

Time Is Of The Essence For Soybean Development

LEXINGTON, KY.

Soybean producers should scout their crop for seed fill and drought stress as the time frame for decent yields is narrowing, said Chad Lee, grain crops specialist with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture.

According to the July 23 Kentucky Weekly Crop and Weather Report, 62 percent of the state's soybeans were flowering and 32 percent were setting pods.

"A lot of flowers and pods are aborting due to the drought and high heat. There's not as much seed fill as we'd like to see at this point," Lee said. "We could still see some seed fill, but we need good, soaking rains."

Much of Western Kentucky is still considered to be an extreme drought with most areas more than 10 inches behind normal rainfall amounts, according to the Weekly Crop and Weather Report.

While the area received some helpful rain the evening of July 26, more rain is needed for a decent crop. There is a slight chance of rain early

in the week of July 30. The eight- to 14-day forecast for the area is predicting near normal precipitation levels for this time of the year, said Matt Dixon, UK agricultural meteorologist.

Soybeans tend to handle drought conditions better than corn, but their appearance can be deceiving. From planting time until harvest, soybeans need between 20 and 25 inches of rain, Lee said.

"It's harder for producers to see drought stress in soybeans compared to corn," Lee said. "Checking for flower and pod counts is a good way for producers to see whether the crop is experiencing drought stress. Soybeans will also flip their leaves up when the plant is showing signs of heat and drought stress."

Lee said, by the middle of August, producers likely will have a good idea of what their yields will be.

"If producers don't get any rain in the next two weeks, they should start contacting their crop insurance agents," he said. △