

2005 CROP WEATHER SUMMARY

JANUARY – APRIL: Early January two storms with a mixture of snow and ice hit New England. During the last two weeks of the month, temperatures dipped below freezing. On January 23, a blizzard dumped close to three feet of snow in southern New England coastal region. Seasonal temperatures and snow prevailed during February. Maple sugar producers were busy preparing for the upcoming season; some southern New England producers have started tapping trees and boiling. Cool nights and warm days are ideal tapping conditions. Snow storms at the beginning of March increased the annual total snow fall to record highs in New England. New England maple sugar producers were busy during the month tapping trees. However, sap quantity was limited due to cold temperatures early and warm temperatures late in the month but syrup quality was excellent. April had warmer than normal temperatures. Heavy rain caused flooding throughout New England and ice jams in northern New England. Then drier conditions dominated the rest of the month. Farm activities included, tending livestock, calving and lambing, tapping maple trees, applying fertilizer, spreading manure/fertilizer, plowing and harrowing fields, working in nursery/greenhouses, fencing, and pruning trees.

May: New England farmers experienced one of the coldest May's in history. Rain, cold soil temperatures, and saturated fields resulted in 18 workable days for May. Soil moisture levels were rated near or above 40 percent surplus all month. Planting progress was at least two weeks behind schedule for many field crops. Hay field growth was slow due to cool temperatures and lack of sunshine. Fall potatoes were 20 percent planted by the end of the month. Oats and barley planting reached the halfway mark in Maine by the end of May. Potato planting in Massachusetts and Rhode Island neared completion at month's end after a slow start. Only 15 percent of the 2005 field corn crop had emerged by the end of May. Shade tobacco transplants were nearly all set by the end of the month, while broadleaf tobacco farmers were just starting. Temperatures dipped below freezing which caused frost damage to fruit crops in some areas. Tree fruit and berry condition was rated as fair to good due to less than optimum pollination and spraying weather. Vegetable growers battled poor germinating conditions due to cool soil temperatures. Greenhouse producers struggled with fungal diseases, added expense of heating facilities, and poor sales due to the extended cool and rainy weather.

JUNE: By early June, crops responded to improved soil temperatures. Maine potatoes were fully emerged and condition ranged from good to excellent at month's end. Massachusetts and Rhode Island potato conditions were rated good. By mid-June, Maine oats and barley farmers had most of the grains planted. Most of the field corn crop emerged at month's end as a mixture of sun, rain and warm temperatures promoted growth. Farmers were active baling first cut hay during June; first cut condition ranged from good to fair in the region. By month's end, hazy, hot, and humid conditions with scattered afternoon thunderstorms arrived promoting good growth on second crop hay but hindered drying conditions. Shade tobacco was all transplanted by early June. Crop condition was reported good. Broadleaf tobacco growers were setting out the last of the tobacco plants, top-dressing and cultivating at the end of June. Orchardists scouted for disease and insect pests and applied protective fungicides and insecticides as needed. By mid-June, strawberry harvest was underway in most areas and conditions were extremely variable throughout the region, ranging from fair to very poor in Massachusetts and good to fair elsewhere. By mid-June, highbush blueberries were at full bloom or petal fall and dry conditions provided excellent pollinating conditions in most areas. Specialists rated berries in good to excellent condition at month's end after a cool, wet spring. By late-July, Massachusetts cranberry bogs were in full bloom and excellent pollinating conditions moved the crop condition from fair to good. Vegetable growers were active seeding successive plantings of sweet corn all month long and crop conditions were good to excellent region wide. The month finished up with a storm on June 29th, which brought heavy winds and hail along the Connecticut River, and a small tornado touched down in western Massachusetts.

JULY: July began humid but a cool and cloudy front arrived to the region the second week. Crop development and growth were enhanced greatly with almost 28 days suitable for fieldwork during the month. At the beginning of the month, second cutting of hay was just underway and close to the halfway point at month's end whereas, first cutting neared completion. At month's end, strawberry harvest was finished and growers were busy renovating beds. Highbush blueberry harvest started late but warm, humid days enhanced crop development. Unfavorable spring conditions delayed peach harvest although crop was rated good to fair at month's end. Shade tobacco harvest began in early July ahead of schedule with more than a quarter completed at month's end. Crop condition was rated good. By mid-July broadleaf tobacco harvest began ahead of schedule from warm weather enhancing crop development. Early sweet corn harvest was in full swing throughout the region at month's end. Apple growers were busy as harvest season approached mowing orchard floors and spraying as necessary. Pear conditions were rated fair to good at month's end. Cranberry bed reached full bloom and growers continued to irrigate, monitor for pests, and apply pesticides and fungicides. Crop condition was rated good to fair. Warm, dry conditions in southern New England caused drought like concerns for field corn whereas, other areas in

the region received heavy rains that influenced crop development. Oats and barley in Maine continued to develop as both were rated good to excellent at the end of July. By month's end, Massachusetts potato grower's were in full swing with harvest as crop was rated good as Rhode Island grower's were gearing up for harvest. Maine potato grower's continued on a five-day spray schedule. The crop condition was rated good.

AUGUST: Hot, humid, and dry conditions dominated August. At month's end relief arrived when remnants of Hurricane Katrina brought heavy rains to the region. Rain was welcomed but arrived too late for those crops under severe stress. At the end of August, Maine small grain harvest past the halfway point. Oats and barley were rated in good to excellent condition. Maine potato growers remained on a seven to ten day spray schedule for the month to protect against late blight. The Maine crop was rated in good to excellent condition. Crop condition was good to fair in Massachusetts and fair to poor in Rhode Island due to inadequate moisture. Warm weather provided favorable growing, harvesting and curing conditions for both shade and broadleaf crops. As the month drew to a close, prolonged lack of moisture caused concerns with third crop hay yields. First crop hay harvest finished at month's end. Corn silage conditions varied throughout the region due to the variability in moisture received; crop conditions ranged from excellent to good in New Hampshire and Vermont, to good to fair elsewhere. Sweet corn conditions ranged from good to fair in southern New England to good to excellent in northern New England. Both highbush and wild blueberry harvest were near completion at month's end. Highbush blueberry condition was rated good to excellent. Early apple harvest was in full swing as the month came to a close. Apple conditions in Maine and Vermont were good to excellent, and conditions elsewhere were good to fair. Peach harvest continued strong and crop condition was rated good to fair. Pear condition at month's end was rated fair to good in the region. The remnants of Hurricane Katrina brought much needed rainfall to Massachusetts' cranberry bogs. Drought like conditions had lowered reservoirs needed for frost protection and growers remain concerned that levels were not adequate for the upcoming harvest.

SEPTEMBER: September brought mild temperatures to the six-state region. Mid-month topsoil moisture levels were rated short or very short in 47 percent in the region. Rains finally arrived from Hurricane Ophelia at mid-month and again with Hurricane Rita. Second cutting hay harvest was nearly complete by month's end. Lack of moisture forced farmers in southern New England to chop corn silage the first week in September to avoid crops burning up in the fields. Close to three quarters of New England field corn was in the silo by month's end. Warm, dry conditions provided excellent harvest and curing conditions for the 2005 tobacco crops. Lack of moisture kept most of the broadleaf crop disease-free with harvest complete at mid-month. Shade tobacco harvest was winding down by mid-September; damage from TMV (Tobacco Mosaic Virus) had showed up at some locations as the crop cured. Maine small grain farmers took advantage of early dry weather and progress of oats and barley harvest remained strong until rains arrived at the end of the month. Maine potato growers held off harvest until the end of September to allow tubers to bulk up after a late start in June. Harvest gained momentum but heavy rains hit, leaving many fields with standing water in the rows. Potato harvest in Massachusetts and Rhode Island was active during the month, with good or fair conditions dependant on moisture availability. Dry weather reduced yields on many vegetable crops and irrigation was in full force if available. Blueberry harvest was complete in New England by mid-September. High bush blueberry condition was rated good or excellent region-wide, with fruit size average to above average. The 2005 cranberry harvest season was underway at the end of September but proceeded slowly in hopes of rainfall to increase sizing and cooler temperatures to improve coloring. Peach harvest was winding down at month's end with the crop rated in good to fair condition. Apple harvest reached the halfway point as the month came to a close with fruit size varying from average to below average in the six state region due to lack of moisture. Pear growers had 35 percent of the crop left to pick at the end of September, with fruit size at average or below average.

OCTOBER – DECEMBER: The month of October had seasonal conditions. Warm and wet early. At month's end, snow fell in higher elevations. Heavy rains during the month caused flooding and mudslides along rivers and streams. Hundreds of acres of corn, hay and potatoes along the Connecticut River were flooded and crops were lost. Many pumpkins were left out in fields and on farm stands as this year's crop was plentiful. Farmers continued to finish field work as weather allowed. November had warmer than normal temperatures and higher elevations continued to receive snowfall. Apple growers were busy marketing their crop due to a surplus since rainy weather provided poor sales in October. Potato growers in northern Maine reported soil moisture is too high to harvest the last of the potatoes. The month of December had mostly seasonal temperatures in New England and four winter storms hit the region. The month had wintry mix scattered early and late in the month. Farm activities included cleaning up fields, spreading manure and lime on fields, soil testing fields for next season, finishing haying and chopping haylage, spreading bait to control voles in orchards, cutting firewood, taking down broadleaf tobacco, cleaning and putting away farm equipment, and tending livestock.