



ILLINOIS FARM AND FOOD OUTLOOK

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Urbana, Illinois 61801

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1978 CORN AND WHEAT YIELDS INDICATED

ON JULY 11, THE USDA RELEASED ITS FIRST ESTIMATE of the size of the 1978 U.S. corn and spring wheat crops. The production estimates are based on harvested acreage estimates released on June 30 and crop conditions as of July 1.

CORN. The 1978 corn crop is estimated at slightly over 6.1 billion bushels, 3.3 percent smaller than last year's record harvest. The average yield for 1978 is estimated at 90.1 bushels per acre, compared with 90.8 bushels last year and the record of 97 bushels.

In Illinois, the 1978 crop is expected to total 1.09 billion bushels, down from last year's harvest of 1.15 billion bushels. The reduction comes from a smaller planted acreage and an estimated yield of 102 bushels per acre, a decline of 3 bushels from 1977.

Of the major corn-producing states, only Iowa, North Carolina, and Georgia are expected to have larger crops than a year ago. Iowa's average yield is placed at 100 bushels per acre, an increase of 12 bushels over 1977, while yields in Minnesota are expected to average 88 bushels, down 12 bushels from last year.

WHEAT. The report reduced the USDA's June 1 estimate of winter wheat production by 31 million bushels, a decline of 2 percent. Total wheat production for 1978 is placed at 1.8 billion bushels, 11 percent below 1977. The spring wheat crop is expected to total 525 million bushels, up from 499 million bushels.

The winter wheat crop in Illinois is estimated at 35.1 million bushels, 48 percent less than last year. The average wheat yield for the state is now estimated at 37 bushels per acre compared with last year's 43 bushels.

SOYBEANS. Although 1978 soybean production was not estimated in the July report, the corn yield estimate may give some indication of the August soybean estimate. In the past three years, the July corn yield estimate has ranged from 3.25 to 3.33 times as large as the August soybean estimate, averaging 3.3 times as large. If a similar relationship holds in 1978, the August soybean yield estimate could range from 27.1 to 27.7 bushels per acre. Based on the June 30 estimate of harvested acreage, a yield of 27.3 bushels per acre would result in 1978 production about equal to this year's output.

IMPLICATIONS. The corn yield estimate and resulting crop size are larger than earlier estimates by private forecasters. Most forecasters had placed yields at 87 to 88 bushels per acre.

It should be noted that final yield estimates have historically varied substantially from the July 1 estimate. In the past three years, the final yield estimate was above the July estimate once and below twice. The average difference was about 3 bushels per acre.

Growing conditions for the next three to four weeks and the timing of the first killing frost will determine actual yields.

The USDA will make monthly revisions in its corn crop estimate. The first soybean yield estimate and the first revision in corn yield and planted acreage estimates are due to be released on August 10.

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