

Weather Aids Ark Winter Wheat Planting, Growth

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Arkansas' winter wheat was in good shape so far, with 75 percent of the crop planted and 47 emerged, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Farmers rated the crop 46 percent good, 38 percent fair and 9 percent in excellent condition.

Fair weather has allowed Arkansas' wheat growers to plant 20 percent of the crop since the previous week's report.

Cotton was 97 percent harvested, up from 90 percent the previous week. Soybeans were 93 percent harvested, up from 84 percent the previous week.

Wheat looks great at this point – green and growing," Keith Perkins, Lonoke County extension agent for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said Tuesday. "We still have some acres to plant.

"Producers need to watching for ryegrass and making sure to apply control measures while the ryegrass is still small and easier to control," he said. "Also, they need to make sure they have plenty of drainage ditches."

Arkansas farmers were expected to plant some 621,000 acres this fall for harvest in spring 2013. Farmers planted 550,000 acres for har-

vest in spring 2012.

"We were expecting the crop acreage to be up a little bit. Preliminary estimates were 10 to 20 percent from last year," said Jason Kelley, wheat specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. "Whether that winds up as the final number remains to be seen.

"Overall, the crop looks very good," he said. "Some places have gotten enough rain to slow planting, but overall it has been a good planting season."

However, not every county saw an increase in winter wheat acreage. Brent Griffin, extension staff chair in Prairie County, said, "we are down in acres from last year."

Some growers in the county did "double-cropping" – meaning they grew winter wheat and as soon as the harvest was done, used the field for soybeans that can mature in a shorter period of time.

"Double-crop beans typically yield 10 to 12 bushels an acre less than soybeans grown for a full-season," Griffin said. "With \$15 soybeans and difficulty getting a stand during a hot, dry June " many growers decided to devote the land to full-season soybeans. Δ



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