

Title: Corn conditions across the country suffer, Arkansas crop appears strong

Author: By RYAN MCGEENEY U of A System Division of Agriculture

Size : 64 Inches Sq Batesville,AR Circulation: 7159

Keywords: University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture / U of A Division of Agriculture ~ University of Arkansas



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By RYAN MCGEENEY
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Despite a significant dip in mid-season corn condition across the United States, growers in Arkansas may be heading toward a significantly stronger harvest.

An Aug. 11 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that sampled more than 14,000 growers and consultants began tracking the week-by-week condition of corn crops throughout the country in late May and will continue through early November. As of Aug. 6, U.S. growers reported about 57 percent of their corn crop as “good to excellent” condition. While this approximately ties the reported condition of corn crops in 2019 and 2022, it’s significantly lower than conditions reported in early August of 2018 (about 72 percent), 2020 (also about 72 percent) and 2021 (about 64 percent).

The USDA report, however, is significantly weighted toward growers in Midwestern states, with more than 1,000 respondents in Kansas and

nearly 1,000 in Texas (297 respondents, by comparison, are located in Arkansas). And while Arkansas has certainly seen its share of summer heat, many Midwestern states have borne an even greater brunt of heat and drought conditions.

According to the USDA’s

Arkansas-specific Crop Progress and Condition Report published Aug. 14, growers reported 69 percent of corn acres as being in “good” or “excellent” condition.

Jason Kelley, extension wheat and feed grains agronomist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said the improving condition in Arkansas corn was largely driven by early summer rainfall.

“From the end of May through the end of June, the weather was dry, both here and in the Midwest, so the percentage of the crop rated good-to-excellent was lower than it normally has been during that time of year,” Kelley said. “But then it started raining.”

Throughout most of July, large swaths of Arkansas expe-

rienced nearly clockwork-like rains of several inches each week. While some areas of the state, especially the southwestern corner, received an overabundance, most of Arkansas’ approximately 800,000 acres of corn benefitted, Kelley said.

“Once we got to the more important stages, like pollination and grain fill, it was still warm, but we were getting more timely rains than we have the past couple of

years,” he said. “That’s been very helpful. A 2-inch rain is so much more beneficial than a 2-inch irrigation.”

Hunter Biram, extension agricultural economist for the Division of Agriculture, said that the condition of a crop at any given moment in time doesn’t necessarily predict the final quality of the harvest or its value in the marketplace.

“These values could give us a better idea of what crop

yields might be at harvest, but I’m not sure if they could give us any indication as to what the quality will be once it is delivered to a grain elevator,” Biram said. “If the measure told us anything about potential discounts given to farmers at delivery, then this could be an indicator of farm income.”

Across the United States, growers are estimated to produce more than 15 billion bushels of corn in 2023, an in-

crease of more than 10 percent over the previous year, according to the USDA report.

As of last week, USDA reported that about 3 percent of Arkansas corn had been harvested. As producers head fully into harvest efforts, Kelley said, conditions are favorable.

“Right now, looking at the weather forecast – it looks like we’ve got about 10 days of no rain and rising temperatures,” he said. “Which is ideal.”

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ABOVE: Corn harvest on the Dow Brantley farm in Lonoke County. Corn is now among the crops covered by a Potash Rate Calculator developed by the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station.



Fred Miller

RIGHT: Corn pours from combine to truck.

U of A Division of Agriculture photo