Small Grains in 2006

Introduction

The following tables present results from barley and wheat varietal tests conducted in Virginia in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Small-grain cultivar performance tests are conducted each year in Virginia by the Virginia Tech Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences and the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. The tests provide information to assist Virginia Cooperative Extension agents in formulating cultivar recommendations for small-grain producers and to companies developing cultivars and/or marketing seed within the state. Yield data are given for individual locations and across locations and years; yield and other performance characteristics are averaged over the number of locations indicated. Performance of a given variety often varies widely over locations and years which makes multiple location-year averages a more reliable indication of expected performance than data from a single year or location. Details about management practices for barley and wheat are listed for each experimental location.

The Season

The 2005-2006 small-grain crop began with acceptable soil moisture and cool temperatures. Late fall and early winter were very cool. Average temperatures in January were more than seven degrees above the long-term average for that time of year and resulted in a boost in small-grain growth (Figure 1). February was more like winter for the Commonwealth of Virginia than the previous month. Most areas experienced dry conditions in spite of the occasional snow and ice. In fact, precipitation was only 54 percent of the average annual accumulation for February (Figure 2). The small-grain crop was rated 80 percent fair to good. In early spring, dry conditions continued across the commonwealth. Most areas received only light to moderate rain and temperatures were one to three degrees above normal. Continued dry weather resulted in tiller loss in many areas. The average temperature during the month of May was more than four degrees below the long-term average, resulting in very favorable grain filling conditions.

Virginia producers planted an estimated 56,000 acres of barley in 2005-06, 4000 acres less than the previous year. Grain harvest occurred on 80 percent of planted acres. At a projected 86 bushels per acre, yields are one bushel less than the 2005 crop and nine bushels per acre higher than the 74 bushel per acre average of 2003-04. Planted acres for wheat were estimated at 210,000 acres in 2005-06 which was up 30,000 acres from the previous year. Harvested area in 2005-06 was estimated at 170,000 acres, similar to the previous two seasons. Statewide average yield was estimated at 66 bushels per acre, as compared to a statewide average of 63 bushels per acre in 2004-05 and was eight bushels per acre higher than the ten-year average (58 bu/A). If the estimate proves correct, this will be the second highest average yield ever recorded in the commonwealth. Overall wheat production is expected to be over 11 million bushels.