

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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DOLE SAYS BLEAK WINTER WHEAT ESTIMATE "CONFIRMS OUR WORST FEARS"-- CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT FEDERAL AID WILL BE NEEDED; BUDGET CONFERENCE CLEARS DOLE WINTER WHEAT RELIEF AMENDMENT.

WASHINGTON -- USDA's first official forecast of this year's winter wheat harvest "confirms our worst fears", Senator Bob Dole (R-Ks) said today.

USDA estimated that Kansas would produce only 202.4 million bushels, less than one-half the potential Kansas production and 120 million bushels below last year's reduced level. Nationally, winter wheat production was estimated at the lowest level since 1978 at 1.43 billion bushels. The figure is down 8 percent from last year.

"This bleak forecast for Kansas is as bad as we suspected from our tour of the state in Mid-April. This discouraging news is indisputable evidence that Kansas farmers and ranchers will need a life preserver this year," said Dole. "Senator Kassebaum and I will continue to pressure the administration to do all it can to bring federal relief to Kansas."

Earlier this week, Senator Dole asked Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yuetter to release Conservation Reserve Program acres for haying and grazing to help save foundation herds.

"There was one positive development today, and that is the news that our drought relief amendment for winter wheat has survived the joint House and Senate conference on the budget," Dole said about his provision that extends the 1988 Drought Relief Act to cover 1989 winter wheat. "I will continue to track this critical Kansas ag legislation to make certain it stays in all the way to the President's desk."

USDA's estimate was based on surveys conducted prior to May first. USDA also noted the current harvested-to-planted ratio of 75% is the lowest nationally since 1951. The estimated 34.9 bushel yield would be the lowest since 1978.

Kansas pasture conditions were rated at 47% of normal placing the state in a "severe drought" status. Kansas received only 20% of normal rainfall in April and the accumulated July '88 - April '89 precipitation total is the lowest since 1976. Much of the wheat in central and western Kansas is heading out at 10-14 inches. Nationally, pasture and range feed condition on May 1 for the 48 contiguous States was 68%.

Hay stocks on-farms as of May 1 totaled 17.6 million tons, 36 percent below the May 1 level a year ago and 46% less than the May 1, 1987 quantity held.