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## **USDA predicts a little less corn, fewer soybeans than expected**

**By Stewart Doan**

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In its Prospective Plantings report released this morning, The U.S. Department of Agriculture said the nation's farmers intend to plant a little less corn in 2009 than they did in '08 and a lot fewer soybean acres than market-watchers anticipated.

Corn growers intend to plant 85.0 million acres of corn, down 1 percent from last year, USDA said, as lower corn prices and unstable input costs are discouraging some growers from planting corn. If realized, this will be the second consecutive year-over-year decrease but will still be the third largest acreage since 1949. While expected acreage is down from last year in many states, producers in the 10 major corn-producing States (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) collectively intend to plant 66.3 million acres, up slightly from the 66.1 million acres planted last year.

USDA said soybean producers intend to plant 76.0 million acres, up slightly from last year. If realized, the U.S. planted area would be the largest on record. Acreage increases of 100,000 acres or more are expected in Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Ohio.

Area planted to spring wheat is expected to total 13.3 million acres, down 6 percent from 2008, while the expected Durum planted area is 2.45 million acres, down 10 percent from the previous year.

Cotton plantings are expected to total 8.81 million acres, 7 percent below last year and the lowest since 1983. According to USDA, growers intend to decrease planted area in all States except Georgia, Kansas, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Record low acreage is expected in Louisiana and Mississippi.