

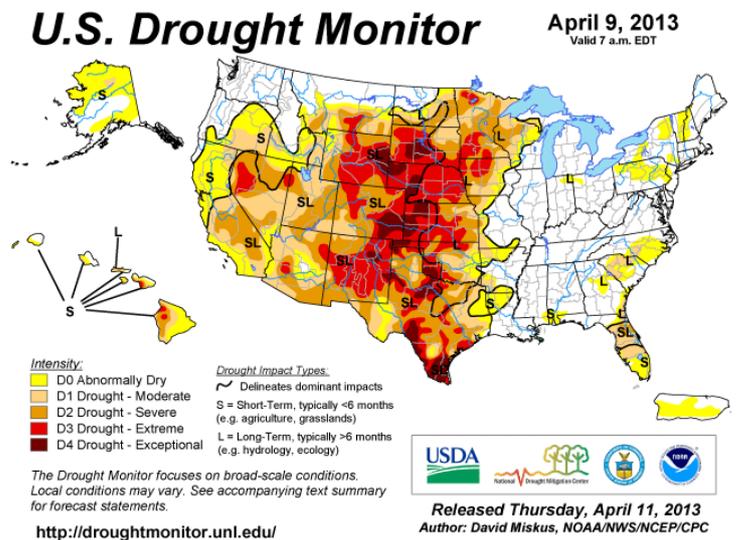


The Chem Gro Crop Watch, Issue #2, 4/17/13

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I guess it is safe to say our drought is over (at least for now). As we drive around the country side and look at our saturated fields with water standing in the low areas and road ditches, it reminds me of similar conditions that we had a year ago. April 25th through the first week of May in 2012 we also had very wet and saturated ground conditions.

Mary Carlisle and I walked many cornfields scouting for Black Cutworm feeding while sinking up to our ankles with mud in V2-V3 tall corn. There were several times when we looked at each other with laughing and puzzled faces wondering why we were even out there while the sound of suction noises from the wet soil was trying to pull off our boots. Who would have thought a year ago that the rain would have shut off in early May?! So here we are today, looking at a miserable 10 day forecast with more rain and below normal temps; wondering when conditions will be fit to plant corn. But, the drought is over for our area (at least for now).



What about the early April planted corn? A few brave souls planted corn around the April 5th-6th time period. Ground conditions were excellent, and the soil temperatures were rising into the mid 50 degrees. Then, Monday April 8th came and it has been miserable weather since. Although the corn had adequate conditions to germinate before the cold rain came (corn seed needs 48 hours of “leave me alone time from mother nature” immediately after planting), I feel that it does not stand a chance to be the best corn on the farm operation for two reasons.

First, the fungicide seed treatment that is on each kernel lasts approximately 3 weeks from my experience. After that time period, the efficacy of disease protection wears down very fast leaving the kernel (a high carbohydrate food source) subjected to many fungal pathogens. It is kind of like putting a piece of bacon on top of your dog’s nose and telling him not to eat it....yeah right. Looking at our cold and wet forecast, it will be all of the 3 weeks and possibly more before the ground conditions improve to not create such a hostile environment on a struggling corn seedling.

Second, soils that are saturated with water will always create a poor environment for seedlings that have not emerged yet. When soils become to the point of being saturated with water, that excessive amount of water displaces valuable oxygen in the soil. The oxygen is needed for germination, and survivability of the seeds. Although cold saturated soils will hold more oxygen than warm saturated soils and water-logged seedlings will survive longer in cold soils, emergence is always erratic. You will see the better drained areas of the field (higher oxygen areas) emerge first with possible strong stands and will

follow in emergence of several days later in the saturated soil types. Reduced stand population and reduced uniformity is pretty much a given. A corn stand needs to emerge 48 hours from the first to last kernel in the field to reach optimum yield potential.

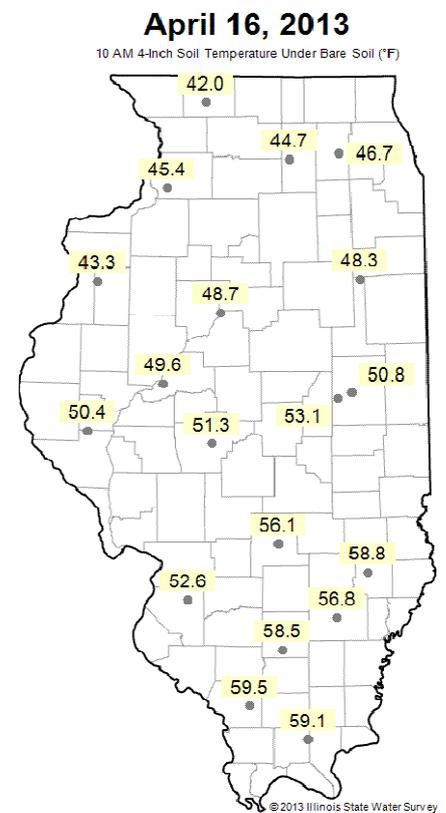
Corn planted April 5th and 6th of this year will not have the ability to reach it's optimum yield potential. My advice is to locate seed to replant. Hopefully there is seed available to replant with! There is a seed corn shortage in the seed industry. There will not be a lot of seed available for replant if there is a wide scale problem this year!



How warm is the soil? As you can see from the map, soil temperatures have not maintained in warmth. Although the calendar slowly slips away with every rainfall and gloomy- cool day; we sometimes feel like we are losing precious time. However, after looking at the soil temperature map; we have not sacrificed an ideal day yet. We need to stop remembering how warm and early last year's planting season was. Last year was a fluke, and for many different reasons.

When conditions return to warm and dry again, it will be challenging for many to hold the course and follow a few guidelines that you already know:

1. Resist the urge to "cheat". I know this is easier said than done, especially now when it will become crunch time when it dries out. We all know that side wall compaction from the corn planter, and field cultivator compaction layers are bad when these actions are performed in wet or "heavy" soils; so I won't give you anymore lectures about that.
2. Should I be thinking about switching my corn hybrids to earlier maturities? I would not change any plans until roughly May 20th. If the weather keeps persisting to be wet after this date, then I would want to change to some earlier maturity hybrids if you had hybrids fuller than 114 day. I would plant all "pre-planned", fully adapted corn hybrids that were developed for our area ranging from 107-113 day clear through the end of May. Over the last 10 years, I have evaluated "out of zone" early maturity hybrids (less than 105 day maturities) in test plots comparing to normal maturity hybrids that are adapted for our region. These "out of zone" early maturity hybrids were bred for areas north of I-80. Although these hybrids always shelled much drier at harvest time, they never economically penciled out due to the excessive yield loss caused by poor disease tolerance, drought tolerance, or both. These hybrids just simply are not bred to withstand our environment that we have in Central Illinois. My point for all of this, if we get towards the end of May, I would not switch my original game plan in hybrid selection to "out of zone" early corn that may cost you more money in the end, despite them being drier at harvest.



That's my 2 cents worth.....the choice and decision is always yours.

Lonne