Introduction

The following tables present results from barley and wheat varietal tests conducted in Virginia in 2013-2015. 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 Service 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 in parenthesis near the column heading. 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

Temperatures and rainfall in September and October were generally near the 30-year means and mostly conducive for wheat seeding, though some areas were delayed due to excess moisture. By November 10, 57 and 93% of wheat and barley acres were seeded compared with the 5-yr average of 68 and 95%. In late November soil moisture was mostly adequate and wheat was rated 76% good and 21% fair, while barley was 66% good and 27% fair. December was mild for most areas of the commonwealth and rainfall of 2-3 inches was widespread. Temperatures in early January and much of February and early March were colder than the long term average which definitely reduced winter growth and tillering in many fields. Mostly due to this delayed development only 64 and 52% of wheat and barley acres, respectively, were rated good or excellent. By early April, conditions and crop ratings improved statewide, however development was 5-10 days behind most years. Widespread rains and cool weather persisted in most of the state through mid-April. Freeze damage from earlier cold nights was observed in some fields, especially in the southern counties, but little yield loss was experienced. Early May brought much warmer weather and less rainfall. While fusarium head scab was reported in some areas, the overall occurrence was low due to the general absence of rain during flowering. By May 24, wheat heading was reported in 85% of fields, compared to the 5-year average of 95% by this date. Timely harvested wheat generally had good test weight and grain quality, however many areas experienced frequent rains prior to harvest causing reduction in quality and an increase in dockage. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services estimates that Virginia farmers will harvest 16 million bushels of winter wheat during 2015 which is 10 percent less than the previous year. Average wheat yield was estimated to be 71.0 bushels per acre, up 3.0 bushels from 2014.
Figure 1. 2014-15 and 30-yr mean cumulative growing season precipitation for Virginia.

Figure 2. Growing season daily average temperature, 2014-15 and 30-yr mean.