Small Grains in 2007

Introduction
The following tables present results from barley and wheat varietal tests conducted in Virginia in 2005-2007. 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
Planting conditions for the 2006-2007 small-grain crop ranged from acceptable soil moisture to excessively wet in some southeastern counties. Forty-two percent of the small grain-crop was planted by October 29, which was exactly the five-year mean. Rain and unseasonably warm temperatures in early winter favored small-grain development, especially helping later planted stands. 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). Late winter brought unseasonably cool temperatures and dry weather with February and March rainfall at 70 percent of normal (Figure 2). Cold damage and the dry spring resulted in the wheat crop being rated 54 percent good and 27 percent fair.

The “Easter Freeze” resulted in some damage to wheat and was especially hard on barley fields, but the Virginia crop overall fared much better than many of our neighbors. More damage was reported in early-heading cultivars.

Dry conditions at harvest time facilitated a timely harvest with the USDA reporting the wheat harvest 12 percent ahead of normal on July 1. These warm and dry conditions resulted in slightly smaller kernels in most instances. Overall quality of the 2007 crop was good. Test weight averaged 0.27 lb/bu more than the 2006 crop, largely because dry conditions allowed continued harvest without weathering. Grain protein was 0.11 percent higher in 2007 than in 2006, also due to warm and dry conditions during grain fill.

Virginia producers planted an estimated 53,000 acres of barley in 2006-07, 5,000 acres less than the previous year. An estimated 35,000 acres were harvested with an average yield of 73 bushels per acre. This is four bushels per acre less than the long-term average of 2000-2006. Planted acres for wheat were estimated at 190,000 acres in 2006-07 which was up 40,000 acres from the previous year and 22,000 acres more than the 2000-2006 mean. The harvested area in 2006-07 was estimated at 185,000 acres, up 12 percent over the previous two seasons. The statewide average yield was estimated at 67 bushels per acre, seven bushels per acre higher than the five-year average (60 bushels per acre). Overall wheat production is expected to be near 12.4 million bushels.