dg-harvest

Harvest delays linger; IFB plans meetings to address concerns

BY DANIEL GRANT

 How extensive are harvest delays this season brought on by a multitude of weather challenges?

 Christmas gifts will be opened before a number of farmers wrap up harvest in the weeks ahead.

 “We’ve still got soybeans to harvest. We’re down to 50 acres,” Illinois Farm Bureau president Richard Guebert Jr. said Wednesday. “It’s been tough on this farm because of all the weather events and torrential rains we’ve gotten on numerous occasions.

 “This is probably one of the most difficult years in my 40-year farming career,” Guebert noted. “I thought ’93 was tough, but this is probably tougher because of the duration and widespread nature (of the weather challenges).”

 USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) extended its weekly crop progress reports until Dec. 9 this season to account for the late harvest.

 But 8% of the corn crop, more than 1 billion bushels, remained in the field as of the last NASS report for the season. The first weekly crop progress report for 2020 will be released April 6.

 Farmers in Illinois and Indiana harvested 96% of corn as of last week while 95% of the crop was in the bin in Iowa.

 Elsewhere, corn harvest was just 43% complete in North Dakota, 74% complete in Michigan and Wisconsin and 83% complete in South Dakota as of Dec. 9.

 NASS didn’t update soybean harvest progress last week, but 4% of that crop (about 137 million bushels) remained in the field as of Dec. 2.

 Brent Pollard, a Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau member, hired a custom harvester last week to cut soybeans after the bean head on his combine broke. Beans in his area still tested 17 to 20% moisture as of last week.

 “There’s good sized docks on them. It’s so wet,” Pollard said. “I can’t remember seeing so many beans in the field (this late in the year) in my lifetime.”

 Moisture issues also plagued the corn crop, along with sloppy field conditions.

 “We’re getting into late-planted stuff and some of it didn’t black layer,” Pollard said. “Some is coming out of the field at 30% moisture, which makes drying an issue. We sit all day because there’s not enough drying capacity.”

 IFB leaders, including county Farm Bureau presidents, met at the annual meeting to discuss harvest issues and frustrations with NASS crop reporting procedures this season.

 “It’s no secret a lot of our farmers are frustrated with what’s occurred going all the way back to the June report,” said Mark Gebhards, IFB executive director of governmental affairs and commodities. “NASS recently reported we’re 100% finished with soybean harvest in Illinois. That is not true.”

 In response, IFB plans to embark on a series of meetings around the state during the winter to gain input from members about their specific concerns regarding NASS crop reporting procedures.

 “We want to get input from folks around the state to see what their concerns are,” Gebhards said. “I know USDA is cognizant of this. This is really about a process.”

 IFB plans to use the input from members to develop a plan it can take to USDA to address crop reporting concerns. END