

# Study examines variability in yields

**B**ETTER genetics and farming practices may be responsible for the lack of severe corn yield losses in recent years, according to a recent University of Illinois Extension study.

"It also may be that weather conditions that resulted in the worst yields in recent history — 1983 and 1988 — have not re-occurred," says Gary Schnitkey, U of I Extension farm financial management specialist. Schnitkey authored the report "Has Variability in Corn Yields Been Reduced?"

Schnitkey utilized data from farms enrolled in the Illinois Farm Business Farm Management Association to evaluate how yields have varied. "Evidence suggests that widespread losses occurred in 1983 and 1988," he says. "Losses as large as in 1983 and 1988 did not occur in the 1990s or the early 2000s. However, yield shortfalls are still possible."

Corn yields from the farms enrolled

## Key Points

- Even with better genetics, yield shortfalls still occur.
- Weather in recent years has been less severe than in 1983 and 1988.
- A great deal of year-to-year yield variability exists on Illinois farms.

in the FBFM program were used to calculate relative yields, which equals a year's actual yield divided by the average of the previous four years of yields, times 100. A farm with a yield of 120 bushels per acre, whose previous four-year average yield is 150 bushels, has a relative yield of 80% (120 bushels/150 bushels x 100).

"A relative yield of 100% means that the yield is equal to the previous four-year average; 120% relative yield means that the yield is 20% higher than the previous four-year average; and an 80%

relative yield means that yield is 20% lower than the previous four-year average," explains Schnitkey.

## Insurance implications

Relative yields have crop insurance implications. The four-year average yield used to calculate the relative yield is the same as is used to calculate the Actual Production History yield, though up to 10 years can be used to calculate the APH yield.

"Relative yields can be compared to coverage levels to see if yield insurance would make payments," Schnitkey says. "For a relative yield of 78%, yield insurance would pay if an 80% or 85% coverage level had been selected, while payments would have occurred for coverage levels of 75% or below.

"The comparisons are valid only for yield insurances, as price changes have to be considered when determining payments from revenue insurances."

From 1977 through 2005, the study indicates that relative yields averaged 104% across all farms, indicating that yields have risen over time. However, there is a great deal of year-to-year variability. The year with the highest relative yield is 1992, with an average of 138%; the lowest year is 1988, with an average relative yield of 60%.

Overall, the study indicates that lower relative yields tend to be regional rather than statewide in nature.

"For example, many northern Illinois farms had low yields in 2005 while many southern Illinois farms had low yields in 2003. When viewed using averages, these low yielding years have been less severe than previous years," says Schnitkey.

■ **Read the full report online. Go to [www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/manage](http://www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/manage) and click on "Has Variability in Corn Yields Been Reduced?"**

## Enter *Prairie Farmer's* next farm dog contest

**W**ED love to see your best photos and read about your farm dog — from clever canines to cute puppies. The winner and runners-up will be featured in a 2007 issue of *Prairie Farmer*.

We're looking for stories and photos with just the right mix of originality, charm and visual appeal. Just send us the best photo of your farm dog, and a description in 150 words or less of what makes your pooch special.

First-place winner in our Favorite Farm Dog Contest will receive \$100; second place will receive \$50; third place \$25. Honorable mentions will receive a free one-year subscription to *Prairie Farmer*.

To enter, just send us a high-quality print or digital photo of your dog. You can e-mail stories and digital photos as attachments to [cjohnson@farmprogress.com](mailto:cjohnson@farmprogress.com). Or mail entries by Dec. 1 to: Favorite Farm Dogs, *Prairie Farmer*, 1301 E. Mound Rd., Decatur, IL 62526.

Please include your name, (the name of the photographer, if different from the entrant's name), your address and phone number.

No Polaroids please. All entries become the property of *Prairie Farmer* and will not be returned.



**CLASSIC COLLIE:** *Prairie Farmer* named a collie who is guardian of Dair-E-Land Holsteins at Shobonier as its 2006 farm dog winner.

## Leaders earn top positions on soy board

**G**EORGE Dixon, Colchester, was recently elected as chairman of the Illinois Soybean Association board.

Other elected officers include: Ken Dalenberg, Mansfield, vice chairman; Bill Wykes, Plano, secretary; Ron Moore, Roseville, treasurer; and Bryan Hieser, Minier, assistant secretary-treasurer.

The following six district directors were elected to two-year terms on the ISA:

■ Pat Dumoulin of Hampshire returns to represent District 2 farmers in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kankakee, Lake, McHenry and Will counties.

■ Pete Pistorius, Blue Mound, will again represent farmers in District 10 (Christian, DeWitt, Macon, Moultrie and Shelby counties). Pistorius served as ISA secretary last year.

■ Ken Dalenberg of Mansfield was reelected in District 11, covering Champaign, Coles, Douglas, Edgar and Piatt counties.

■ David Hartke of Teutopolis was reelected in District 14, which includes Clark, Crawford, Cumberland, Effingham and Jasper counties.

■ Doug Winter, Mill Shoals, was elected for District 16 and moves to ISA district director from interim at-large director. District 16 includes Clay, Edwards, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne and White counties.

■ New to the board is Dean Campbell of Coulterville, who was elected to represent farmers in District 17, which consists of Jackson, Jefferson, Perry, Randolph, and Washington counties.

At-large directors were also elected. Dale Crawford of Sullivan and Matt Hughes of Shirley will serve for three years. Ron Moore of Roseville and Joe Murphy of Harrisburg will serve for two years. Ron Kindred of Atlanta and Ross Prough of Greenfield will serve one-year terms.

## Names in the News

### Corn Marketing Board elects new officers

Kirkwood farmer Wendell Shauman was recently elected chairman of the Illinois Corn Marketing Board for 2006-2007. The Warren County farmer was named a *Prairie Farmer* Master Farmer in 2001. Shauman replaces Bryan Fogerson of Tuscola as ICMB chairman.

Other officers elected to ICMB leadership are: vice chairman, Ron Gray of Claremont; treasurer, Donna Jeschke of Mazon; and secretary, Jim Rapp of Princeton.

### Two named to U.S. soy group

Two Illinois soybean farmers were recently elected to the U.S. Soybean Export Council Board of Directors



**SHAUMAN**

Executive Committee. Ken Dalenberg from Mansfield was re-elected to the executive committee and serves as treasurer for the council. Mike Cunningham from Bismarck was also elected to serve on the executive committee.

The USSEC is responsible for implementing international marketing activities that create global demand for U.S. soybeans and soy products. Formed by the farmer directors from both the American Soybean Association and United Soybean Board, the USSEC was launched in



**CUNNINGHAM**



**DALENBERG**

October 2005. It is funded in part by the soybean checkoff.

### Corzine reappointed to ag biotech group

Leon C. Corzine, Assumption, was reappointed for a one-year term on the Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture. The AC21 was established three years ago to provide information and advice to the U.S. agriculture secretary on topics related to the use of biotechnology in agriculture.

The committee is charged with examining the long-term impacts of biotechnology on the U.S. food and agriculture system and USDA, and providing guidance to USDA on pressing issues related to the application of biotechnology in agriculture.



**CORZINE**