



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 221
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
Week of October 17, 2005**

**Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793**

Fall Harvest

JEFFERSON CITY – Fall is typically an exciting time for Missouri farmers, as they reap the rewards of another growing season. 2005, however, has been anything but a typical year for the 170,000 Missourians who make their living from farming.

Much of the state suffered through a prolonged drought during much of the summer, although rains in mid-August helped break the drought and benefited late developing crops and pastures. Missouri corn fields were particularly impacted by the hot, dry summer, with yields projected to be 35-percent below last year's record crop. Corn production in Missouri is forecast at 304 million bushels, with an expected yield of 103 bushels per acre, down 59 bushels from last year.

Those late summer rains were beneficial to fields planted later, especially soybeans, which responded to the additional moisture. Soybean production is forecast at 167-million bushels, a drop of about 25-percent from last year's record crop. The state yield is forecast at 33 bushels per acre, down 12 bushels from last year.

Grain sorghum forecasts are also down this year from the record crop of 2004. The latest forecast of 8.9-million bushels is down 43-percent from last year.

Bad weather is affecting farmers in other ways, as well. Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute reports farmers are paying more to harvest their crops due to higher fuel prices, but they are getting paid less for those crops at market due to higher shipping costs. FAPRI attributes some of the higher fuel costs to hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

On the other hand, bad news for grain farmers could be good news for livestock farmers. Missouri pastures suffered during the hot, dry summer, forcing some livestock farmers to begin feeding grain much earlier than they would normally. The low prices corn producers are getting at market now will make feed less expensive, helping the state's feeder cattle market.

FAPRI is warning that production costs for farmers could remain high next year. In addition to higher fuel costs, farmers also are paying higher prices for fertilizer and might experience shortages next spring. That's because natural gas is the biggest cost in producing anhydrous ammonia, which is the source of most nitrogen fertilizer. With the recent rise in natural gas prices, some nitrogen plants in the U.S. have ceased operating, increasing the dependence on imported nitrogen.

So, as you and your family sit down to dinner tonight, think about the people who produced the food you are about to eat, and perhaps say a prayer for their welfare.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.