



## **Rains ring alarms over soft red winter wheat too**

America's soft red winter wheat, a beacon of hope for wheat output amid extreme conditions harming other crops, is coming up against its own weather setbacks, which have lifted disease concerns.

Concerns for world wheat continue to centre on America's hard red winter variety, the country's main wheat crop which has suffered persistent dryness, leaving only 5% of Oklahoma's fields in "good" or "excellent" condition, according to a government report out late on Monday.

"Although the weekend rains [in Oklahoma] were desperately needed, it may be too late to benefit the wheat crop as conditions are still dismal and yield potential has been severely limited," the US Department of Agriculture said.

The briefing also highlighted fears for America's rain-delayed spring wheat sowings, pegging them at 6% completed, compared with an average of 25% by now.

### **'Disease issues'**

However, brokers put the US soft red winter on the watch list too after USDA showed the condition of this variety deteriorating, if remaining at elevated levels.

In Illinois and Missouri, where growers more than doubled sowings of the wheat variety last autumn, the proportion of crops rated "good" or "excellent" tumbled by nine points to 56%, and 13 points to 58%, respectively.

"There are worries about soft red winter wheat too. It's wet," Mike Mawdsley at broker Market 1 said.

At Macquarie, Alex Bos highlighted fears "that if the rain continues, more disease issues will start cropping up in soft red winter".

The variety - the one traded in Chicago - has a lower protein content, and is typically cheaper, than the harder wheats, and is typically used in cakes and biscuits, as well as commonly in livestock feed.

### **Yield prospects**

However, he added that it was "still too early to start talking about yield loss" in soft red winter wheat, unlike for hard red winter crop, for which estimates for the US harvest had been cut from more than 800m bushels nearer to 750m bushels, and which he believed come in "closer to 735m-740m bushels".



Furthermore, the slow rate of spring sowings had put the USDA's estimate of 14.4m acres of spring wheat in doubt.

"There is an increased risk that might end up below 14m acres if it does not warm up quickly," Mr Bos told Agrimoney.com.

## **Too cool, too dry**

Spring sowings have been slow north of the border in Canada too, where the Canadian Wheat Board said that plantings on the key agricultural Prairies area, usually 4% completed by now, and 12% down a year ago, had yet to begin.

"Cool temperatures, 1-8 degrees below normal, continued to hinder snow melt and field drying over the past week," the board said, while highlighting a "positive factor" of little recent rain.

Meanwhile, northern wheat areas in China, the top producing country, dry weather looks like continuing to test winter-sown crops.

"None of the weather models show any sort of significant rain coming over the next seven days for any portion of Manchuria with the north China plains," David Tolleris at WxRisk.com said.

## **Rain for Europe?**

However, prospects have improved for Russia, with warmer temperatures displacing the cold weather which has held back spring grains sowings to 40% below last year's levels.

And Mr Tolleris held out prospects of rain for dry northern Europe too.

"The weather models are showing that the block in the jet stream over north central Europe and lower Scandinavia will continue to move slowly west towards the UK and Iceland by day 9-10," Mr Tolleris said.

"This could allow for a more normal made it a spring weather pattern to develop and a return to seasonal rainfall for central and western Europe redeveloping sometime after May 6."

## **Agrimony**