

Corn harvest is winding down. Most producers have completed harvest, there are a few fields scattered around still yet to shell. The moisture stayed up, it seemed like it took forever for the corn to dry down. Those with dryers were able to harvest high moisture corn and get a few days head start. I am hearing a lot of 200 bushel per acre average corn yields. A few fields were as high as 240 bushels per acre but not many. There were several fields that were in the 180-190 range. Southern rust came in and a lot of acres were treated with fungicide. I’m not sure it made a lot of difference. The fields treated at brown silk still had rust. Those treated a little later, the fungicide shut the rust down in the top of the plants but it was still present at harvest. No problems were reported with lodging. Grain sorghum harvest is progressing rapidly. A lot of acres were treated for sugarcane aphids. Some just last week and they are still waiting on the pre harvest interval to harvest. Some of the grain sorghum fields were treated twice for aphids, once early and again with the harvest aid. The fields treated early had good control in the upper leaves but the aphids were still in the field on the lower leaves. They moved back up in a few days after treatment. Yields have been good. I am hearing a lot of 135 to 150 bushels per acre yields. I have had a few reports of harvest issues dealing with honey dew but not many.

River Valley Update – Kevin VanPelt (Conway County)

With corn yields in the River Valley all over the board, it's a good reflection of what the season was like. There was just a very narrow window the first of April when it was dry enough for planting, which resulted in a large percentage of the corn crop being planted late. Then the first part of the summer many acres were either lost to or severely affected by flooding and unseasonably cool temperatures. Southern Rust was showed up late in the season but never became an issue. The better drained, early
planted fields cut 200 - 220 bushel per acre, but the fields that had water standing on them or were clay type soil only cut about 120 bushel per acre. Overall, producers in the River Valley averaged about 150 bushels per acre on their corn harvest.

**Market Update – Scott Stiles (Economics Specialist)**

Corn futures have traded mostly sideways this week after posting decent gains Monday. After the close Monday, NASS released its’ weekly *Crop Progress* report. The U.S. crop condition ratings came in better than expected as they remained steady at 68% good-to-excellent. The current rating is below last year, but above the five-year average.

Early yield reports from the eastern Corn Belt indicate that yields are off 15% from last year. However, key states such as Illinois had state average yields of 200 bushels in 2014. A decline of 15% still nets a state average of 170, which is above the USDA’s current U.S. average estimate of 167.5 bushels. It’s too early to make any solid judgement calls on the U.S. 2015 crop. In Monday’s *Crop Progress*, the USDA estimated the U.S. corn harvest at 10% complete. Given the dry weather conditions seen over the past week, harvest should easily be 20% complete by the weekend.

Other news the market is following this week is the possibility of South American corn being imported into the U.S. east coast ports. There has been speculation that 10 Brazilian corn cargos had been sold to the U.S. China’s price support policy on corn has been a recent headline as well. Currently, the plan indicates that the price paid to farmers for corn placed in the government reserve (from November 2015 to April 2016) will be 10-11% less than that offered last year. This may slow the accumulation of stocks and it should narrow the price gap between Chinese domestic prices and international prices. This could also slow U.S. sorghum exports to China.

On a positive note, there appears to be strong interest in planting soybeans this fall in South America. This may reduce corn acres in Brazil and Argentina as currency weakness in the two countries has driven up the cost of imported crop inputs. Also, roughly half of Russia and one-fourth of Ukraine is currently experiencing an extended drought. These are some key international issues to keep an eye on which may in turn help increase U.S. grain exports in 2016.

With December 2016 corn trading above $4 (about $4.05 today) it’s not too early to begin thinking about establishing a $4 floor for 2016. Given the level where November soybeans are trading today, there could be a significant corn acreage increase next year in the Corn Belt. Hedging (selling December ’16 corn futures) in small percentages on price rallies would be a strategy to consider. For example, sell 5% of expected production at $4.05, another 5% at $4.10, and 5% at the recent high of $4.15. More importantly, base your hedging decisions on covering your cost of production.

**Upcoming Reports/Events**

**September 30**
- Crop Insurance Sales Closing Date for Arkansas Winter Wheat
- Deadline to enroll in the 2014 and 2015 ARC/PLC farm program at Farm Service Agency
- NASS *Grain Stocks* report
- NASS *Small Grains Summary* report

**October 6**
- EIA *Short-term Energy Outlook* report
October 9

- NASS Crop Production
- USDA WASDE (monthly supply/demand report)

USDA-NASS *Crop Progress* reports are released each Monday afternoon at 3:00 p.m.
USDA-FAS *Export Sales* are released each Thursday morning at 7:30 a.m.

Twitter - Jason Kelley @AR_Feedgrains, Kevin Lawson @ar_cornverify
Cooperative Extension Service Corn Page – [www.uaex.edu/corn](http://www.uaex.edu/corn)
Cooperative Extension Service Grain Sorghum Page – [www.uaex.edu/grain-sorghum](http://www.uaex.edu/grain-sorghum)
Arkansas Row Crops Blog – [www.arkansascrops.com](http://www.arkansascrops.com)