



Kansas wheat harvest underway

WICHITA (AP) — Kansas farmers were finally able to get into their fields to harvest winter wheat over the weekend as the ground dried out ahead of the next wave of storms.

But the Kansas wheat harvest still lags well behind normal averages and farmers are scrambling to get this season's high-priced crop safely into the bin.

Just 6 percent of the wheat crop has now been harvested in the state, the National Agricultural Statistics Service reported Monday. In a normal year, 36 percent would have been cut by this late in the season.

At elevators as far north as Salina, the grain industry was getting its first hard look at the quality of the 2008 crop. Top quality wheat typically has test weights of 60 pounds per bushel or better.

One of the few places in the state where wheat harvest has been anywhere near normal this year is in Kiowa, where 3.3 million bushels of wheat had been taken in as of Monday.

"We're not done, but we are sure on the downhill side," said Alan Meyers, general manager of OK Co-op Grain Co. in Kiowa. The harvest in the Kiowa area is about 85 percent finished.

Farmers in the Kiowa area mostly escaped the downpours that had stalled harvest elsewhere in the state, but even a couple of rains early last week made a noticeable dent in their test weights.

Industry trade group, Kansas Wheat, reported Sunday that harvest has reached as just far north of Salina in central Kansas. But the group says progress has languished in the eastern and western parts

“There are some who still feel it will go a little higher.”
Alan Meyers,
Kiowa co-op manager on the price of wheat

of the state.

The rush to get the crop in before the next wave of storms hits was palpable since each passing rain deteriorates grain quality.

Loss already was showing up in places like Fowler, where the local elevator noted that test weights before the rain showers suspended harvest last week had been averaging 61 pounds per bushel. But now the average is 58 pounds per bushel.

As of Sunday, about 15 percent of the wheat around Fowler had been harvested, with yields averaging between 30 and 50 bushels per acre.

Monday's crop weather report from NASS chronicled some of the impact statewide as crop conditions as ripe wheat sat uncut for days in sodden fields. About 24 percent of the wheat crop was in very poor to poor condition.

The rest of it was faring somewhat bet-

ter: 36 percent rated fair, 34 percent rated good and 6 percent rated excellent, NASS said in its weekly crop update.

About 150,000 bushels of wheat were also taken in over the weekend at the Right Co-op in Wright with harvest beginning in earnest on Saturday. Test weights were running 60 pounds per bushel.

Fueling the usual harvest rush this season are record crop and input prices as combines roll across fields.

In Kiowa, the cash wheat price at the elevator was \$8.35 a bushel on Monday, Meyers said, adding that about 60 percent of growers in Kiowa are immediately selling their wheat crop.

"There are some who still feel it will go a little higher," Meyers said. "So they are holding it."

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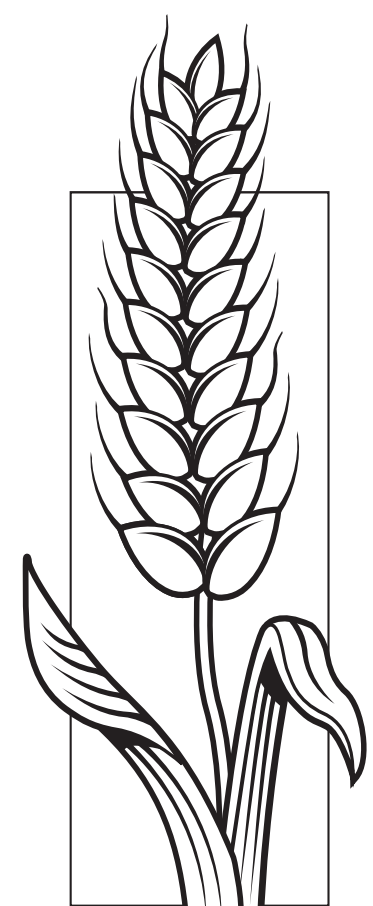


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