



CWC Wheat Bulletin

May 27, 2010

Impact of Weather on California Wheat Crop - As you all know, California has experienced unusual weather during the current growing season, so we requested comments from around the state to assess the likely impact of the weather on the timing of the harvest and the crop quality and yield. Here is what we heard, from north to south:

J.W. Cope, Handler Commissioner (Alternate), Tulare County: "At times it seems the winter of 2010 continues in Siskiyou and Modoc county. We have experienced sub freezing temperatures and damaging winds that desiccated an already cold and water stressed emerging crop. Several fields have been replanted after some of the more damaging wind events. Most of the spring planted cereals were or will be planted 2 to 3 weeks late due to uncertainties over irrigation supply and the untimely occurrence of rain and snow showers. Few of the spring cereals are beyond the 5 leaf stage as our daily high temperatures have rarely exceeded 55 degrees. Our planted acreage will be reduced and will reflect a noticeable switch from wheat to barley. We are projected to receive reduced irrigation deliveries which are subject to further curtailment if protected species prescribed lake and river flow levels are jeopardized. Much of the available irrigation water will be first allocated to perceived higher value potato, onion, alfalfa and mint crops. At this time, it is very difficult to judge the quality or quantity of our crop."

Lee Jackson, At-Large Commissioner: "Cool May temperatures are delaying crop maturity in the Central Valley and lengthening the grain-fill period. On balance, this should result in higher yields. Extra moisture at this time of the season, however, is not desirable. It prolongs the activity of pathogens such as the stripe rust fungus and, if significant amounts of rain occur and cooler than normal temperatures persist, sprout damage (and low falling numbers) could result. The Central Valley crop looks about 1-2 weeks late this season."

Alan Freese, Commissioner (Alternate), Solano County: "It is hard to tell, but my gut feeling is that we will be later harvesting, and we will start to see some weeds come up in the grain, as it opens up do to maturing. I do believe that the harvest will be later. As far as sprouting in the head, I don't think that the wheat in this area is mature enough for that to happen, and probably have not had enough late rain to cause a problem."

Jeremy Freitas, Commissioner, Fresno County: "I think weather issues have not had a significant effect on yields and most growers in my district are expecting good yields and good quality. Many growers are finishing their last irrigation and have used less water this year than in years past due to the cool temperatures and late rains. The wind has had had some affect as far as lodging or laying the wheat down which might cause minor problems with growers who were planning on stripper harvesting. Other than a few minor issues growers seem optimistic about 2010 wheat results."

Mike Holdsworth, Handler Commissioner, Visalia: "Cool damp spring usually tends to help yields (if disease not present) but might possibly lower proteins. Increase in acres of Joaquin should help off set proteins of some of lower protein varieties in past few yrs. Falling #s shouldn't be a problem in SSJV maybe in NSJV or Sac valley, HWW varieties tend to have a greater problem with falling #s sprout damage. Generally speaking harvest will be behind. Probably wk of 6/7 before we get really going. Some dryland trying to start this week, but rain in forecast for next couple of days."

Roy Motter, Commissioner, Imperial County North: "Yields on wheat so far have been above normal. I think that the cool weather in April and May have helped yields. (5 to 10 percent?) The only quality issue we seem to be having is lower than normal protein. This is due in part to higher yields, high fertilizer prices, low wheat price and to some degree to the rains that we had early in the season where growers were unable to water run fertilizer. We have no other quality issues here in the desert, as we have not had any rain since early in the season. Due to the cooler weather harvest just got started in the last week, which is delayed a week or two. This delay will have no impact."

Ron Rubin, Commissioner (Alternate), Imperial County North: "Our durum wheat crop started strong last week. Yields are above average while protein was below average through last week. This week protein has come up to average. I suspect the 3 inches of rain we had in January did not allow normal fertilizer applications in the irrigation water had something to do with the lower protein. The market is based on feed prices so much of the non-contracted crop will go to the feed yards."

Francisco Maciel, SRA II, UCE, El Centro: "This year's weather conditions didn't affect much to my plots in fact the first irrigation on plant, we had to skip it. The rainy days on January 18,19 and 21 made delay the irrigation for about two weeks. Other than that, the weather worked on our side this time. The yields this year will be better than last year. I am still taking weight data on my samples. I will have the yields and test weight information ready in two more weeks since I harvested my plots on May 17th 2010."