

2012 irrigated corn, soybean yields defy drought

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LINCOLN—Nebraska irrigated corn and soybean yields reached their second-highest averages in history in drought-plagued 2012, but yields for their dryland counterparts were at their lowest averages in about 30 years.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistics Service reported state average yields of corn and soybeans of 190 bushels per acre and 59 bushels per acre, respectively, under irrigation—second only to 2009 for corn and 2011 for soybean.

Under dryland conditions, average yields were 61 bushels per acre for corn and 25 bushels per acre for soybean, lowest since 1983 for the former and '84 for the latter.

“The low dryland yields were not surprising given that the rainfall during the crop growing season did not exceed 10 inches at most locations, which is about half of the rain amount in a typical year,” said Patricio Grassini, research associate professor in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s agronomy and horticulture department.

The 2012 irrigated corn yield average was 10 bushels above the 2011 yield and five bushels above the 2005-11 average. Highest county level averages were reported in south central Nebraska, ranging from 205 to 220, according to NASS.

It was a very different story for dryland corn. That 59 bushel/acre average was 74 bushels below the 2011 average and 68 bushels below the 2005-11 average.

The highest county-level average dryland corn yields, in the range of 80 to 100 bushels/acre were reported in counties on the east central and east south edges of the state and in two counties in south central Nebraska.

Nebraska statewide irrigated soybean yield in 2012 of 60.7 bushels/acre was only 0.4 bushel below the 2011 irrigated soybean average and 2 bushels above the past seven-year average (2005-2011). The highest county-level average irrigated soybean yields, in the range of 66 to 70

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bushels, were reported for counties in south central Nebraska.

For dryland soybean, the statewide average yield of 25 bushels/acre was 23 bushels below the 2011 average, and 20 bushels below the past seven-year average (2005-2011). The highest county-level average dryland soybean yields, in the range of 32 to 38 bu/ac, were reported for counties in the east central and east south edges of the state and for two counties in south central Nebraska.