



NEWS RELEASE
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Great Lakes Grain – 11th Annual Crop Assessment Tour

Final yield and crop quality report for 2020 Crop Assessment Tour

CHATHAM, ON, September 8, 2020 - Great Lakes Grain concluded the annual Crop Assessment Tour, now in its eleventh year. The tour ran from August 24 to September 4 and had the staff from Great Lakes Grain and participating FS Co-operatives from across Ontario, assess **538 corn fields** and **421 soybean fields**.

Each cropping year brings opportunity and challenges—some new and some reoccurring. Perhaps the most significant difference compared to 2019 is the median planting dates for corn and soybeans. In 2019 the median planting date for corn was June 11; in 2020 that date is May 14. For soybeans, the median planting date in 2019 was June 10 compared to 2020 with a median planting date of May 24. To risk overstating the obvious a much earlier start to the planting season in 2020. This early start was not without some unintended outcomes for corn planted late April and early May. Cold soil conditions and cool weather prevailed for the first half of May resulting in some stand loss and has led to some of the lowest plant populations we have recorded in the previous ten years of the tour. It remains to be seen how much ear flex can compensate for missing plants.

Hindsight is always 20/20, and perhaps it was not the year to seed corn deeper than two inches as the weather did not provide a progressive warming trend after planting—in another year maybe a different outcome. It is always good to push the envelope and try new things; however, one thing is for sure—shallow seeding never pays. The later planted corn after May 14 has more uniform plant population.

The number of nutrient deficiencies was not as pronounced this year as in other years. We observed very few comments about nitrogen and potash deficiencies.

We saw very low incidence and severity of foliar leaf disease and ear rots. We did observe some western bean cutworm feeding on some uneven and later planted corn. These fields may be at risk for varying levels of ear rots and the development of DON.

The CHU (crop heat unit) accumulation as of September 5 in the southwestern region of Ontario are sitting at 2921 which is a full six days ahead of a year ago, and four days ahead of the normal 30-year trend line. In corn, this places black layer dates around the end of September to mid-October depending on planting dates and relative maturity of the hybrids. There are several positives in the growing season that support a good average to slightly above average corn yield with appropriate test weights and reasonable harvest moistures—this is in stark contrast to 2019 and is a welcome change. Last year 22% of the corn was in dent stage vs this year as 54%.

The soybean crop will be the crop we talk about the most when we look back on the 2020 season. The soybean crop makes its yield in the back half of the growing season. The weather in late July and August has helped to support what will most likely be a new provincial yield record.

There are fields with challenges. We observed a wide range of rainfall patterns from fields with adequate soil available moisture to fields that were in desperate need of rain. Some fields with weed escapes will need a preharvest burndown. Root rot complexes were easy to spot. Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) is readily detected in some fields. A few observations of potash and more manganese deficiencies were noted. It seemed wherever there were additional abiotic stresses the crop was dropping leaves rapidly. The soybean growth model at DecisionFarm.ca is projecting R8, full maturity, around September 18 to 20, and will be supportive of early wheat planting.

Dale Cowan, Agronomy Strategy Manager and Senior Agronomist at AGRIS and Wanstead Co-operatives stressed, "Even though we are estimating a stellar soybean yield with the incidences of root rots and nutritional issues, it just means there is even more yield being left unrealized in your fields."

Above-average corn and soybean yields are expected in Essex county as early planting gave way to a great start. Essex had areas of more prolonged drought, maybe taking a little out of the corn yields. Soybeans look very promising.

Kent county could make both record corn, and soy yields as plentiful rain and heat prevailed throughout the growing season.

Lambton, Middlesex and Elgin counties had early planting and excellent growing conditions through the summer as well. A droughty period at the end of June may have done some damage to the corn crop in the southwest.

Observations of corn in Norfolk county found that populations were down. That appears to be a result of potential cold germ from seed that was in the ground before or during the snow and cold temperatures in early May. Soybeans have fared much better with robust populations and great pod set. We are expecting large yields for this county.

As we move further north into Brant and surrounding counties, we saw the worst drought-affected crop areas. The sandy, gravel bottom soils missed timely rains. There is evident drought stress in this corn crop. Beans in this region have also been impacted with the drought. Aborted pods will hamper the yield potential for this bean crop.

Oxford county corn was average, but we are expecting a high-yielding bean crop.

A small stretch of southern Perth county missed the rains, and we found crops that will show that when combines hit the field.

Devin Homick, Grain Origination Coach at Great Lakes Grains, said optimistically, "As we moved north from Perth and Waterloo the crop continues to show good yield potential for corn and soybeans. Last year I believe parts of Dufferin and Simcoe counties were the driest areas for FS PARTNERS. This year it is their turn to catch the rains and produce a potential bin-busting crop. I saw the largest yield potential for corn and soybeans in Simcoe county. The staff out doing yield assessments in Wellington, Dufferin, Simcoe, Grey and Bruce counties believe it is the best crop they have seen in the eleven years on tour.

One common theme throughout all the years is the consistency in yield from fields that have complex rotations, drainage, reduced tillage, and adequate and balanced fertility programs. By controlling what we can reduces the risk of yield loss from challenging weather and allows us to optimize yields when weather is favourable.

Don Kabbes, Great Lakes Grain General Manager, states, “the tour allows us to observe crop performance on the farms of our customers, and gain valuable insight into what is working and where the opportunities are for improvement.”

Don continues, “Assessing your yields at this time of year allows you to review your marketing plan in detail. We have seen a soybean rally this past number of weeks and the opportunity to confidently make additional sales at profitable levels is paramount. We normally do not get a late-season rally such as this. Understanding your yield potential allows to market with confidence that you will have the crop to fulfil your obligations. It also allows you to manage additional offers for your crop if this rally continues. Look out further than beyond this year. Planning begins now for next year. The crop tour is a report card of your performance. With every good plan needs a constant review of current performance and have the ability to make course corrections for the future.”

[Great Lakes Grain](#) is a grain marketing partnership between [AGRIS Co-operative Ltd.](#), [GROWMARK, Inc.](#) (including [FS PARTNERS](#), a division of GROWMARK, Inc.) and [Embrun Co-op](#). Great Lakes Grain is one of the largest operators of Ontario country elevators. It represents close to 22 million bushels of storage capacity with total marketing in excess of 50 million bushels. Great Lakes Grain serves farmers out of 27 AGRIS Co-operative, FS PARTNERS and Embrun Co-op branded locations that span from Windsor north to Georgian Bay and to the Ottawa Valley.

Visit us at www.greatlakesgrain.com for more information.

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