

**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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WILLIAMS COUNTY**

2011 Growing Season Weather Summary

According to Adnan Akyuz and Barbara Mullins, both of the NDSU Department of Soil Science, the 2011 growing season (the period from April through September) for North Dakota can simply be characterized as “wetter” than normal compared to the 30 year average from 1981 to 2010. No one will argue that statement, even those retired farm producers who have lived a lifetime in this area. I have yet to come upon a farmer who remembers so many prevent-plant acres as we had this year.

Here are some of the numbers which support Akyuz and Mullins. The state average precipitation during the 2011 growing season was 16.94 inches which was the 12th wettest growing season among the past 117 years since 1895. Historical records indicate that the state average precipitation values range between the lowest value of 5.62 inches and the highest value of 20.33 inches occurred in 1936 and 1941 respectively. Data collected at the Williston Research Center show the 2011 growing season to be the 11th wettest over the 117 years. However, the amount of precipitation was quite varied in Divide, Williams and McKenzie counties. Parts of Divide County received a high of 170 percent of normal rainfall while the Williston area had a low of 125 percent of normal.

Likewise, the state average temperature during the 2011 growing season was 58.3 degrees F, which was the coldest growing season among the past 117 years. Even though the state average growing season temperature appears to be cooler than normal, it can be characterized by a much cooler spring followed by a warmer summer and much warmer fall compared to the normal values. Historical state average growing season temperature values in North Dakota range between 62.5 and 52.7 in 1988 and 1907 respectively.

In 2011, the Williston Research Center reported 130 consecutive days between the last and first day of frost. This was the 48th longest period since 1894. The period was from May 10 to September 18. Sites at Bismarck, Fargo and Cavalier reported the longest (145) continuous frost free days.

The first killing frost occurred on September 18 in most of the northwestern parts of the state. This basically ended development for crops planted the end of June. The next hard freeze occurred one month later thus making the fall season very pleasant for everyone.

The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) has predicted a cooler than normal winter and spring. If the forecast comes true, late planting during the start of the coming growing season should be considered. The CPC gives equal chance of having a wetter or dryer than normal winter and spring seasons. However, it acknowledges that we are still under the influence of La Niña episode. There is a 69 percent probability that LA Niña will persist into winter and 51 percent chance that it will persist into April. There is only a 5 percent chance for development of El Niño conditions by April.

By February we will have a more accurate weather outlook for the 2012 planting and growing seasons. During the Wheat Show Tanja Fransen of the National Weather Service (Glasgow office) has consented to give us a current update.