



November 2022

Greetings Friends & Landowners:

We often quip about the similarities between farming and football, like how Mother Nature whipped our tails with a relentless drought that dried up our offense and forced a defensive battle. It's more fun to think of this crop season as a rebuilding year, rather than a failure.

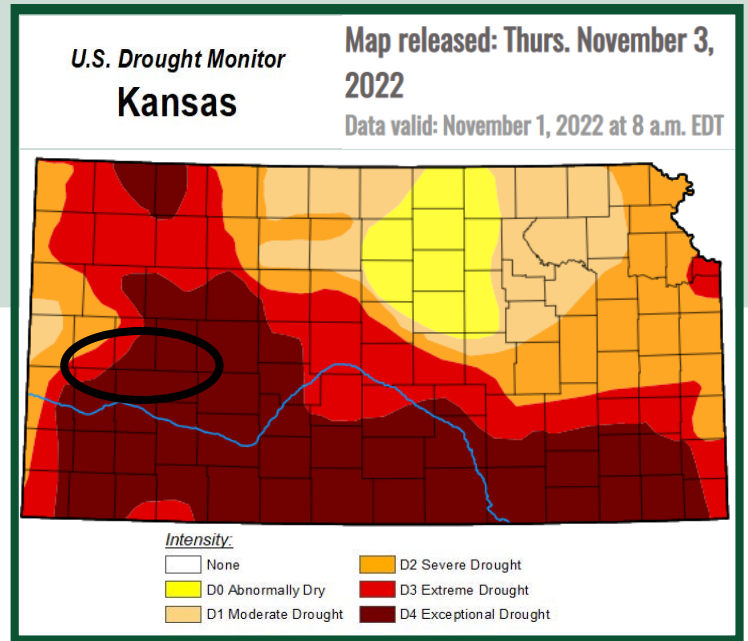
We are proud of how our team responded to the many challenges. After our continuous wheat couldn't finish the season, we didn't give up. It took some extra effort and hustle, but we planted all the failed wheat acres back to milo, which proved to be a great defensive strategy. The milo left us in excellent field position with abundant crop residue to protect the soil from erosion.

Our best highlights of the season came from Wichita County where the right timing and right rotation yielded 80-100 bu/ac corn and milo. This glimmer of hope has kept us excited for next year!



Football provides a much needed diversion!

The best medicine for the mental anguish of harvesting a poor crop is having some good football to look forward to on the weekends. For many of us, it starts on Friday night with the Scott City Beavers, who finished with an 8-2 record. They made it to the 2nd round of the state playoffs before losing by 1 point. Our VFF team had 1 junior, 3 sophomores, and 1 freshman playing for the Beavers this year. Much like the crop season, we can't wait for next year!



The drought spreads and intensifies!

Since our June update, the drought has spread to include all of Kansas, with most of Southwest Kansas in the D4 (exceptional) category. The black circle on the map depicts the majority of VFF's farm in Kansas.

We can attest to a BIG difference in yields between the D2, D3, and D4 levels of drought on our farm. Generally speaking, our yields in the D2 (severe) area were 50-70 bu/ac better than in the D4 (exceptional) area. Our best yields were clearly on the west side of the farm.

This is the second consecutive year that we've received more rainfall on the west side of the farm, and it's contrary to normal. Typically, rainfall increases by 1 inch for every 20 miles from west to east across Kansas.

We have recorded 10.01 inches of precipitation at the VFF headquarters since last November, which is 50% of our normal expected rainfall. To put that in perspective, the lowest recorded total since 1906 in Scott City was 10.15 inches in 1956. (Source: The Scott County Record)



Blow dirt
from a
neighboring
fallow field
with no
stand of
wheat.



Corn harvest by the numbers:

It was a tough year to grow dryland corn in Western Kansas. Only 38% of our planted acres were harvested. Yields ranged from 0 to 96.1 bu/ac, depending on location and crop rotation. Overall, the harvested acres averaged 33.9 bu/ac (50% of normal), while those same bushels divided by the planted acres averaged 14.7 bu/ac (19% of normal). By crop rotation, the harvested corn planted into wheat stubble averaged 40.8 bu/ac, while the corn planted into milo stubble yielded 27.4 bu/ac.

Our irrigated corn also suffered from the heat and drought this summer. With the majority of our irrigated corn acres double-cropped behind triticale, we had limited soil moisture available for the corn at planting. With no help from Mother Nature, our irrigated corn silage yields were only 68.8% of normal.



Blowing dirt and fires!

While our farming practices have improved significantly since the infamous 1930s, it could still get ugly this winter. It is drier than any single year during the *Dirty 30s*.

Despite poor stands of wheat, the only places on our fields trying to blow are on the ends where extra equipment traffic broke loose the crop residue. A strip-chisel is fixing those spots from blowing. Our bigger concern is fire.

Unfortunately, the crop residue that protects the soil from wind erosion is also a great conduit for fire. While green wheat fields naturally act as fire breaks, few exist in these terribly dry conditions.

Milo harvest by the numbers:

We harvested 90% of our planted acres of dryland milo in 2022. Milo yields ranged from 0 to 104 bu/ac, with an average of 26.9 bu/ac across all planted acres (32% of normal). By crop rotation, the average yields were 34.6 bu/ac for milo planted into wheat stubble, 17.6 bu/ac into failed wheat, and 11.3 bu/ac into milo stubble. For reference, our worst milo year in the past 25 years was 2011, with an average yield of 5.2 bu/ac, compared to our best in 2015, with an average of 134.5 bu/ac. Our overall 25-year milo average yield is 84.5 bu/ac.

The silver lining this year is the high commodity prices, which also bolsters our safety net provided by crop insurance. The average cash milo price during harvest at the local elevators was \$7.50/bu. That's one of the best milo prices we've seen in the last 25 years!