Ag Radio Programs for April 30 - May 6, 2018

Now that it's rained

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A weekend ago and then again the middle of last week we finally got some rain that amounts to something. In the space of a week most of the county receive 3/4 of an inch to a little over an inch. When you are as far behind normal as we are, you'll take anything you can get and it was very needed by the wheat crop and alfalfa fields. If you had applied a pre-emergent residual herbicide treatment, that was enough rain to get the herbicide activated and incorporated. If you had surface applied any fertilizer recently, it was washed into the soil. There were slow soaking rains. Not very much, if any, ran off of fields. This will have given us some good surface moisture in that top 4 to 6 inches so that once you can roll you need to get your corn in the ground. And with May starting tomorrow, once the corn is planted I'd turn right back around and start get the soybeans in the ground as well. Looking at the 15 day forecast is shady at best but we need to be getting crops planted to take advantage of whatever moisture comes along when it comes along! Be extra vigilant about getting any additional burndown herbicides applied. The ground is warming up rapidly and the rain will have cranked up a bunch of seeds just waiting to get going. We're going to have a very compressed spring now. Some things are right on schedule and others are lagging and wanting to catch up. You may have gotten some seeds germinating before the pre-emerge products were activated so catch them soon. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

What to do with the wheat

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The rain last week helped but I think we all know that we've got a lot of wheat that doesn't look great. Which leads producers into the unknown territory of what the heck to do with those fields. If the field is covered by crop insurance you need to make some decisions prior to heading. Once the head is emerged, then regardless of what you do with it, you can't insure a replacement crop. If you tear it out now and go in with a spring planted crop you should be able to insure that spring crop. In recent years wheat's been getting ready to head out about now so we fortunately have a little bit of time, a few weeks anyway to make a decision. One thing that some producers are thinking about is grazing the wheat out to destroy it and then follow up with a spring planted crop. The worse the wheat looks, or rather the lower the anticipated yield, the better the economics of that look. You have to figure in what may have already been done to that field particularly if herbicides have been applied as that can impact the next crop. If you haven't applied herbicide or fertilizer you're probably looking at 30 bushels per acre projected yield as the break point. If yield is better than that, you're better off to take the grain. If yield is less than that, then graze it out and replant with something else. If you go the latter route though, that wheat must be destroyed so there are no heads that show up. And if you use herbicides, get them on at least ten days prior to head emergence to be sure! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soybean seeding rates

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Quite a few weeks ago I talked about soybean seeding rates. Now that we are into May and much closer to planting time and with a better feel for current weather conditions, let's re-examine things. We know that low seeding rates won't hurt us as much as we used to think and likewise high seeding rates won't hurt us as much as we thought, but since most of you aren't using bin run seed anymore, high seeding rates become economically prohibitive! We know that historical yields are also a good indicator of the kind of yield environment we are planting into. The question this year is do we stay the course with traditional seeding rates or back off a bit as soil moisture conditions aren't good and some of us aren't overly optimistic with that situation changing. In most of our average fields this year I think we want to target about 70 to 80,000 plants per acre. In irrigated or historically higher yielding fields I think we aim for 100 to 105,000 seeds per acre. You're actual seeding rate depends on what your emergence rate is - drilled beans need higher rates as they frequently have lower emergence rates. Planters do a much better job. If you don't know for sure, just calculate 80% emergence and go from there. Additionally I would plan to start planting by May 10th or just as soon as you can after corn planting. Because of the rain we have pretty good soil moisture right now to get that plant established. Once it's established then we just have to hope we get more rain! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

How Dry Has It Been?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Okay. It rained last week. Much of the region had 3/4 of an inch to a little over an inch. A nice good soaking rain. And a lot of folks are now thinking, well gee, it rained so there's not a problem. I've spent considerable time trying to figure out how to make people understand HOW dry it has been. We have reliable precipitation information for our area dating back to 1931. This isn't Manhattan, this isn't Topeka, this is a combination of Ft. Riley, Junction City, Milford Lake data. This is local. I took all that data and totaled January through April rainfall, compared to long term average (and that means averaging from 1931 through 2018 - 88 years worth) and then went back and looked at the 8 month period starting the previous September through the end of April. For right now, January to date, we have received 2.82 inches of rain. Long term average is 6.81 inches. We are at 41% of average through the four month period and that is drier than any of the previous 88 years. If we look at September through April, we have received 8.70 inches. Average is 15.51. The last 8 months we have had 52% of long term average. That is the driest September through April period dating back to 1931. We are at a rainfall deficit that we didn't see in the 1930s or even in the 1950s. 1988 and 1989 were very dry. But not this dry. By the way, our county wide average wheat yield in 1989 was 11.6 bushels per acre - we normally have a county wide average in the 40's. What does this all mean. It means it's dry! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Dealing with Drought

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's hard to know what to do with cropping plans when we are sitting smack on top of a record dry period. As I talked yesterday, even going back to the 1930's, we've never seen it this dry for a 4 or 8 month time span. As I contemplate weather patterns like this and wonder how long it may continue I always go to the climate prediction center's web page where they do a whole string of 3 month forecasts. For our area, clear through October, we are sitting on equal chances for temperatures and precipitation. What this means is that there is no indication in their models that says it will be wetter or drier than normal, hotter or colder than normal. So there's a 33.3% chance of normal weather a 33.3% chance of it being warmer, colder, wetter, or drier than normal. So what the heck does that mean? It means there's nothing stronger coming along to change the current pattern that we are in. Now, we can get along okay with less than normal rainfall, if the rain we get falls at the right time. Naturally there's no promises of that happening. So what do we do with our cropping plans? We proceed as normal. Farming is a job of tremendous optimism as so much is out of our control. If we plan for dry weather and it rains, we've missed yield opportunity. If we expect more than normal rain and we get less, we've hurt our yield chances. So we stay the course, we make adjustments as we move along and we hope that equal chances in the long range prediction equates to something close to normal. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.