

Fieldwork runs ahead of norm

HARRISBURG — Brisk and gusty northwest winds brought the coolest temperatures since the end of March during the week ending April 27.

Mid-week shower activities left farmers with three days rated suitable for fieldwork, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Farm fieldwork activities included plowing, discing, repairing fences and equipment, hauling manure, spreading fertilizer and lime, and planting oats, potatoes, corn, forage crops, soybeans, tobacco beds and sweet corn.

Soil moisture was rated 61 percent adequate, 21 percent short and 18 percent surplus across the state. In the north, soil moisture was rated 66 percent adequate, 17

percent short and 17 percent surplus. Central soil moisture was rated 50 percent adequate, 29 percent short and 21 percent surplus, while southern soils were rated 70 percent adequate, 15 percent short and 15 percent surplus in moisture.

The statewide near-to-below freezing temperatures Tuesday and Wednesday mornings caused some additional damage to peaches, cherries, pears, apples and asparagus. This frost damage has not yet been fully assessed. Peaches are reported as 25 percent in pink stage and 66 percent in or past full bloom. Cherries are reported as 28 percent in pink stage and 60 percent in or past full bloom, while apples are reported at 38 percent in pink stage and 28

percent in or past full bloom. Green peas and strawberry plants are reported as looking very good.

At 68 percent complete, plowing is well ahead of last year's 42 percent and the five year average of 55 percent. Completed plowing is rated at 60 percent in the northern, 76 percent in the central, and 72 percent in the southern regions.

This year's oats are 70 percent sown, compared with 42 percent at the same time last year. Forty-five percent of the crop is sown in the north, 85 percent in central counties and 87 percent in the southern counties.

Potato planting made excellent progress during the week, with planting now 32 percent ahead of last year's rate. Statewide, 40 percent is now completed. The

regional standings were 23 percent planted in the north, 41 percent planted in the central counties, and 51 percent planted in the south.

Tobacco beds are reported as 60 percent sown. At this time last year, tobacco beds were virtually completed.

The winter grains continue mostly in the pre-boot stage with some reports of barley and wheat in boot in central and southern areas. Statewide, barley is eight percent booted while wheat is less than five percent booted. Statewide planting of soybeans stands at eight percent complete, up two percent from last year.

At eight percent, completed corn planting stands slightly ahead of last year's five percent and the five-year average of six percent.

Corn planting was reported in all three regions of the state.

Both alfalfa and clover-timothy hay stands are rated as 59 percent good and 41 percent fair. The amount of feed obtained from pasture rated average to below average statewide.

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Youngsters will be delighted with this pretty, nutritious beverage called Raspberry-Cranberry Punch: Beat one can (12 oz.) frozen cranberry juice cocktail concentrate with an electric mixer; add five and one-third cups cold milk. Stir in a drop or two red food color, if desired. Pour into glasses; top each drink with a small scoop of raspberry sherbet. (Yield: 6½ cups).

How to hedge corn crop against drought

LANCASTER — If there's one thing most corn growers can agree on — it's the importance of weather. Few will question its tremendous effect on crop profits.

In spite of the great influence weather has on yields, there are ways you can modify its effects.

Top corn growers recommend using cultural practices to make full use of sunlight, rain and warm temperatures in their fields.

"Weather control" starts with selecting corn hybrids that fit a specific cropping program and growing conditions.

Scientists say corn is most sensitive to weather from six weeks before silking to three weeks after. What happens during this period largely determines what yields will be in the fall. Potential yields of 150 bushels per acre can be drastically reduced by drought and high temperatures during this critical period of plant growth.

That's why top growers suggest planting hybrids with a range of maturities in order to reduce risk of stress during this weather-sensitive period.

Planting more than one hybrid number can reduce risk of losses from disease and insects which vary with weather conditions.

Since full-season hybrids often yield better, you'll want to plant a part of your acreage to a full-season number. But if you plant

large acreages, consider medium and short season numbers, too.

Besides minimizing harmful weather effects, an early hybrid can spread your planting and harvest workload.

Some top growers prefer to plant hybrids in order of increasing maturity. But scientists recommend planting full-season corn first on about 25% of your acreage, medium maturity on about half of your acreage. Plant short season hybrids last.

Here's another tip: if planting a full-season hybrid is delayed too long, it's best to switch back to an earlier hybrid. A good early hybrid planted late usually yields more than a late-maturity hybrid planted late.

Several other ways to hedge your corn crop against weather stress periods:

- Plant early.
- Plant hybrids of varying maturities.
- Plant full-season hybrids first.
- Match plant population to hybrid, moisture supply and fertility levels.
- Consider narrow rows to allow for earlier shading, cooler soil, less evaporation.
- Use plenty of fertilizer.
- Maintain good soil tilth and texture to help increase water intake and reduce run-off. Break up crusts. Avoid overworking. Use conservation practices.
- Control weeds and insects.
- Consider early harvest when corn is at 25 to 27% moisture content. You may be able to reduce field losses in order to more than offset drying costs.



THINK AHEAD...
Read Futures Markets on Page 3.



These different ears demonstrate varying degrees of drought stress on corn. Planting hybrids with varying maturities as early as possible reduces risk of moisture stress.

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