

U.S. Farmers Share Harvest Happenings

U.S. farmers have completed the fall 2016 harvest of coarse grains. This year, weather and related conditions played a key role in timing and yields.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) asked barley, corn and sorghum farmers from across the United States to share information about their planting activity. This issue of *Grain News* checks in with some of those farmers for a harvest report and their preparations for 2017.

These farmers had generally pleasant weather during harvest and yields consistent with the environmental factors and conditions in their regions. Overall, they are pleased with the quality coarse grains they have produced for the world market.

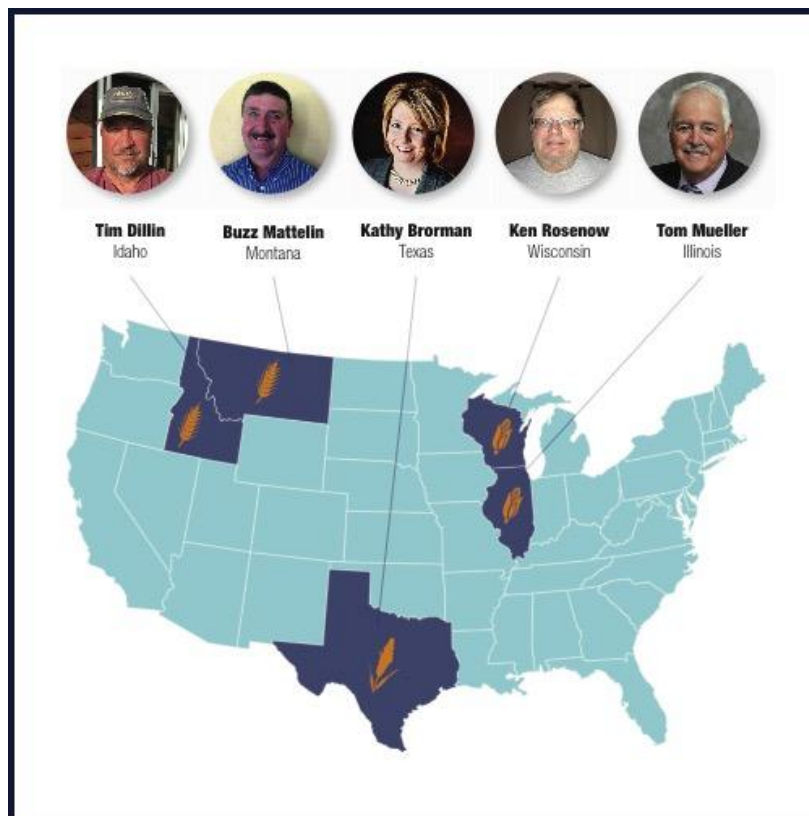
BARLEY

Buzz Mattelin, Montana

Buzz Mattelin is a third generation farmer in Montana. Mattelin works with a young farmer, training him to take over the nearly 100-year-old farm when Mattelin retires. He grows malt barley, sugar beets, durum wheat and oil seeds near the upper Missouri River.

Has this been a typical harvest season?


“Our typical harvest dates are mid-August through mid-September. We harvested really early in 2016, starting the first week of August and we were done in a couple of weeks.”





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U.S. Grains Council

Email: grains@grains.org
www.grains.org

 @usgc

 /usgrainscouncil

 /usgrainscouncil

U.S. Headquarters

20 F Street NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20001
202.789.0789 TEL
202.898.0522 FAX

Your Local Office

Address
Address
TEL
FAX
EMAIL

Developing
Markets.

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What kind of harvest equipment do you use?

“John Deere, since I married the dealer’s daughter. We are wide-open space out here, and dealers can be far away. There have also been many consolidations in recent years. That makes getting parts and service an ongoing concern for us.”

How were your yields and/or contracts?

“We contract with Busch Agricultural Resources, LLC, a division of Anheuser Busch. We contract in the fall, based on the Chicago Board of Trade spring wheat futures. We did well on last year’s contracts but we do not have next year’s yet. Hopefully we will make a little money.”

Were there any unusual factors to this growing season?

“The season started dry, then we had some nice moisture in June. It shut off at just the right time, with a long dry spell just when we needed it. Hopefully we will have a mild, open winter and we can be in the field getting things done to prepare for 2017.”

What type of post-harvest preparation do you do for the next crop or growing season?

“We practice no-till and minimum-till as much as possible, but we do have to work the ground when going from sugar beets to barley because the beet harvest equipment leaves ridges in the soil. Otherwise, we just go over the ground with a heavy harrow. We do a split application of nitrogen fertilizer, putting the first on in the fall, then look at the soil tests again in May or June.”

What do you want your overseas customers to know?

“I was able to go on a trade mission to Colombia this fall to meet with craft brewers there. The commitment to building relationships with international buyers is a priority for United States coarse grain farmers.”

Tim Dillin, Idaho

Tim Dillin operates a century-old farm in Idaho, near the Canadian border. At age 82, Dillin’s father is still active in the farm. They raise around 500 acres (202 hectares) of feed, food and malt barley, in addition to wheat. The family also raises Red Angus cattle.



Barley harvest on Tim Dillin’s farm in Idaho.

Access U.S. Crop Reports

Accurate and current information about the United States crop sector is available online from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Government, industry and media reference the Crop Progress reports issued weekly during the growing season (April to November).

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) provides United States crop production data, including acreage, plant and harvest progress, crop conditions, area harvested, yield and more.

In addition, USDA NASS offers crop production annual summaries, including crop production reports for virtually every crop grown in the United States. These production reports are updated monthly. For a historical perspective, readers can access previous crop reports from as far back as 1964.

USDA NASS has an email subscription service available that delivers the latest reports electronically as soon as they are released. Reports can be accessed as PDF, text or zip files for ease of use. A quick search feature sorts and provides relevant information specific to each query.

For more information, visit www.nass.usda.gov. ■

Has this been a typical harvest season?

“We usually harvest mid-August through September. Harvest this year was good and basically uneventful. We

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started harvest in August, and finished and had the fields planted back to winter white wheat by the end of September.”

What kind of harvest equipment do you use?

“We use a typical John Deere cereal grain combine. That is the dealer that is closest to us and we get good service and parts.”

How were your yields and/or contracts?

“We planted around 400 acres (161.87 hectares) of barley this year, and all of it met food grade, so that satisfied our contract. We had a very good yield on our farm and statewide. We took a very large crop to market this fall. The state of Idaho had a high acceptance of malt grade.”

Were there any unusual factors to this growing season?

“It was pretty normal, with great weather. We applied a little extra nitrogen for the wheat, but nothing different for the barley crop.”

What type of post-harvest preparation do you do for the next crop or growing season?

“We rotate crops, so part of our winter wheat crop is followed by barley and part by canola. Most fields are planted to barley every 3 years. Volunteer barley can be a problem when the field is planted back to wheat, so we work the ground before re-planting and focus on eliminating stray plants.”

What do you want your overseas customers to know?

“We had a trade team visit from Asia this year and that was great. The demand for food barley is picking up. The company we contract with is trying to find more farmers to grow more. We will do all we can to meet that demand as we continue to care about the quality of our product – how it is grown, and how it is handled after harvest.”

CORN

Ken Rosenow, Wisconsin

Ken Rosenow’s Wisconsin operation is a family partnership with his wife and son. They farm 1,100 acres (445 hectares) of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay, and also raise a herd of beef cows.

Has this been a typical harvest season?

“We typically harvest corn in October and continue into November. This year is warmer than normal and I cannot believe we picked corn in t-shirts. I remember many times being out here in boots, gloves, a heavy coat and about five layers of clothes to stay warm.”

What kind of harvest equipment do you use?

“We are not loyal to any particular brand. We use a little bit of everything. Our combine is a John Deere 9560 STS. It has GPS with all the data recorded on a data card. It is easy to become glued to the screen watching the numbers.”



A Turkish trade team visited Ken Rosenow’s Wisconsin farm.

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How were your yields and/or contracts?

“According to our combine yield monitor, we saw 170 bushels to the acre (10.67 metric tons per hectare) around the edges and in the wet spots, with around 200 to 225 bushels per acre (12.56 to 14.13 metric tons per hectare) in the main part of the field.”

Were there any unusual factors to this growing season?

“Because of the warm weather, the corn was able to mature and dry naturally in the field. When harvest started we had some test 23 to 24 percent. Usually it is above 30 at that point. Then we tested around 20 percent moisture, something we usually do not see until Thanksgiving after a hard freeze. So, it should be good quality.”

What type of post-harvest preparation do you do for the next crop or growing season?

“We do a crop rotation of corn, beans and winter wheat. We typically do not plant cover crops after the corn; we just do not have a long enough growing season for it here. We do get out there with fertilizer after the corn.”

What do you want your overseas customers to know?

“That we have a really good crop and there should be plenty of product for customers wanting to buy. It is a pleasure doing business with international buyers. We had a trade mission here from Turkey this fall. It is always good to meet face to face and remember the world is a smaller place. We all want the same things.”

Tom Mueller, Illinois

Tom Mueller grows corn and soybeans and raises beef cattle in northwest Illinois. He hires extra help in the summer. Mueller grew up in the house his grandfather lived in on the farm.

Has this been a typical harvest season?

“We usually start harvest early October as soon as the corn moisture content allows, and can end as late as the end of November. This year it was unseasonably warm and we were pretty much ahead of schedule. We had days when we reached 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 degrees Celsius), very unusual for the temperate northern Corn Belt, and the month of October averaged 5 degrees Fahrenheit (-15 degrees Celsius) above normal. With the fall so warm and dry, we did not have to worry about corn moisture at harvest time. Our corn was harvested at around 16 percent moisture content, so we were able to put it straight into the bins with fans on it, and not have to mechanically dry it.”

What kind of harvest equipment do you use?

“We are located near the John Deere factory and several dealerships, so we use their equipment. Our combine is an older one – a 9550. We had it in the shop this summer for a good tune-up and it has been trouble free this fall.”

The weather was nearly perfect. We had adequate rains at the right time, and our crop was never stressed the entire season.” – Tom Mueller, Illinois

How were your yields and/or contracts?

“Yields this year are good, averaging 225 to 230 bushels per acre (13.5 to 14.44 metric tons per hectare).”

Were there any unusual factors to this growing season?

“The weather was nearly perfect. We had adequate rains at the right time, and our crop was never stressed the entire season. It was certainly the year to get the most potential from a crop. We did a split application of nitrogen this year. The first application went on last fall, and then we side-dressed another 50 units when the corn was about boot-top high. We used a dry urea product with an inhibitor that reduces volatilization.”

“We worked with our fertilizer company to plant a test plot. We did various strips, one with the normal 120 units with a stabilizer, another received 160 units with a stabilizer, one with 80 units with a stabilizer and one with 120 units without the stabilizer. The exact calculations are not yet available, but I could tell from the combine during

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harvest, yields were better in the strips with more nitrogen and less on the strip with no stabilizer. It was a good way to tell if the practices we are using are paying off.”

What type of post-harvest preparation do you do for the next crop or growing season?

“We let our cattle graze some of the corn stock stubble. That cuts down on winter feed we need to provide them. We will apply anhydrous ammonia to provide nitrogen on fields that will be planted with corn next year. We have planted cover crops of rye and turnips before, but we did not this year. If I had known the weather would hold, I would have tried harder to get them in. They do hold the nitrogen in the soil for next year and help prevent soil erosion.”

What do you want your overseas customers to know?

“Now that the election is over, hopefully we can get back to talking about trade deals that are good for many people and great for agriculture.”

SORGHUM

Kathy Brorman, Texas

Kathy Brorman’s farm in the Texas Panhandle encompasses 8,320 acres (3,368 hectares). The family also owns and operates an insurance agency. Brorman’s four daughters are involved with the farm. They grow dryland sorghum, regular grain sorghum and sorghum silage, along with some wheat.

The United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP) said harvest was on time this year in regions across the Sorghum Belt. Sorghum harvest is unique in that it begins early June in South Texas and progresses north ending in South Dakota in late October.

Has this been a typical harvest season?

“We usually finish harvest about November 10, but we had a pretty easy year this year and were done by October 25. The weather was beautiful.”

What kind of harvest equipment do you use?

“Case IH with Trimble GPS. You just turn it around and it goes by itself.”

How were your yields



Sorghum harvest reaped record-breaking yields in 2016.

and/or contracts?

“We sprayed three times for sugarcane aphids and they still ate the lower one-third of our silage crop. The spray just could not get through the canopy. The same thing happened on the seed milo, where yields were 4,500 pounds per acre (44.88 metric tons per hectare), down about 2,000 pounds per acre (2.22 metric tons per hectare) from usual. Otherwise, the plants looked good and the berries looked good.”

Were there any unusual factors to this growing season?

“We planted late, so we were fine, but others in this area had to deal with 18 days of heat index above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius), and that messed up pollination.”

According to USCP, the weather this year added a different dynamic to the growing season for many producers. The increased rainfall was extremely valuable from a yield perspective, but also created challenges. High moisture resulted in increased pests, but producers were able to effectively manage their crops to avoid yield loss while still maintaining quality.

What type of post-harvest preparation do you do for the next crop or growing season?

“The winter wheat is planted, so now it is back to the office to project numbers for next year, lock in prices and contracts, and educate ourselves about better varieties and solutions to the aphid problem.”

USCP adds that depending on the region, some producers will do tilling, fertilizing or other management practices during the fall and winter to assure a bumper crop next year. In addition, producers are preparing to make planting decisions for next year. They are watching the market to determine where the need is so they can plant accordingly for 2017 to respond to end-users’ needs.

What do you want your overseas customers to know?

“That you can trust us to have good quality grain.”

USCP adds that the industry has experienced record yields yet again this year and the upward trend is only predicted to continue. ■