

Crops continue to struggle as parts of Wisconsin see extreme drought

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 12, 2023

Farmers in the state continue to grapple with persistent dry conditions as portions of Wisconsin are now experiencing extreme drought.

While the USDA's latest crop progress report notes sporadic rain in western Wisconsin and elsewhere have helped some, much of the state continues to see "poor crop and pasture conditions" due to the dry weather.

The report from the federal agency's National Agricultural Statistics Service, which covers the past week, shows topsoil moisture has improved slightly. But crop growth has begun to lag in some areas, with soybean progress in particular falling behind last year and the five-year average rate.

In an interview yesterday, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation President Kevin Krentz said some parts of the state are getting enough rain to get by, but others are "really hurting for any amount of rain" they can get.

"From the time we planted the crop, anything that was planted in late May really came out of the ground inconsistently," he told WisBusiness.com. "Some of the seed sat there for upwards of 30 days before it germinated and sprouted out of the ground. So that heavily affected the crop across the state."

During the past week, high temperatures "sucked a lot of moisture out of the air, and out of that crop," with farmers observing corn plants "curling up" to protect themselves, Krentz explained. He added the dry environment will impact this year's crop yields.

"Those crops that have emerged out of the ground at vastly different times will definitely affect the yield, will definitely affect the quality, because it will mature at a different time," he said. "So harvest could be very tricky in timing that to get the best quality as possible."

The National Integrated Drought Information System shows 5.5 million Wisconsin

residents are now living in areas of drought, marking an 8.2 percent increase since last week.

Meanwhile, about one-fourth of the state is in a state of severe drought, the NIDIS website shows. Apart from a small section near the state's northernmost point, the rest of that area covers much of south central Wisconsin, and all of the state's southeastern and southwestern regions.

One area of extreme drought is centered around Dane County, covering about 2.7 percent of the state. Another 65 percent of the state is in a state of moderate drought, and 7.3 percent is abnormally dry.

Still, Krentz noted farmers "could still be saved" if significant rainfall occurs over the next month or so.

"The tassels are coming on the corn, the buds are coming on the soybeans ... So all of those crops, it's extremely important over the next couple of weeks as the yield factor will be determined," he said.

See the USDA report:

<https://www.wisbusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/WI-Crop-Progress-07-10-23.pdf>

See the NIDIS map here: <https://www.drought.gov/states/wisconsin>

See an earlier related story:

<https://www.wisbusiness.com/2023/dry-conditions-impacting-crop-growth-in-wisconsin/>

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