



USDA Crop Production report for 2009 breaks records – and dispels ‘food vs fuel’ concerns

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, Jan. 12 – U.S. farmers produced the largest corn and soybean crops on record in 2009, according to the Crop Production 2009 Summary released Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Corn production is 13.2 billion bushels, 1 percent above the previous record of 13 billion bushels set in 2007, and 9 percent higher than 2008. Corn yields reached an all-time high in 2009 at 165.2 bushels per acre, eclipsing the previous record of 160.3 bushels per acre set in 2004. Planted area, at 86.5 million acres, is the second highest since 1949, behind 2007’s 93.5 million acres.

The 2009 soybean crop broke records for planted and harvested area as well as for yield and production. Soybean production totaled 3.36 billion bushels, up 13 percent from 2008 and up 5 percent from the previous record set in 2006. The average yield per acre is 44 bushels, up .9 bushels from the previous record set in 2005. Farmers nationwide planted a total of 77.5 million soybean acres and harvested 76.4 million acres in 2009, both up 2 percent from the previous record set last year.

NASS estimates 2009 rice production at 220 million hundredweight, up 8 percent from 2008. Planted area is up 5 percent from the previous year, to 3.14 million acres, while harvested area is up 4 percent to 3.1 million acres. The average yield for all U.S. rice is estimated at 7,085 pounds per acre, which is 239 pounds above the 2008 yield.

Grain sorghum production, at 383 million bushels, is down 19 percent from 2008. Sorghum yields, at 69.4 bushels per acre, are down 4.4 bushels from last year. Planted area totaled 6.63 million acres, the third lowest on record, while harvested area is 5.52 million acres, down 24 percent from 2008.

All cotton production is down 3 percent from the previous year, at 12.4 million 480-pound bales. Yield is estimated at 774 pounds per acre for 2009, down 39 pounds from last year. Harvested area, at 7.69 million acres, is up 2 percent from 2008.

The Crop Production 2009 Summary is available online at www.nass.usda.gov, or in pdf format for the 92-page report at www.usda.gov/nass/PUBS/TODAYRPT/cropan10.pdf. The report contains year-end acreage, yield and production estimates for grains and hay; oilseeds; cotton, tobacco and sugar; dry beans, peas and lentils; and potatoes and miscellaneous crops.

Reacting to the report, Renewable Fuels Association President Bob Dinneen said that “The unparalleled productivity of America's farmers continues to amaze even the most skeptical of critics. Despite unfavorable weather conditions from start to finish, farmers produced considerably more corn than the food, feed, and fuel markets are demanding. Such gains in productivity undermine any claims that U.S. biofuel production will require new lands in other nations to come into production.”

Dinneen said the USDA report shows that “There can be no question that American farmers have both the capability and the can-do attitude to feed the world while simultaneously helping reduce our nation’s reliance on imported oil.” He also pointed out that the record 2009 corn crop was produced on 7 million less acres than were required to produce the second-largest crop on record (13.0 billion bushels) in 2007 – and that “Despite poor planting conditions, a cool, wet growing season, and an abysmal harvest that still sees corn standing in fields, American farmers shattered records for both yield per acre and total production.”

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