

Drought Continuing To Affect Western Kentucky Grain Crops

PRINCETON, KY.

With the majority of Western Kentucky now in a severe drought, many corn and soybean producers are hoping for timely rains to maintain yields and the quality of their crops.

"Most of our corn is about 24 inches tall and extremely stressed," said Kenny Perry, Graves County agricultural and natural resources agent with the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

Shane Bogle, agricultural and natural resources extension agent in Caldwell County said corn development there ranges from a few inches tall to shoulder-high, and it's also showing signs of drought stress.

According to the May 29 Kentucky Weekly Crop and Weather Report, Mayfield in Graves County and Princeton in Caldwell County have received just less than 1.5 inches of rain since April 1. This is around 8 inches below normal rainfall totals for both locations.

Corn plants may be losing some of their po-

tential kernel development, but this may not have much of an effect on yields at this point, said Chad Lee, grain crops specialist in the UK College of Agriculture. Plants normally have the potential to develop 1,000 kernels, however only 400 to 600 actually make it to the ear. Since the crop is still in the early development stages, as long as the area gets timely rains, it should result in minimal yield losses. Greater yield losses could occur if the weather continues to be dry as the plants reach tasseling, he said.

While full-season soybeans are planted and emerged in Caldwell County, the vast majority of producers will plant double-crop soybeans after the wheat harvest concludes in a couple of weeks, Bogle said.

Many Graves County soybean producers have been waiting for rain to plant their crop, Perry said.

"I agree with producers waiting to plant soybeans, as having adequate moisture will help improve seed-to-soil contact and germination," Lee said. Δ