

Crop Conditions as of September 11, 2008

In the last two weeks, the weather has been mainly cool and damp, with rain showers and heavy morning dew. These conditions, coupled with late crop maturity have caused major delays in harvest progress. Provincially, 21 per cent of the 2008 crop is in the bin, compared to eight per cent two weeks ago, and 35-40 per cent at this time, in most years. Some crops are being taken off damp and tough, and need to be dried. Frost has occurred in many areas across the province and has likely caused some quality deterioration, particularly for late maturing crops. Overall, provincial yields are estimated to be similar to their 10-year averages for dry peas, spring cereals and winter wheat, and above average for oilseeds.

Crop harvest this year has been off to a slow start and is about 10 days behind normal. Harvest is most advanced in the Southern Region at 30 per cent complete, followed by the Peace Region at 25 per cent complete (see Table 1). For the North East Region and Central Region, harvest progress is 17 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, while the North West Region lags behind with eight per cent. Estimates of provincial harvest progress by crop are: dry peas 79 per cent, barley 23 per cent, durum wheat 21 per cent, spring wheat 20 per cent, canola 15 per cent, and oats eight per cent. For winter wheat and fall rye, combining is about 85 per cent complete. Shown in Table 2 is the regional percentage of crops in the swath.

With respect to quality of crops already harvested, grade estimates are average for barley and canola, and above average for spring wheat and durum wheat. Preliminary results of early samples (for 2008 crops in the bin) indicate that 85 per cent of hard red spring wheat, and 90 per cent of durum wheat could be graded as No.1 or No.2. About 18 per cent of barley could be of malt quality. For canola, over 80 per cent could be graded as No.1. Some light bushel weights for spring cereals are being reported. Weather conditions remain the key factor affecting the quality of crops still in the field.

The second cut haying operation in Alberta is estimated at 60 per cent complete on dryland, and 95 per cent complete under irrigation. Yields for dryland hay are below average, while for hay under irrigation, yields are average. Overall, hay quality ranges mostly from fair to good. Pasture conditions in the province are rated as 38 per cent poor, 38 per cent fair, 23 per cent good, and one per cent excellent. In some areas, cattle are grazing hay fields.

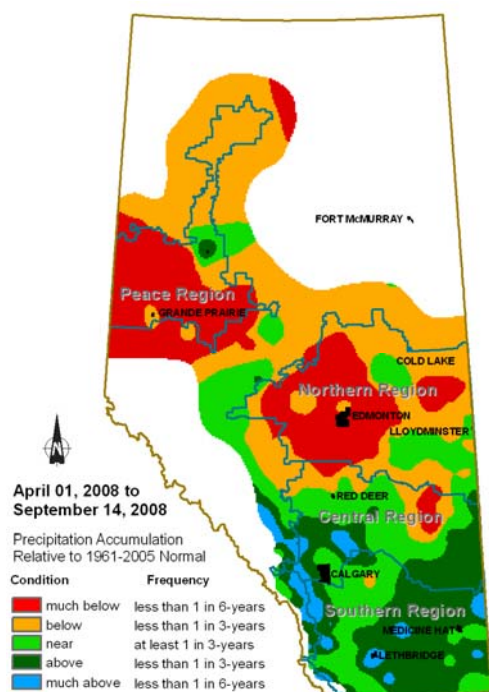


Table 1: Alberta Crop Harvest Progress, 2008

	South	Central	N. East	N. West	Peace	Alberta
Spring Wheat	25%	14%	15%	6%	33%	20%
Durum Wheat	23%	13%	15%	6%	33%	21%
Oats	18%	8%	7%	4%	11%	8%
Barley	35%	15%	20%	13%	23%	23%
Canola	26%	14%	12%	3%	19%	15%
Dry Peas	77%	68%	90%	86%	77%	79%
All Crops	30%	15%	17%	8%	25%	21%

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Table 2: Percentage of Alberta Crops in the Swath, 2008

	South	Central	N. East	N. West	Peace	Alberta
Spring Wheat	22%	20%	23%	21%	4%	19%
Durum Wheat	22%	23%	23%	21%	4%	21%
Oats	17%	23%	32%	19%	4%	20%
Barley	18%	20%	34%	35%	4%	23%
Canola	44%	50%	71%	83%	61%	63%
Dry Peas	2%	3%	4%	4%	9%	3%
All Crops	22%	26%	40%	44%	28%	31%

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Our thanks to Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, staff of AFSC and the Alberta Ag-Info Centre for their partnership and contribution to the Alberta Crop Reporting Program.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

The 2008 Alberta Crop Report Series continues to provide summaries for the following five regions:

Region One: Southern (Strathmore, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Foremost)

- Due to rain showers and heavy morning dew, crop harvest has been progressing slowly during the last two weeks, and is estimated at 30 per cent complete for major cereals and oilseeds. For specialty crops, estimates of harvest progress are 35 per cent for lentils, 27 per cent for chickpeas, 20 per cent for mustard seeds, and 14 per cent for potatoes. Producers have started undercutting dry beans, while sugar beets harvest is expected to begin in early October. Frost has occurred in western areas of the region. Crop damage from sawfly and gophers is also reported.
- Overall, yield estimates are above average for major crops, and average to above average for specialty crops. With respect to quality, grade estimates for major crops are generally favorable, based on preliminary results of early samples.
- The second cut hay under irrigation has come off in good quality. Pasture conditions are reported as 34 per cent poor, 30 per cent fair, 33 per cent good, and three per cent excellent.

Region Two: Central (Rimbey, Airdrie, Coronation, Oyen)

- The recent cool, damp weather conditions, coupled with late crop maturity, have caused major delays in crop harvest this year. About 15 per cent of the 2008 crop is in the bin, with another 26 per cent in the swath. The recent frost has likely caused some quality deterioration. Yield estimates range from average for cereals to above average for canola, while crop quality is expected to be below average. In some areas, grasshopper counts have exceeded threshold levels.
- The second cut haying operation is about 45 per cent complete, with quality ranging mostly from fair to good. Pasture conditions are rated as 21 per cent poor, 52 per cent fair and 27 per cent good.

Region Three: North East (Smoky Lake, Vermilion, Camrose, Provost)

- Crop harvest has been progressing slowly during the last two weeks, due to cool temperatures and rain showers. It is estimated that 17 per cent of the 2008 crop is in the bin and 40 per cent is in the swath. Most producers in the region expect to have average to above average yields for major cereals and oilseeds. Similarly, crop quality ranges from average to above average, based on preliminary results of early samples.
- The second cut haying operation is estimated at 85 per cent complete, with quality mostly fair to good. Pasture conditions are reported as 42 per cent poor, 51 per cent fair and seven per cent good.

Region Four: North West (Barrhead, Edmonton, Leduc, Drayton Valley, Athabasca)

- With only eight per cent of the 2008 crop in the bin, crop harvest in the region is off to a slow start this year. The delayed harvest can be attributed to the recent cool, damp weather conditions and late crop maturity. Some grains are being taken off damp and tough, and need to be dried. Overall, yield estimates are average for cereals and above average for oilseeds. As to quality, grade estimates for major crops range from average to above average, based on preliminary results of early samples. Additionally, frost and hailstorms have caused some damage in northern parts of the region, particularly for late maturing crops.
- The second cut haying operation is about 45 per cent complete, with below average yields. Pasture conditions are rated as 46 per cent poor, 32 per cent fair and 22 per cent good.

Region Five: Peace River (Fairview, Falher, Grande Prairie, Valleyview)

- Weather conditions during the last two weeks have been mainly cool and damp, with some frost reported. Some crops are being taken off with a high moisture content, resulting in the need to use grain dryers. Overall, harvest is estimated at 25 per cent complete. Due to the dry conditions experienced in summer, crop yields in the southern and central areas of the region are generally below average, with some producers, particularly those along the B.C. border, reporting well below average yields. In the northern parts of the region, adequate moisture reserves for most of the crop season have resulted in some excellent crops. Overall, yields for the major crops are significantly below average, while the quality of crops already harvested is about average.
- The second cut haying operation is about two-thirds complete, with yields lower than in most years. Pasture conditions are reported as 53 per cent poor, 23 per cent fair and 24 per cent good.

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