

Despite drought, grain report indicates high quality corn crop

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The overall quality of the 2012 U.S. corn crop is high and improves upon last year's very good marks across a range of test factors, according to the U.S. Grains Council's Corn Harvest Quality Report 2012/13.

Total U.S. corn production fell in 2012 due to the worst drought in decades, but despite the drought, this year's crop showed a year-over-year improvement in average test weight, protein levels and density, as well as lower moisture and BCFM than the 2011 crop. The full report is now available at www.grains.org.

This is the second year for the council's Harvest Report. The Harvest Report assesses the quality of the U.S. crop as it is delivered from farms to local elevators, the first step in entering international marketing channels. It will be followed in April 2013 by the second annual Corn Export Cargo Quality Report, which assesses quality at the point of export.

The council produces the reports so global importers will have access to reliable and comparable data from year to year, with samples being gathered and tested using transparent and consistent methods.

"With an increasingly competitive global market, the availability of accurate information is in the long-term best interest of U.S. farmers, exporters and international buyers," said Erick Erickson, USGC director of global strategies.

"We received a tremendously positive response to the inaugural reports from international buyers, so certainly there is a need for this type of information."

For the harvest quality report, samples of U.S. corn were gathered from 12 states that combined are the source for 99 percent of U.S. corn exports. Tests conducted on the samples cover grading factors like test weight, physical factors such as stress cracks and other items such as moisture, protein starch, oil and mycotoxins.

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“The samples tested demonstrate that this year’s U.S. corn crop, while smaller due to the drought, is of outstanding quality overall,” Erickson said.

Data indicates the average test weight for the 2012/13 crop was 58.8 pounds per bushel, an increase over 2011 and more than two pounds per bushel above the grade limit for No. 1 U.S. corn.

At the same time, broken corn and foreign material (BCFM) was lower, as were the number of damaged kernels. Moisture, at 15.3 percent, was also lower than last year.

“Protein numbers were generally higher, starch was marginally lower and oil content was unchanged,” Erickson said.

The frequency of stress cracks, which indicate the relative susceptibility of kernels to break up during handling, are up marginally (from three percent last year to four percent this year), which could be an indicator that the crop will be more susceptible to breakage during handling, information that may turn up in the Corn Export Cargo Quality Report in the spring.

Erickson noted that the council’s Corn Harvest Quality Report 2012-13 only assesses the quality of the current U.S. corn harvest as it enters merchandising channels, as quality can be affected by further handling, blending, storage conditions and other downstream factors.

The full report is available at the U.S. Grains Council website, www.grains.org , and from the council’s international offices.

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