

## Planting Conditions for 2014

Wheat planting conditions across Kansas tell an unusual story as Western Kansas farmers are excited about moisture and many Central Kansas farmers sit on the sideline praying for rain. After a long period of drought, producers in the Western region of the state will be planting into some of the best conditions they have seen in a long time. Wheat farmers across the rest of the state are still battling the weather and preparing fields to drill.

For the first time in several years, Western Kansas wheat producers are planting into moisture. The recent rain has given some farmers restored hope after losses from drought. Jeanne Falk-Jones, multi-county agronomy specialist for the Northwest Extension Office believes this may lead to an increase in the number of wheat acres that are planted this year.

"We have been blessed with rain and we actually have moisture to be planting into which has not been the case in previous years. Our producers are very excited about the improved planting conditions and hope that the weather will continue to fulfill the crop throughout the rest of its lifecycle," Falk-Jones said.

While the recent moisture has provided a better potential seed bed for farmers to drill into, the moisture profile is still very bleak. In the Sept. 23 USDA Kansas Crop Condition report, Northwest Kansas topsoil moisture measured 63 percent adequate while the subsoil moisture measured 88 percent short to very short. In order to sustain a successful crop, more rain will be necessary.

It has been three years since Southwest Kansas has had a good wheat crop. However this year the area is currently experiencing the best wheat planting conditions seen for an extended period of time. Joe Liebrant, Grant County extension agent reported that nearly 50 percent of planting is completed in this area, and producers are optimistic as there is moisture in both the top and sub soils. Weather has been the biggest challenge for producers in this area and while the planting conditions are positive, a successful crop will depend on weather conditions.

"The conditions are as good as they have been to plant wheat for the last few years," said Liebrant.

Planting across the Central part of the state is about 5 percent complete as producers are just starting to get underway. With very little recent moisture many farmers have voiced concern about seed beds that are hard, clotty and dry. Other challenges presenting producers in this area are weeds and volunteer wheat, especially for no-till operations. Wheat streak mosaic was an issue in last year's crop and volunteer wheat and weeds must be eliminated before planting in order to prevent disease.

Many South Central producers missed out on rain again and are preparing to plant into dry soil. Following the same procedure as the past few years of drought, producers are anticipated to wait until after the Hessian fly-free date to begin planting.

After two years of record breaking yields, Southeastern Kansas producers are expected to increase the number of acres planted into wheat. Although planting in this area is not yet in full swing Josh Coltrain, extension agent out of Girard estimates a rise in wheat planting.

"As good as wheat has done and as much of a struggle we have had with other crops, I think wheat has proved a viable option for producers in this area," said Coltrain.

An abundance of volunteer wheat threatened Southeast Kansas last year and producers will be focusing on controlling weeds and volunteer wheat before planting begins.

The 2014 Kansas wheat crop is around 13 percent planted according to a report released by the USDA Sept. 23. Wheat planting across Kansas is expected to be complete by the middle of November.