Recent rush of rainfall results in rare reactions

By Kathryn Bennett
City Editor

Recent heavy rainfall in the Lafayette-West Lafayette area has influenced local crop production estimates but has not deterred residents from participating in Labor Day festivities or shopping, local officials say.

Ellsworth Christmas, professor of agronomy, said the 6.1" of rain received locally since Aug. 29 will positively influence soybean production, as well as the heavy rainfall throughout the state. Area farmers faced concern over the lack of moisture during August, said Christmas, but the recent precipitation has restored crop estimates to their normal levels, he said.

"The net result of the rain is that it has stopped further deterioration of the crops," he said.

"Had we not had this rain, there would have been a reduced potential," Christmas said. Southern parts of Indiana might even see increased soybean yields because of the rainfall. "There were some beans that were planted late enough that they are still flowering," he said. "But that's over a very limited number of acres."

However, the rainfall could have mixed effects for corn production, said Robert Nelson, extension agronomist. Although the excess precipitation will provide a boost of growth for the end of the season, Nelson said corn crops might experience damage to their root structures because of field flooding. "Basically, with these crops, when their root systems suffer from flooding, it's probably detoxifying at least part of the root system," he said.

Nelson said areas that received 2-3 inches of rain will probably benefit from the precipitation, but areas like Lafayette-West Lafayette may suffer from decreased yields. "When you get this root damage late in the season, it basically has a pretty negative effect on photosynthesis," he said.

Indiana Flooding

Heavy rainfall has soaked central Indiana, having various effects locally.

- Lafayette-West Lafayette received over 3" of rain on Sunday and Monday.
- Lafayette-West Lafayette has received 6.1" of rain since Aug. 29.
- Local businesses remained unaffected over the holiday weekend.
- Farmers may experience decreased corn crop yields but overall the precipitation has restored crop estimates.

"These plans may shut down sooner than they would otherwise, and cut off the growing season a bit," said Nelson. "Even though the rainfall may not be encouraging for some farmers, officials say the weekend's GlobalFest activities were not damaged. A naturalization service was moved inside due to the showers, but other festivities continued without incident, said Pennie Ainsworth, assistant supervisor of the West Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department.

"I said it's one of the best, well-attended ones we've had," she said. "There was a constant stream of people."

Local businesses remained relatively unaffected by the rainfall compared to other areas of the state, said Dana Smith, president of the Lafayette-West Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. "I would assume that it had affected businesses, and I say that principally because people tend to stay out of the rain," he said.

"However, I think it affected folks in Indianapolis a whole lot more. We have not seen that occur here."

Smith also said Labor Day shoppers were not deterred from visiting stores because of the rain.

"If they were open, it didn't seem to cut down on their traffic," he said.