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Where Did the Corn Acres Come From?

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture released its Acreage Report on June 30th and estimated planted corn acres for 2011 at 92 million acres. The 92 million acres is a 4 million acre increase – or a 4.5 percent increase – over 2010 acres of 88 million acres. A complete list of acre changes by state is shown in Table 1. In general, states in the western corn-belt have large increase in acres. Somewhat surprisingly, most states in the eastern corn-belt have not lost acres.

Table 1. Change in Planted Corn Acres from 2010 to 2011.

State	Average Acres in 2006 - 2001	Acres in		Change (2011 - 2010 Acres)
		2010	2011	
(Thousand acres)				
Nebraska	8,920	9,150	10,000	850
Iowa	13,420	13,400	14,200	800
South Dakota	4,750	4,550	5,200	650
Minnesota	7,740	7,700	8,100	400
Kansas	4,010	4,850	5,100	250
North Dakota	2,160	2,050	2,300	250
Wisconsin	3,850	3,900	4,150	250
Michigan	2,400	2,400	2,550	150
Arkansas	412	390	500	110
Mississippi	694	750	860	110
Kentucky	1,266	1,340	1,440	100
Missouri	3,020	3,150	3,250	100
Colorado	1,176	1,330	1,400	70
Georgia	375	295	365	70
Idaho	302	320	390	70
Louisiana	540	510	570	60
Tennessee	696	710	770	60
Ohio	3,420	3,450	3,500	50
Pennsylvania	1,366	1,350	1,400	50
California	600	610	640	30
Oklahoma	344	370	400	30
Delaware	175	180	190	10
Maryland	492	500	510	10
New Jersey	84	80	90	10
South Carolina	350	350	360	10
Wyoming	91	90	100	10
Florida	66	60	65	5
Oregon	60	70	75	5
Utah	68	70	75	5
Nevada	4	4	8	4
Massachusetts	18	17	19	2
Maine	28	28	29	1
New Hampshire	15	15	16	1
Alabama	270	270	270	-
Arizona	50	45	45	-
Connecticut	26	26	26	-
Indiana	5,840	5,900	5,900	-
Rhode Island	2	2	2	-
Virginia	492	490	490	-
West Virginia	46	48	47	(1)
Vermont	91	92	90	(2)
Montana	76	80	75	(5)
New Mexico	135	140	135	(5)
New York	1,044	1,050	1,040	(10)
North Carolina	912	910	900	(10)
Washington	174	200	190	(10)
Illinois	12,240	12,600	12,500	(100)
Texas	2,172	2,300	1,950	(350)
United States	86,482	88,192	92,282	4,090

Source: U.S.D.A. National Agricultural Statistical Service.

Of the 4 million acre increase, 60 percent occurs in four states: Nebraska (850,000 acres), Iowa (800,000 acres), South Dakota (650,000 acres), and Minnesota (400,000 acres). These four states are located in the western corn-belt where 2011 planting weather has been generally favorable. There are obvious exceptions to this favorable weather in areas where flooding has occurred; however, flooding has not

resulted in acreage losses causing state acres to decline below 2010 levels.

Eight states have increases of over 100,000 acres and account for 32 percent of the increase in corn acres: Kansas (250,000), North Dakota (250,000), Wisconsin (250,000), Michigan (150,000), Arkansas (110,000), Mississippi (110,000), Kentucky (100,000), and Missouri (100,000). Generally, these states surround the heart of the corn-belt.

Eastern corn-belt states have not lost acres. For example, Ohio has an increase of 50,000 acres and Indiana has the same acres as in 2010. Both of these states have experienced a wet spring, leading to concerns about whether acres would be prevented from planting or shift to soybeans. While shifting may have occurred, changes did not result in a decline in corn acres.

Illinois has a decline in acres. Illinois acres for 2010 are reported at 12,500,000, a decline of 100,000 acres from 2010 levels. While small, Illinois's decrease in acres differs markedly from Iowa's large increase. A wet spring may have contributed to Illinois' decline. Moreover, many Illinois farmers had poor yields on corn-after-corn in 2010, which may have lead farmers to back off from planting corn-after-corn in 2011.

The state with the largest drop in corn acres is Texas (350,000). Texas has experienced a large increase in cotton acres which may contribute to the corn acre decrease. Drought conditions also may contribute to the corn acre decrease.

Two final observations:

1. Western corn-belt farmers appear to have reacted to market signals that project much higher corn returns by planting more corn. It would have been interesting to see if eastern corn-belt farmers would have reacted to the same incentives had spring weather been more conducive to planting. Corn acres may have been higher in the eastern corn-belt had more normal weather occurred, leading to much higher national corn acres than expected.
2. Futures prices for corn fell after the release of the June 30th Acreage Report. Part of this decline may be due to actual corn acres being higher than market expectations. While higher than expected, yesterday's report of 92 million corn acres is the same as made by Joe Glauber for the U.S. Department of Agriculture at the 2011 Agricultural Outlook Conference in February. Even with poor weather in parts of the country, farmers with today's technologies have a remarkable ability to plant crops.