

Could be 'perfect' crop year for Gothenburg area farmers.

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Corn plants, beaded with moisture, glisten in the morning sun.

Robust soybean vegetation colors a field green and gold as far as the eye can see.

Parts of Nebraska and much of the rest of the Corn Belt have been devastated by hail and floods while Gothenburg and area farmers have remained relatively unscathed.

"We have escaped most of the weather," said Home Agency manager Dan Tinlin whose business insures the crops of many producers.

Tinlin predicts an excellent harvest if bad weather doesn't get in the way between now and harvest.

"And strange things can happen," he added.

If the weather holds, statewide predictions are in the 160-bushel-per-acre range. But around Gothenburg, and in other areas of Dawson County, some fields are expected to yield 200 bushels or more.

In Nebraska, the 2009 corn crop broke all records, since recording started in 1900, with 178-bushel yields on average.

For corn, soybean and alfalfa producer Scott Brown, who farms about seven miles northeast of

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town, the growing season has generally been good.

Hail in early July damaged one of his fields which opened the crop to leaf disease.

Brown thinks his corn crop will be average while soybeans and alfalfa fall into the above-average range in contrast to last year when hail damaged corn and soybean crops that were "looking terrific."

Because of high corn and soybean prices, the producer said he spent more than usual on insurance this year to protect his crops as well as additional dollars on inputs such as herbicide and nutrients.

But bumper crops can mean higher input prices next spring.

"This year, input prices were decent but next year end users like seed corn dealers and others want a piece of the pie," Brown said. "Next year could be a challenge."

This fall, he predicts his soybeans to yield about 70 bushels per acre compared to last year when non-damaged fields produced an average of 80 bushels.

State officials expect average soybean yields of 55 bushels per acre.

Asked if he would describe the 2011 harvest as perfect, Brown said last year's crops—before hail—were shaping up as the perfect crop.

"Everything was looking phenomenal until it hailed before the corn tasseled," he said. "It was a train wreck."

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Still, new technology and improved chemicals and farming practices contribute to higher yields.

Brown agreed, noting that he thinks higher yields are possible through technology such as global positioning systems. And soil sampling can pinpoint problem areas in fields.

"Yields aren't increasing on every acre but more in problem areas," he said.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636