Weather still having its farming effects

HARRISBURG — Farmwork in Pennsylvania progressed during the week ending May 20, although temperatures ranged well below normal and most sections of the state saw late frost. Farm activities included plowing; spraying; harvesting rye for green chop and silage; and planting oats, corn, alfalfa, soybeans, potatoes, sweet corn, cabbage and tomatoes.

Four days were rated suitable for farm fieldwork. In the northern region of the state two days were rated suitable, in the central region four days were rated suitable and in the southern region of the state five days were rated suitable for fieldwork.

Topsoil moisture was rated surplus by 51 percent of our reporters and adequate by 49 percent. In the northern region of the state 64 percent of our reporters rated it surplus and 36 percent rated it adequate. In the central region 53 percent rated it surplus and 47 percent rated it adequate, while in the southern region of the state 25 percent rated it surplus and 75 percent rated it adequate.

By the end of the week, spring plowing was 66 percent complete. Last year at this time 78 percent was complete while the five-year average for this date was 87 percent complete. In the northern region of the state 57 percent was complete, in the central region 69 percent was complete and in the southern region of the state spring plowing was 74 percent complete.

Statewide, 82 percent of the oat crop was seeded compared with 87 percent seeded at this time last year. In the northern region of the state 68 percent was seeded, in the central region 86 percent was seeded and in the southern region 91 percent of the oat crop was seeded.

By the end of the week six percent of the soybean crop was planted compared with nine percent planted at this time last year. In the northern and central regions of the state, less than five percent was planted while in the southern region of the state 13 percent of the soybean crop was planted.

Statewide, 65 percent of the potato crop was planted, about the same as last year. In the northern region 45 percent was planted, in the central region 67 percent was planted, and in the southern region of the state 83 percent of the potato crop was planted.

Statewide, 33 percent of the barley crop was in the boot stage and 15 percent was headed compared with 41 percent in the boot stage and 27 percent headed at this time last year. In the northern region 43 percent was in the boot stage and none was headed. In the central region 28 percent was in boot and eight percent was headed while in the southern region 31 percent was in boot and 41 percent was headed. By the end of the week 20 percent of the wheat crop was in boot compared with 45 percent last year. In the northern region 22 percent was in boot, in the central region 17 percent was in boot, and in the southern region of the state 25 percent of the wheat crop was in the boot stage.

By the end of the week 32 percent of the corn crop was planted compared with 39 percent planted at this time last year. The five-year average for this date was 56 percent planted. In the northern region of the state 16 percent was planted, in the central region 35 percent was planted, and in the southern region 53 percent of the corn crop was planted.

Both alfalfa and clo-tim stands were rated good to fair. Statewide, 72 percent of our reporters rated alfalfa stands good and 28 percent rated them fair. Clo-tim stands were rated good by 71 percent of our reporters and fair by 29 percent. The amount of feed obtained from pastures was rated average by 68 percent of our reporters, below average by 18 percent and above average by 14 percent.

By the end of the week 83 percent of the state's peach trees were in full bloom or past compared with 95 percent in full bloom or past last year. Cherries were reported as 86 percent in full bloom or past compared with 95 percent last year. Statewide, 50 percent of the apple trees were in full bloom or past compared with 87 percent at this time last year.

PFA opposes Scheps relicensing

(Editor's Note: See Letter to the Editor on Page A10.)

CAMP HILL — The Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA) today called on the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board (PMMB) to deny the request of Bradford County Farms, Inc., for relicensing as a milk dealer in Pennsylvania.

Bradford County Farms is a subsidiary of Scheps Cheese Company, Inc. of Patterson, N.J., which is presently in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Recent testimony on relicensing shows the cheese company which stopped receiving milk at its Wyoming County plant last July owes farmers and other creditors about $20 million.

In a letter to PMMB Chairman George Brumbaugh, PFA president Keith Eckel of Lackawanna County said, "Scheps is proposing in its reorganization plan under Chapter 11 of the Federal Bankruptcy Law that the same persons who managed the company into bankruptcy — Alfred Scheps and Benedict Scheps — manage the company after the confirmation of the plan by the bankruptcy court.

"Alfred Scheps is proposed under the plan to be Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer and Benedict Scheps will be afforded the ability to provide significant sales, marketing and operations input through the consulting firm of Scheps Consultants, which is proposed to be the sole management consultant firm for Scheps and in which Alfred and Benedict Scheps have a prime interest."

Eckel continued, "There is at present considerable controversy surrounding the propriety of past management practices by Scheps.

Eckel said admissions and allegations of impropriety and fraud "raise too many questions of credibility of management operations and sincerity in management effort to reimburse milk producers and other creditors advancing products and capital, and place serious doubt on whether the cosmetic personnel changes porposed in the reorganization plan will even slightly modify continuation of the pre-bankruptcy management practices.

"Under these circumstances," Eckel added, "our organization cannot support the restart of Scheps."

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