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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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USDA EXPECTS CORN ACRES TO DROP IN 2008 AS SOYBEANS, WHEAT GAIN GROUND

Washington, March 31, 2008 – On the heels of last year’s record-high corn production, U.S. farmers intend to plant 8 percent fewer corn acres in 2008, according to the *Prospective Plantings* report released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Producers plan to plant 86 million acres of corn this year. While 7.6 million acres less than 2007, this would still be the second-largest area since 1949.

The outlook for corn prices remains strong, thanks to increasing ethanol production and other factors. Still, favorable prices for other crops, along with crop rotation considerations and high corn input costs, are motivating some farmers to switch from corn. Iowa is expected to see the largest decrease in corn acreage, down 1 million acres from last year’s record, to 13.2 million acres. Both Indiana and Minnesota are expected to drop 800,000 acres from their record highs of last year.

Nationwide, soybean acreage is expected to jump 18 percent, to 74.8 million acres. This is an increase of 11.2 million acres from 2007 and is just 1 percent below 2006’s record high. Acreage increases are expected in nearly every state, with the largest growth in Iowa, up 1.25 million acres, and Nebraska, up 1.2 million. Increases of at least 800,000 acres are anticipated in Indiana, Minnesota and South Dakota, while Kansas, New York and Pennsylvania are expected to plant their largest soybean crops in history.

Wheat acreage is also expected to rise in 2008, up 6 percent to 63.8 million acres. Winter wheat planted area, at 46.8 million acres, is up 4 percent from last year. Expected acreage of durum wheat is up 22 percent, to 2.63 million acres.

NASS estimates 2008 cotton plantings at 9.39 million acres, 13 percent below last year. Upland cotton acreage is expected to total 9.19 million, the lowest level since 1983 and down 13 percent from last year. The largest acreage declines are expected in Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas.

The *Prospective Plantings* report provides the first official estimate of U.S. farmers’ planting intentions for 2008. NASS’s acreage estimates are based on surveys conducted during the first two weeks of March from a sample of approximately 86,000 farm operators across the United States.

Prospective Plantings and all NASS reports are available online at www.nass.usda.gov.

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