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**A Weekly Column for the
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Missouri Crop Harvest Set To Begin

Unconditionally sunny, warm, and dryer weather ushered in the beginning of fall in our state. This time of year traditionally begins crop harvest season and countless hours of field work for farmers, with corn and soybeans as our state's most abundant crops.

With the end of the 2008 crop production season quickly approaching for our state, many farmers are wondering how Missouri's active summer weather conditions will play a role in harvesting their crops this season. After excessive spring rains caused considerable planting delays and severe flooding, dry weather conditions consumed much of our state from mid-July through mid-August. Hurricane season brought the wet weather back to Missouri after Hurricane Ike's landfall in eastern Texas, which brought flooding to Missouri, Illinois, western Indiana, and southern Michigan. Some rainfall totals even reached in excess of six inches within a 24-hour period.

However, according to the National Agriculture Statistics Service's (NASS) Missouri Field Office, our state's corn crop seems to be on track to exceed expectations, despite already being behind schedule. The field office recently released crop progress reports indicating the corn crop in Missouri is faring well.

In the last week of September, NASS reported that the Northeast, West Central, and East Central districts (each of these districts contain some of the counties in the 28th Senate District) have an average of 48 percent of corn matured compared to 97 percent the same time last year. On average, 35 percent of the crop in these areas was rated in fair condition, while 39 percent of the crop was rated in good condition, and 5.6 percent of the crop was rated in excellent condition.

Statewide, NASS reports that 17 percent of corn is mature, more than two weeks behind last year and three weeks behind normal. Overall, the corn's condition is rated 33 percent fair, 40 percent good, and 10 percent excellent.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) crop production report last month, our country's farmers are expected to harvest the second largest corn crop on record. From a yield standpoint,

total U.S. corn production is estimated at 12.3 billion bushels, which is down 6 percent from last year's record, but up 17 percent from 2006.

The USDA's report also reflected that soybean production is on its way to be the country's fourth largest in the crop's history. National soybean production is expected to produce 2.97 billion bushels, up 15 percent from last year but down 7 percent from the 2006 record. Yields are projected to average 40.5 bushels per acre, down 0.7 bushels from 2007; however, the harvested area is forecasted to be 17 percent higher than in 2007.

At the end of September, 95 percent of the soybean crop had bloomed in Missouri with soybean conditions rated as 36 percent fair, 36 percent good, and 8 percent excellent. In the Northeast, West Central, and East Central districts, 38 percent of the crop rated in fair condition, while 38 percent of the crop rated in good condition, and 6.6 percent of the crop rated in excellent condition, on average.

As farmers gear up for harvest, those in the farming community know most of the work isn't done just in the fields. The [Missouri Department of Agriculture](http://www.mda.mo.gov) recently announced that the 2009 Building Our American Communities (BOAC) Grant Program applications are available online at www.mda.mo.gov. This program offers 18 grants each to Missouri 4-H clubs and FFA chapters up to \$500 for groups or individuals who present proposals benefiting an agricultural community as well as promoting community development.

Projects may include improvements to existing facilities, grounds, or buildings that are used by various groups or organizations in the applicant's community. Examples of 2008 BOAC grant projects include landscape and beautification projects for historic and public buildings, safety and convenience improvements for local fairgrounds, and replacement and renovations of damaged and aged publicly used structures.

For more information on our state's crop progress and conditions, visit the NASS website at www.nass.usda.gov. Or if you would like more information on the BOAC Grant Program, visit the Missouri Department of Agriculture's website at www.mda.mo.gov. And if you have questions or comments about any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.mo.gov.

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

