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Cornbelt Update

A weekly publication for farm owners and operators, Oct. 16, 2009, Vol. 11 No. 26

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- **USDA's corn yield forecast** is on track with growing season weather and crop condition ratings says IL marketing specialist Darrel Good. But he says the USDA forecast bean yield is a bit below the crop condition ratings and his estimates based on growing season weather. He says typically, yield forecasts increase in Nov., but 2009 is not a typical year. Read more: <http://www.farmdoc.illinois.edu/marketing/weekly/html/101209.html>
- **2009 is not typical**, says Good, because the growing season for late maturing crops was ended early by freezing temperature. He says that may have reduced yield, along with widespread incidents of disease in both corn and beans, causing quality issues. Good believes that USDA's November crop report may very well show a decline in yields.
- **Darrel Good says** corn prices have climbed 65¢ and beans have risen over \$1.00 per bushel while USDA has continued to push upward its crop estimates. That is because of strong demand. He says the ethanol industry has recovered substantially, and there are higher estimates for corn being used for livestock feed than in earlier estimates.
- **Darrel Good says** soybean prices have been held up by the strength of exports, which are now at a predicted record of 1.305 bil. bu. for the new marketing year. Currently, exports and unshipped commitments are at 758 mil. bu., up 350 mil. bu. from last year.
- **If you are concerned about pricing**, Good says the crop size and quality concerns will keep corn and bean prices strong. He suggests that higher prices should lead producers toward pricing strategies that have less storage and more harvest time pricing.
- **Looking back** at the USDA World Supply-Demand Report, KS marketing specialist Mike Woolverton says the estimate for Chinese corn production was cut by 200 mil. bu., and global corn stocks were also lowered. He concludes that lower global stocks could put upward pressure on US corn prices, and China may be in the market for corn.
- **Woolverton found nothing** to be bullish about in the wheat market. He says US stocks are at a 9 year high after raising production and lowering use. Exports will be down because of competition from Russia, Canada, and Australia. He says despite global production being down 2% this year, global stocks will be up 12% this year. He is hoping wheat prices will follow corn and bean prices higher during the year.

- **If you are putting price targets** on your grain, Michigan St. marketing specialist Jim Hilker provides some price probabilities, based on futures as of October 14:
 - 1) Dec corn: 80% probability between \$4.52 & \$3.19, with the midpoint at \$3.79.
 - 2) Mar corn: 80% probability between \$5.10 & \$2.93, with the midpoint at \$3.86.
 - 3) Jul corn: 80% probability between \$5.65 & \$2.77, with the midpoint at \$3.95.
 - 4) Jan beans: 80% probability between \$11.84 & \$8.26, with the midpoint at \$9.88.
 - 5) Mar beans: 80% probability between \$12.50 & \$7.72, with the midpoint at \$9.82.
 - 6) Jul beans: 80% probability between \$13.33 & \$6.92, with the midpoint at \$9.59.
 - 7) Dec wheat: 80% probability between \$6.03 & \$4.30, with the midpoint at \$5.09.
 - 8) Mar wheat: 80% probability between \$6.81 & \$3.99, with the midpoint at \$5.21.
 - 9) Jul wheat: 80% probability between \$7.66 & \$3.74, with the midpoint at \$5.35.
- **Farm program sign-up** may be last on your priority list, but it has begun for the 2010 crop, and farmers who are eligible for Direct Payments may request advanced payments. Those payments would equal 22% of the applicable payment and will be made on Dec. 1. The deadline for sign-up for Direct, Counter-cyclical payments and ACRE is June 1.
- **“Striking”** is the description used by IL crop production specialist Emerson Nafziger to describe the departure of 2009 growing degree days from normal. He says generally, the GDD predictions of maturity have held up fairly well this year, meaning that it took all of September in many fields for the crop to reach maturity. Late planting did not help. Read his newsletter at: <http://ipm.illinois.edu/bulletin/article.php?id=1236> Nafziger also says frost started the dry-down process earlier and may reduce drying costs.
- **What is your kernel size?** Emerson Nafziger says kernel size this year seems to be unusually large, even in later planted fields, which he terms “a positive development.” He says where kernels were still immature when frost killed the plant, some of the grain size will be lost, but since kernels were larger than usual, the yield will still be good.
- **What will stalk quality be?** Nafziger does not anticipate much of a problem with stalk quality in connection with an early freeze. He says many stalks strengthened over the past month by increasing the presence of lignin; therefore stalk sugar content is not as important this fall for stalk strength. He says very immature corn could have problems.
- **When kernels get to the dryer** Nafziger says high temperature drying may caramelize some of the sugars at the tip of the kernel. That may darken and may change the shape of the kernel. Those kernels may also have a lower test weight, and the combination of weight and discoloration may result in pricing discounts at the elevator. He says there is no difference in feed quality, however there is less starch needed by ethanol refiners.
- **Natural drying** may stop at 17% to 18% moisture at this time, says IA agronomist Roger Elmore, and without many chances for field drying, he says attention needs to be given to stalk health. That means producers may have to harvest wetter corn first if it is lodging.
- **IA State grain quality specialist** Charles Hurburgh says expect drying cost to be 5¢ per point of moisture removed, and 23% moisture corn will cost 40¢ per bushel, plus the loss from shrink. He says that means you may have an incentive to hold corn at higher moisture, and await better drying conditions in the spring, or blending opportunities, or sale of the grain to buyers of high moisture grain, but that could create high risks.

- **Shrink is an issue** for high moisture grain, which is 1.17% per point for corn and 1.15% for beans. Hurburgh says any additional deduction in the market shrink calculation is an allowance for material handling losses. That would be a 0.22% handling loss if the elevator calculates shrink at 1.4% per point of moisture. He says an elevator experiences 1% overall handling loss and a good farm system would have about 0.5% loss. But both of those exclude any weight loss from spoilage if the grain goes out of condition.
- **Tests weights under 54 lbs.** should be dried to under 15% moisture if they are going to be stored for any length of time. And breakage of kernels is a potential problem. Hurburgh says low test weight corn, which has been dried, should not be stored into warm weather next year. As moisture is removed, corn will gain test weight, and there will be more gain with low temperature drying compared to temperatures over 150°F.
- **Soybean harvest**, storage, and handling tips are handy given current weather conditions:
 - 1) Grain storage tips, and formulas for crop drying storage and handling. <http://www.extension.umn.edu/specializations/cropsystems/M1080-FS.pdf>
 - 2) Soybean drying, handling, and storage. <http://www.soybeans.umn.edu/crop/harvest/>
 - 3) “Harvest soybeans as early as possible.” <http://www.extension.umn.edu/extensionnews/2009/soybean-harvest-storage.html>
- **MN and WI farmers may have suffered** significantly when the freezing temperatures halted the growth and maturity of substantial corn and soybean acres. If frost damaged less mature crops, MN agronomists say different management would be required, and they have created a website for that: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/frost/>
- **Grain drying fans** are humming throughout the country. If yours is not, your grain shelf life may be shortened, according to NE ag engineer Tom Dorn’s rules of thumb:
 - 1) When corn over 17% moisture is held at a constant temperature, the shelf life is cut in half for every 2% increase in moisture content.
 - 2) When corn over 17% moisture is held at a constant temperature, the shelf life is cut in half for every 10°F rise in temperature.
 - 3) Grain stored without aeration will heat from microbial respiration and will have a shelf life about one-third as long because heat increases that activity, causing more heat.
- **Do a favor** for yourself and your neighbors. Clean the buckthorn out of fencerows, waste areas, and along creek banks. It’s not that you don’t already have a lot to do, but the less buckthorn, the less of a problem with soybean aphids next year. Buckthorn will not resprout from underground roots, but stumps that are cut off will regrow. Pictures and detailed instructions: <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/outreach/VMG/buckthorn.html>
- **If you don’t believe** that eradicating some buckthorn bushes will help, think again. Those swarms of soybean aphids in September were all traveling to their winter quarters on buckthorn growing on your property and that of your neighbors. Researchers have found buckthorn leaves totally covered with soybean aphids, meaning management issues for 2010. Unbelievable pictures: <http://ipm.illinois.edu/bulletin/article.php?id=1229>
- **There is an 11 year trend** in the population of European corn borer says IL entomologist Mike Gray, and the trend is downward, due to the introduction of Bt hybrid corn. He says the widespread use of Bt corn has significantly suppressed corn borer populations. Gray says that trend may lead to a decision that his annual survey can be discontinued.

- **The widespread use of Bt corn** has also lead to questions about the populations of corn root worms says Mike Gray. He says the wet 2009 spring suppressed some, but the use of Bt corn and increased use of soil insecticides may show a downward rootworm trend.
- **I have diplodia in my corn.** Your test weight may be light. If the cob is rotted, it may spread through the grain. Pieces of cob may result in discounts for foreign material. The elevator may also levy a dockage for the presence of kernels damaged by diplodia.
- **I don't want diplodia next year.** Choose hybrids with better resistance. Avoid planting corn into fields in 2010 that had high rates of diplodia in 2009. Bury corn residue as much as possible in fields with heavy infestation. Foliar fungicides have little effect.
- **Your fall to-do list may include** control of winter annual weeds, and if you need some quick guidelines to save time, IL weed specialist Aaron Hager says consider these:
 - 1) the warmer the winter weather, the more weed growth, compared to northern Cornbelt.
 - 2) If soil residual activity is needed, apply early, if not, wait for weeds to begin growing.
 - 3) Ensure that you know what weeds are growing and use effective herbicides for them.
 - 4) Even with a soil residual herbicide applied now, the field may not be clean next spring.
 - 5) When winter annuals are eliminated, some summer annuals emerge sooner than usual.
 - 6) Do not expect to prevent waterhemp next spring by using a fall applied herbicide.
 - 7) Fall applications allow higher rates which may control glyphosate tolerant weeds.
- **Kill a chickweed, kill a cutworm.** That's the essence of recommendations of OH entomologists, who say a weed free seedbed in the spring will reduce the locations for moths to lay cutworm eggs, particularly on chickweed. They are urging a fall application of herbicides to eradicate weeds and the potential for early spring homes for cutworms.
- **Your combine is your friend,** but sometimes friends spread things we don't appreciate and combines will spread weed seeds and fungal molds, says IL plant pathologist Vince Davis. He says, "if at all possible," combine weedy patches last to quarantine seeds, and the same with moldy areas of soybean fields. If it is not possible, ensure the combine is as clean as possible before moving onto fields that have not been impacted by problems.
- **Conditions are ripe** for Phomopsis seed rot in soybeans, particularly because of harvest delays from wet weather. It is a fungal disease resulting in chalky white, shriveled, shrunken soybeans. OH plant pathologist Anne Dorrance says seed may be infected and not show symptoms, but will die when put through germination tests now. However some of the fungi will die during storage and germination rates may be higher later. She says seed with levels of infection less than 20-25% can be managed with Fludioxonil.
- **Pork is popular,** believe MO livestock economists Glenn Grimes and Ron Plain, who say, "The demand for pork at the consumer level was up 3.9% for January-August. For this period consumer demand for beef was down 2%, broiler down 3.4% and turkey was up 5.6% compared to the same period in 2008." Feeder pig prices are spiraling upward.

Cornbelt Update (formerly *Extension Update*) is e-mailed on Friday to selected subscribers and is also on the Internet at www.farmgate.uiuc.edu . E-mail comments to: Stu Ellis at shellis@illinois.edu .