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N.C. corn crop continues to suffer from drought

Yield of 70 bushels per acre is lowest in 10 years

RALEIGH – North Carolina's corn crop continues to suffer the effects of drought, with farmers seeing the lowest yield in 10 years, according to a federal crop report released today.

Corn yield is forecast at 70 bushels per acre, a 5-bushel drop since September. The yield is 30 percent less than 2007's drought-reduced yield of 100 bushels per acre. Production is forecast to be 58.1 million bushels, 43 percent less than last year.

The state has asked U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer to declare 59 counties disaster areas because of drought-related crop losses. A federal disaster declaration would authorize the Farm Service Agency to make low interest emergency credit loans available to eligible producers.

"Skyrocketing fertilizer and fuel costs have made good yields even more important to farmers' bottom line, and unfortunately for corn growers, the yields aren't where they need to be," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "North Carolinians see the rain we've had this summer and think the drought is over, but that isn't the case. We still have drought conditions in some areas, while others have had too much rain for crops."

Too much rain in some areas has adversely affected the state's tobacco crop. The yield for flue-cured tobacco is forecast at 2,250 pounds per acre, 20 pounds less than 2007. Production is forecast to be 387 million pounds, 3 percent more than last year.

Statewide, other crops are faring better than a year ago. Soybean yield is forecast to be 32 bushels per acre, up 45 percent from 2007. Production is forecast to total 53.1 million bushels, 75 percent more than last year.

Peanut yield is forecast to be 3,200 pounds per acre, up 300 pounds from last year. Production is forecast at 313.6 million pounds, a 20 percent increase over last year.

Hay production also is up this year. Yield is forecast at 2.3 tons per acre, almost 1 ton above last year's yield. Production is forecast at 1.82 million tons, up 76 percent over 2007.

The numbers appear in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's October crop report. The report is online at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/PUBS/TODAYRPT/crop1008.pdf>.

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