

# Crops Survey Reflects Results Of Drought

FREDERICK, Md. — The Frederick County Crops Survey reflected the hot, dry weather farmers experienced last season. This could be seen not only in yield results, but also in decisions farmers had to make as they struggled to find alternative feed supplies for livestock.

The 1991 survey results showed that overall, 44 percent of the producers harvested less grain. In most instances, less corn was harvested for grain. This was because of its poor quality and yield. The corn was harvested for silage instead of being combined for grain. This helped to recover some of the production costs and meet some of the shortfall in field supplies.

More small grains were harvested in 1991 by producers. Wheat (12 percent more) and barley (10 percent more) have been very reliable crops and fit well in double crop systems. An abundance of good varieties and technological advances in fungicides and herbicides have helped to improve production.

In 1991, 91 percent of the producers reported grain yields below what they expected. In 1990, only

5 percent reported yields below what they expected.

In addition to yield reduction, hot, dry weather also affects the quality of crops. This can be seen in the overall harvested forage evaluation by producers. Forage quality was significantly lower in 1991 when compared to 1990.

As expected, 80 percent of the producers reported forage yields below what they expected, compared to the 4 percent reporting

yields below what they expected in 1990.

One of the bright spots in the survey was the 31 percent increase in producers expanding their forage acres and the 5 percent increase in producers adding more permanent pastures. These are positive steps toward more sustainable types of production with lower costs.

Perennial crops such as orchardgrass, timothy, and alfalfa

allow producers to recapture costs over several years. If a drought hits, everything is not lost. There is not the pressure to recapture all the costs in one season such as with an annual crop like corn.

Because most of our permanent pastures went down in the May heat wave, many livestock producers had to start feeding hay to compensate for lost yields. Overall, 23 percent more producers had to buy hay in 1991 than in 1990, and 75 percent reported buying

hay due to not having enough on hand.

While purchased feeds increased on farms, the amount of on-farm produced feed decreased on 64 percent of the farms reporting.

In 1991, 41 percent of the producers reported using fewer pesticides in crop production. Almost all of them cited either economics, less pest pressure, or concern for the environment as their reason.

## W. Va. Leads Way In RC&D Projects

MORGANTOWN, W. Va. — West Virginia led the nation in fiscal year 1991 in the number of projects completed under Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), the U.S. Department of Agriculture's primary rural development program.

Each RC&D area is administered by a local board or council and assisted by a coordinator from the USDA's Soil Conservation Service.

SCS State Conservationist Rollin N. Swank said West Virginia's six RC&D areas not only did more, they did them with less money than

half the other states.

RC&D, which encompasses all parts of the state, completed 84 projects for recreation and tourism, community improvement, water quality, conservation education, forestry, fish and wildlife, and other purposes. New York's RC&D areas completed 74 projects for second place.

RC&D areas in West Virginia

raised a substantial sum for their projects in 1991 — \$545,000. However, half the states received or raised more, starting with Oklahoma at \$21 million and Arizona with almost \$18 million.

West Virginia was sixth in vol-

unteer hours donated to RC&D at 2,012. First-place Utah had 5,500 volunteer hours.

Soil conservation districts, county commissions, and some cities sponsor RC&D areas and name the board members.

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