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World Agricultural Production

European Union: Estimated Corn Yield Lowest Since 2003 Drought

The USDA forecasts 2007/08 European Union (EU-27) corn production at 48.4 million tons, 6.8 million below last month's estimate and 9.2 million below the five-year average.

Harvested area is forecast at 8.4 million hectares, 0.2 million below last month and 0.3 million below last year. Yield is estimated at 5.76 tons per hectare, the lowest projection since the damaging heat and dryness of the 2003/04 season.

Severe drought and extremely high temperatures prevailed in southern and central areas of the European continent during spring and summer, resulting in large significant soil-moisture deficits. Europe recorded one of its warmest springs in history, followed by record-setting heat during June and July. The dryness hampered corn planting, and the heat greatly accelerated plant development.

Analysts from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service observed evidence of stress to corn in southeastern Europe during July crop travel. The excessive July heat resulted in poor or variable pollination, which will result in fewer kernels and lower yields.

Although the non-irrigated corn crop in southeastern European has been devastated by drought – with output in Bulgaria and Romania forecast to drop by as much as 50 percent – the two leading corn-producing countries in the EU largely escaped the heat and dryness. France, the leading corn producer, experienced favorable weather with frequent rainfall and moderate temperatures throughout the season. In Italy, the second-highest producer, corn is largely irrigated and less dependent on seasonal precipitation. *(For additional information, contact Bryan Purcell at 202-690-0138.)*

