



Press Release: June 9, 2011

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### **Wet spring for barley producers**

Flooding and excess precipitation are causing problems for some North American barley producers this year. North Dakota and Montana, as well as the Prairie Provinces in southern Canada, have had floods and heavy spring rains following a long winter with heavy and late snow cover.

As of June 5, USDA-NASS reports that 80 percent of U.S. barley is planted which is 19 percentage points behind the five year average. Fifty-five percent of the crop is reported to be emerged which compares to the five year average value of 89 percent. In North Dakota 58 percent of intended barley acres are planted with only 31 percent emerged which is 42 and 60 percentage points behind planted and emerged last year at this time. Montana is also behind normal with 85 percent planted as compared to 99 percent at this time last year, and 58 percent emerged which compares to 88 percent last year. Idaho, Minnesota and Washington all have 94 percent or more acreage planted.

The wet conditions can also lead to problems with the quality of the crop. Doyle Lentz, North Dakota Barley Council Chair, says there are concerns that the crop in the ground was "mudded in" due to unfavorable conditions. Lentz states that, in many places in North Dakota, "if it's not flooded, it's too wet to plant; roads have been washed out or are impassable and growers can't get to the fields". He said that he has heard industry contractors are encouraging growers to plant if at all possible, and are maintaining lines of communication to help growers in any way.

Al Slater, director of Midwest Barley Operations for Busch Agriculture Research, Inc. hopes that North Dakota and Montana growers will still try to plant some of their barley crop. "Nobody knows what the season will bring" states Slater, citing that favorable weather patterns, and the fact that barley is a short season crop, could result in good quality and yields.

The crop in Yellowstone and Big Horn Counties in Montana and Northern Wyoming looks good, according to Dave Dougherty of MillerCoors in Huntley, MT. However, some of the crop in that area has been under water due to flooding, some irrigation systems are compromised by flood washouts, and the humid conditions are creating non-typical weather problems such as severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Flooding and wet conditions are also causing infrastructure and field access problems in northeastern Montana and mountain snowmelt is still expected to add significant amounts of water to already high rivers statewide.

Wet conditions extend into the Canadian provinces. Fields still wet after late and heavy snow cover in western Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan have been impacted by heavy spring rains. Rainfall of 3 to 4 or more inches were reported in the Souris and Brandon areas of Manitoba the last week in May. Little field work has been done in these areas.

Flooding from mountain snowmelt is also a possible concern in Idaho, although not likely to impact the barley crop, of which 71 percent is deemed good to excellent. However, reports from University of Idaho researchers indicate that the late spring has delayed their spring work in some locations.