

# Corn Planting Will Finish On Time If Fields Stay Dry

**MISSISSIPPI STATE, MISS.**

**M**ississippi producers can finish planting a potentially good corn crop in the next month if Mother Nature will spot them good weather.

Frequent rains in some areas of the state in the last two months have saturated soil, keeping fields too wet to plant. Cold temperatures in other areas have not allowed soil to stay warm enough to germinate seeds and to encourage growth in emerged seedlings.

"Stand problems have been most frequent with corn planted early in March," said Erick Larson, grains agronomist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. "Weather records throughout the South Delta show two separate 5-to-6-day cold periods that impeded germination in that area in March."

Weather records also indicate the measurement of crop growth relative to temperature since late March is 30 percent less than normal. Farmers have not fared much better in April. They have sustained 15 days with temperatures of 50 degrees or less during the month.

"The cold April weather has been an important factor in getting the crop off to a good start because corn germination and growth generally cease at temperatures of 50 degrees F or lower," Larson said.

Planting intentions are from 10 percent off in some areas to at least 20 percent off in others. The March planting intentions report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture predicted 630,000 acres of corn for Mississippi in 2009. At this point in the planting season last year, farmers planted 720,000 acres of corn.

Despite the planting delays, the 2009 corn crop is not in trouble. According to USDA's crop progress report, planting is 85 percent complete. This is just a little behind the pace of

2008 when planting was 88 percent done at this point in time.

"The poor planting conditions we have experienced since we begin in March may not further reduce corn planting intentions if dry weather holds for the next two weeks," Larson said.

Corn is an attractive crop because it works well in a rotation system with soybeans or cotton, the primary mainstays for Mississippi farmers. It also is profitable because demand is strong in feedstock, biofuel and export markets.

"Corn's use as a feed ingredient in the livestock and poultry sectors is one factor that has kept demand strong," said Extension agricultural economist John Anderson. "Our nation's bioenergy policy and the move by some farmers to divert more acres to corn for ethanol markets have increased acreage tremendously in some areas."

The diversion of some corn from feedstock supplies to ethanol production has increased demand from feed manufacturers. Demand increases in both of these markets can potentially raise prices farmers may receive.

"The upside is that prices may become strong because demand right now is so strong," Anderson said. "Other factors that bode well for corn prices are hopes of recovery from the worldwide economic downturn and the possible improvement in foreign demand for U.S. corn."

Farmers should not rely on higher corn prices as a done deal.

"Corn is not cheap to grow," Anderson said. "Input prices, particularly the cost of fertilizer, are still high this year. While corn does not require as many inputs as cotton, it still is a relatively costly crop to produce, and other factors have to come into play to make it a profitable crop." △

The Syngenta logo features the word "syngenta" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font. A small green leaf icon is positioned above the letter 'n'.

Link Directly To: **SYNGENTA**

The Vermeer logo consists of the word "Vermeer" in a bold, black, serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the letter 'r'.

Link Directly To: **VERMEER**