

Crop Production

Michigan Sugar slices on to record

MICHIGAN Sugar Co. finished slicing the last of the 2006 sugarbeet crop on March 18, which marked the longest slicing campaign in the history of the company. The 180-plus days of the campaign was the result of a 23.6-ton record-setting crop with 3,870,669 tons being delivered to the cooperative by the grower-owners.

Storage conditions of above-average temperatures in December and halfway through January were reason for concern, according to Ray VanDriessche, director of community and public relations for Michigan Sugar. "But there were no deep freezes, which meant no freeze-thaw deterioration as had been experienced in past years," he says.

"Mid-January saw very cold temperatures arrive and continue almost through the end of slice, which resulted in a lower-than-expected shrink of 5% [the difference between beets delivered and actual beets sliced]. The combination of all these factors along with an outstanding job by employees of all

departments contributed to a history-making campaign."

In total, 3,686,161 tons of beets were sliced with a pack of 259 pounds of sugar per ton, for a total of 9.5 million cwt. of sugar produced from sliced beets. The combined average daily slice of the four factories was 20,300 tons.

"This year, once the molasses desugarization run is complete, Michigan Sugar Co. will have produced more than

1 billion pounds of sugar for the first time in the history of the company, and it is the first time total production in the state of Michigan has surpassed this milestone," VanDriessche adds.

In addition to a very successful campaign, Michigan Sugar Co. enjoyed the benefit of an expanding pressed pulp market, which resulted in 300,000 tons of pressed pulp sold mostly to dairy operations throughout Michigan. "Studies

from dairy operations are showing an increase in milk production, and a shinier and healthier looking coat on the animals," VanDriessche says.

The cooperative is looking forward to 2007 with 163,285 acres projected to be planted, he says.

In early April, there were 600 acres planted, which means another early start to the planting season and potential for good yields, he says.

300,000 more corn acres to be planted

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, Michigan Field Office, released the following highlights from the 2007 Prospective Plantings Report:

- Michigan corn growers expect to plant 2.5 million acres, up 300,000 acres from 2006.

- Prospective soybean acres in Michigan are estimated at 1.75 million, down 250,000 acres from 2006.

- Sugarbeet producers in Michigan expect to plant 153,000 acres, down 1% from last year.

- Michigan dry edible bean planting intentions are 220,000 acres, down 2% from 2006.

- Barley acres in Michigan are expected to total 14,000, down 1,000 acres from last year.

- Michigan all-hay harvested acres are expected to total 1.14 million acres, unchanged from last year.

- U.S. corn growers intend to plant 90.5 million acres of corn for all purposes in 2007, up 15% from 2006, and 11% higher than 2005. If realized, this would be the highest acreage since 1944, when 95.5 million acres were planted for all purposes.

- U.S. soybean producers intend to plant 67.1 million acres in 2007, down 11% from last year. If realized, this will be the lowest planted area since 1996.

State represents NGFA

The National Grain and Feed Association recently elected members to its board and executive committee.

Representing Michigan and elected to a three-year term on the board was Dean O'Harris, commodity manager with Parrish & Heimbecker, and elected to serve on the NGFA's Executive Committee was David Geers, president of Michigan Agricultural Commodities.



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