



June 2022

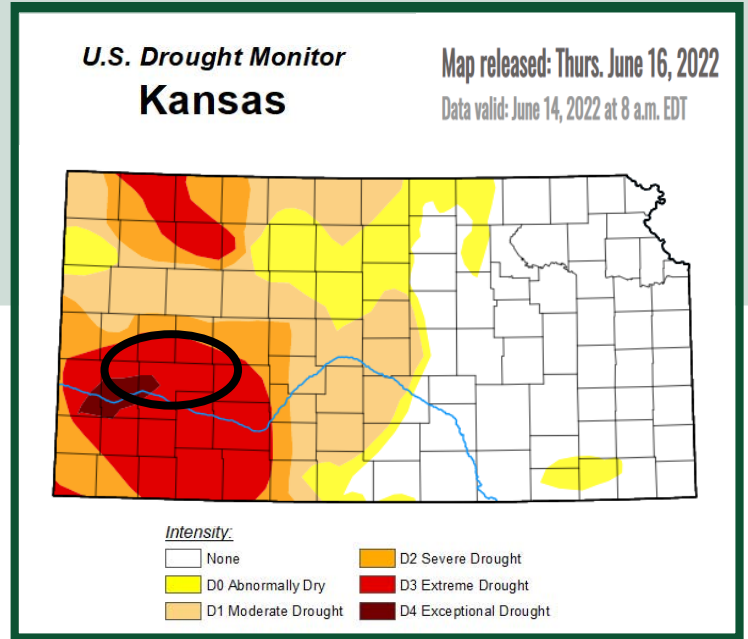
## Greetings Friends & Landowners

We hope you and your family are doing well! Speaking of family, the VFF team recently joined forces with Brian's and Myles's Uncle, Skip Crist. Brian and Myles spent many Sunday afternoons on their Mother's family farm 15 miles south of VFF's current headquarters. Their Grandpa Raymond Crist's influence on their Dad, Larry, was critical in the early years of VFF, and it was not lost on Brian and Myles. While there are certainly economic advantages to merging operations, Brian and Myles are most proud of continuing the Crist family tradition while sharing the economic opportunity with the rest of the VFF team!



## Planters travel from Maine to California

The only bright side to dry weather is that field operations are quite efficient. Only slowed a few days by rain, each planter traveled over 2,700 miles this planting season. That's like planting continuously from the tip of Maine to San Diego! Equally impressive is that the sprayer team covered the same area twice. Needless to say, we are extremely proud of our entire VFF team!



## The drought intensifies

It's summertime in Western Kansas! We've had endless days of 100+ degree heat with relentless wind. Since our last newsletter in April, the Palmer Drought Severity Index has intensified from a D2 (severe) to a D3-D4 (extreme-exceptional) drought classification across our farm (see above map). The last rain at our headquarters in excess of 1" occurred on June 2nd, 2021, over 1-year ago!



Amazingly, our corn planted in April has a near perfect stand and has grown to over 1 foot tall with almost no rain. This is only possible with no-till farming techniques. The picture on the left demonstrates two years of crop residue protecting the soil from heat and wind.





VFF enjoyed an above average wheat harvest in NE Texas with yields ranging from 40-90 bu per acre. In Kansas, all the continuous wheat was destroyed. Yields on the summer fallow wheat ranged from 10-40 bu per acre. It simply wasn't a good year for wheat in Kansas.



### **Drought takes the continuous wheat**

With good moisture and high commodity prices last year, VFF planted every open acre to corn or milo in 2021, leaving no acres fallow (unplanted) to accumulate soil moisture. In most areas, this strategy produced strong yields. The trade-off was that 2022 wheat had to be planted on limited soil moisture following 2021 corn. While this "continuous" wheat looked good through April, it finally gave up the ghost in May from lack of precipitation.

With a never give up attitude, we planted milo into the failed wheat acres. As shown in the picture to the right, the leftover 2021 corn stalks as well as the failed 2022 wheat stubble both serve as mulch for the newly emerging milo plants. Our fingers are crossed the drought will break in July. You never know in Western Kansas. Last year, we had 12" of rain in May. The only guarantee is that when rain finally comes, we'll be ready!



Milo planted into the failed wheat



### **Emergency Relief Program (ERP) provides assistance**

The USDA announced a new program in May that covers crop losses from qualifying disaster events in 2020 and 2021. Drought is considered a qualifying disaster for areas that experience a D2 (severe) category drought for eight consecutive weeks or the drought reaches D3 (extreme drought) or higher. Payments are based on crop insurance losses incurred each year. There are no indications that 2022 losses will be covered by the ERP, but we are hopeful.

### **Drought cuts triticale yields in half, increasing demand for fall forage**

Above, irrigated triticale is swathed, windrowed, and chopped. The intensive harvesting process leaves little crop residue behind, making forage a poor choice for no-till dryland acres where crop residue is critical. Irrigated corn acres that can be chopped for corn silage will be in high demand this fall.