

2010 Wheat Crop Harvested

LEXINGTON, KY.

Warm, dry weather allowed Kentucky wheat farmers to quickly wrap up the 2010 harvest. Overall, crop conditions were pretty good considering the obstacles that were placed in its way throughout the growing season, said Jim Herbek, grain crops specialist with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture.

Preliminary numbers showed Kentucky producers harvested about 300,000 acres and average yields were 63 bushels per acre. While this is an improvement in yields compared to the 2009 crop, which was severely hit by Fusarium head blight, it's still below record-yielding years of 2006 and 2008 when producers averaged 71 bushels per acre.

This year, approximately 70 to 75 percent of the crop was in good to excellent condition at harvest.

While there were optimum conditions at harvest time, the growing season didn't start out that way. Wet conditions during the fall of 2009 delayed corn and soybean harvesting and, as a result, wheat planting.

"By Nov. 1, we only had one-fourth of the potential crop planted, so around 75 percent of our crop was planted late," Herbek said. "Normally, late-planted wheat can catch up in growth if we have a few consecutive days of warm weather during the late fall and early spring, but this year we had a cool late winter and early spring, which didn't help crop growth."

Another factor that could have contributed to lower yields was the extensive flooding some areas of the state experienced during the first part of May. As a result, some fields were damaged where the wheat stayed underwater for several days.

Though not as widespread as in 2009, Fusarium head blight did cause some damage to this year's wheat crop.

"Reports of Fusarium head blight varied a lot," Herbek said. "It's estimated that around 15 percent of the wheat crop had some damage, but some fields had no damage, while others had over 50 percent of the crop damaged."

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