



News Release

Cooperating with Colorado Department of Agriculture
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CROP PRODUCTION - MAY 2012

COLORADO HIGHLIGHTS

Winter wheat production in Colorado, based on conditions as of May 1, 2012, is forecast at 92.25 million bushels according to the Colorado Agricultural Statistics Service. This forecast is 18 percent above last year's production of 78.00 million bushels but 13 percent below the winter wheat crop produced two years ago. Acreage for harvest, estimated at 2.25 million acres, is 250,000 acres more than a year ago. Average yield is forecast at 41.0 bushels per acre, up 2.0 bushels per acre from last year's yield, but 4.0 bushels per acre below the record high yield of 45.0 set in 2010. This year's crop was planted under mostly favorable conditions resulting in good stands going into winter dormancy. After a dry, but mild winter, the crop retains most of its potential. Adequate to short soil moisture supplies exist in most growing areas. Final yield will largely be determined by the combination of moisture and temperature conditions during May and June.

Hay stocks on Colorado farms and ranches as of May 1, 2012 totaled 230,000 tons, down 49 percent from stocks of 450,000 tons on hand last year. This is the lowest May inventory level in Colorado since 1996. Although slightly more hay was produced in 2011 than the previous year above average demand from neighboring states due to extreme drought reduced inventory and set record high prices received for hay.

UNITED STATES HIGHLIGHTS

Production of winter wheat is forecast at 1.69 billion bushels, up 13 percent from 2011. Based on May 1 conditions, the United States yield is forecast at 47.6 bushels per acre, up 1.4 bushels from last year. Expected grain area totals 35.6 million acres, up 10 percent from last year. As of May 1, sixty-four percent of the winter wheat crop in the 18 major producing States was rated in good to excellent condition, 30 points above the same week in 2011, and heading had reached 54 percent, 30 points ahead of the 5-year average.

The combination of a mild winter and spring, paired with timely precipitation, resulted in beneficial growing conditions in the Great Plains States. Precipitation this spring not only aided the winter wheat crop, but also improved pasture and hay fields, leading cattle producers to harvest wheat acreage for grain instead of hay. Current crop conditions have improved from last year in all major Hard Red Winter (HRW) producing states except Montana and South Dakota. As of May 1, the percent of crop rated good to excellent in Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas was 27 points or more higher than last year, contributing to forecasted yield increases for those States.

Crop conditions were varied in several of the Soft Red Winter (SRW) producing States due to cooler than normal spring temperatures. Yields are forecasted to be down in the Coastal Plains States and the Southeast, where many States set record yields in 2011. However, yields are expected to be up from last year in much of the Corn Belt and the Northeast.

Warmer temperatures and adequate moisture in the Pacific Northwest left growers optimistic after a predominantly cool start to the spring growing season. As of May 1, crop conditions reported as good to excellent were unchanged in Idaho, down 8 points in Oregon, while up 18 points in Washington compared to last year. Yields are forecast to be down from last year in Oregon and Washington but up in Idaho.

Production of Durum wheat in Arizona and California is forecast at a collective 26.3 million bushels, up 28 percent from the previous year. Due to warm spring weather in California, crop development advanced ahead of normal. If realized, Arizona and California's yield of 115.0 bushels per acre will be record highs.

All hay stored on farms May 1, 2012 totaled 21.4 million tons, down 4 percent from a year ago. Disappearance from December 1, 2011 - May 1, 2012 totaled 69.3 million tons, compared with 79.9 million tons for the same period a year ago. This is the smallest disappearance since 1985.

Compared with last year, hay stocks as a percent of production increased across much of the Northern Tier and in many eastern States. Mild temperatures coupled with limited snowpack left many pastures and ranges accessible to livestock herds for longer periods of time during the winter allowing producers to feed less hay. Similarly, beneficial rainfall throughout much of the spring and summer boosted pasture growth in many Atlantic Coast States, delaying the need for supplemental feedstuffs as winter approached.

Elsewhere, on-farm stocks declined from last year in a number Great Plains States, as prolonged drought conditions hampered pasture growth and forced many livestock producers to feed an increased amount of hay to their herds.