

# Chicot Co. Corn Producer Kicks Off Planting Season

**LAKE VILLAGE, ARK.**

It's open season in farm fields as corn planting got underway Saturday in one of Arkansas' southernmost counties – Chicot.

"There will be more producers starting this week if the weather holds," Gus Wilson, Chicot County extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said Monday. "If we miss the rain, expect we'll have quite a few acres planted this week."

Growers had some good dry, warm days Saturday, Sunday and Monday, but rain was reappearing in the forecast Monday night through Wednesday night, and again Thursday night and Friday.

"In our location, we tend to be a little bit warmer, and I would say the soil temperature is around 55 to 57 degrees," Wilson said.

Typically, growers can begin planting corn when soil temperatures reach 50-55 degrees, said Jason Kelley, extension wheat and feed grains agronomist with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Kelley recalled Chicot County being among the first last to plant corn year too because of the warm, dry spring.

"It's always a gamble this early in the year, especially with seed in short supply," he said.

"Last year, it worked out well for them."

A late frost, like the one that chilled Arkansas on Easter weekend in 2007, is a concern, but Kelley said. "Before it comes up, the corn can handle a frost or light freeze. Once it gets up, it can still handle a light frost as long as the growing point is below the surface."

Even when it reaches the two-leaf stage, it can still come back. "We found out in 2007 that the weather after a freeze dictates what happens with the crop. After a freeze, growers will want the weather to be warm enough to get a good, uniform stand," he said.

According to the National Weather Service, there's a 50-50 chance the last freeze at Eudora would be March 15, and the last frost, March 29.

However, "if we have to replant for some reason, we may get seed, but it may not be the seed we wanted," Kelley said.

Figures released Monday by the National Agricultural Statistics Service show Chicot

County producers planted 38,100 acres last year, up from 25,800 planted in 2010. The state total was 560,000 acres planted in 2011, up from 390,000 in 2010. State total production was 73.8 million bushels in 2011, compared with 57 million bushels in 2010.

**Corn planting began Feb. 24, 2012, in a field near Eudora in Chicot County, Arkansas.**

U of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture photos by Gus Wilson



**A spray buggy runs ahead of the planter to get a pre-emerge herbicide down as corn planting season begins in Chicot County, Arkansas.**

USDA is currently surveying farmers to gauge their planting intentions for the 2012 season.

"Each year, the agricultural industry watches for the results of the March Agricultural Survey, which provides the first official estimates of U.S. farmers' planting intentions for 2012," said Becky Cross, director of the NASS Arkansas Field Office.

NASS will compile and analyze the survey information and publish the results in a series of USDA reports, including the annual Prospective Plantings report and quarterly Grain Stocks report, both to be released on March 30. Δ

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