

# Most Soybeans Harvested Before Rains Halted Work

## MISSISSIPPI STATE, MISS.

This year's soybean crop is on track to set a state yield record, but much depends on whether recent heavy rains that halted harvest seriously damaged what remains in the field.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated the state's 2.1 million acres of soybeans were 77 percent harvested by Sept. 30. Acreage is up 17 percent from what was planted in 2011.

Trent Irby, Mississippi State University Extension Service soybean specialist, said most reports indicate an above-average harvest which could break the state record yield of about 40 bushels an acre.

"Things looked tough for portions of the dry land crop for a while, but the soybeans held on a lot better through the drought of June and early July than we thought they would," Irby said. "In many areas, we were pleasantly surprised at how the crop turned out."

He estimated at least 50 percent of the state's soybeans are grown with irrigation. A Sept. 30 storm that came during harvest brought 1.5 to 7 inches of rain across the state.

"Producers who still have soybeans in the field never want to see this much rain fall on their crop ready for harvest," Irby said. "We're thankful the rain didn't fall for a week straight. We hope not to see any serious damage."

Statewide, insect and disease pressures were light on much of this year's acreage. Though soybean rust was confirmed in 79 counties by early October, Irby said it hasn't impacted yields.

"If you don't scout for soybean rust, it can take its toll on the crop, but most of our soybeans are well-scouted," Irby said. "Our MSU team of pathologists works very hard to monitor rust, so when it is found, recommendations can be made that will help minimize loss."

Jay Phelps, Extension area agronomy agent working out of Pontotoc County, said soybeans are the primary row crop in the six counties he covers in north central Mississippi.

"None of our acreage is irrigated in this area, but it looks like our yield is above average," Phelps said.

Although crops in north Mississippi are often planted a few weeks later than those same crops planted elsewhere in the state, Phelps said many soybeans were planted early this year.

"The hot, dry spell in June and July was a challenge," Phelps said. "This crop has really surprised me – to go through that much stress and come back with this much yield."

Brian Williams, Extension agricultural economist, said soybean prices are good, ranging between \$14.98 and \$15.23 a bushel in the state. Soybean prices have been moving down from a combination of factors. Among these are better-than-expected yields and higher carryover stocks than previously anticipated.

"Cash prices have been declining since an Aug. 31 high of \$17.85 on the Chicago Board of Trade," Williams said. "Soybean prices are at their lowest since early July, when the Midwest drought was driving prices upward."

Slumping prices are not ruining the good year.

"With record yields and good prices, Mississippi soybean producers are in a good position this year compared to much of the country," Williams said. △



**The majority of the state's soybeans, such as these at Mississippi State University's Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, were harvested before heavy rains Sept. 30 halted work.**

(Photo by DREC Communications/ Rebekah Ray)



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