

FUN FACES OF WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

CORNY'S CORN FAST FACTS (8/2011)



Production Information

Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska and Minnesota account for over 50 percent of the corn grown in the U.S. Other major growing states are Indiana, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Michigan, Missouri, Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. This area is known as the "Corn Belt."

Corn is an annual plant that grows seven to ten feet tall. The scientific name for corn is *Zea Mays L.* Corn is well adapted, high yielding, and can grow under various conditions. Corn requires proper fertilization of the soil. Hybrid seeds, made by crossing two or more corn plants, are planted in the spring with a corn planter. The corn plant has a strong root system including brace roots that help support the corn stalk. The tassel develops on the top of the corn plant. It has hundreds of small flowers that produce pollen. The leaves of a corn plant are long, narrow and pointed on the end. Ears of corn grow where the leaf joins the stalk. A corn plant will normally have 1 ear. The ear of corn is covered with husks or specialized leaves. There are rows of kernels that make up the corncob; each has a silk-like thread that runs from the kernel out through the end of the husk. During pollination, each silk needs to be pollinated in order to produce a kernel of corn. Dent corn will be harvested in the fall. The amount of moisture will help a producer determine the use of the corn. High moisture corn is put in silos, bags and bunkers. Corn that is harvested and dried down is stored in bins and used for various purposes.

Wisconsin Production

In 2009, Wisconsin planted 3.85 million acres of corn. Corn is used for corn silage (the whole plant is chopped and fermented) or harvested as grain for livestock feed, ethanol and other uses. WI often leads the nation in the acres harvested for silage (850,000). Grain yield varies each year, but the 2009 average was 153 bushels per acre. Leading counties of corn harvested for grain include Dane, Rock, Grant, Lafayette and Dodge. Fond du Lac, Dane, Grant, Dodge and Manitowoc were the top silage producing counties.

Career Information

Researchers develop the new uses for corn including plastics, ethanol and human food uses. Growers depend on crop scouts to help monitor weeds, pests and diseases. Plant geneticists help develop new hybrids. Processors take the corn and create ethanol, livestock feed and human foods, and all the other products. Shipping via truck, rail and boat is important for corn. Marketing specialists help farmers and cooperatives with corn prices.

Trivia

- There are over 3,500 uses for corn products.
- An ear of corn averages 800 kernels in 16 rows. A pound of corn consists of approximately 1,300 kernels. An acre of corn yielding 100 bushels produces approximately 7,280,000 kernels.
- A bushel equals 56 pounds and is about 72,800 kernels of corn.

Other Information

There are six different types of corn- sweet, dent, flint, pod, flour and popcorn. Popcorn is the only type that pops. Corn-on-the-cob and canned or frozen corn at the grocery store come from sweet corn. Dent (field corn) is the type most grown in America. Almost all of the corn you see in farm fields is dent corn. Unlike sweet corn, dent corn has a hard outer portion about the thickness of your fingernail. The inner portion of the corn kernel is soft and floury. Dent corn is used to make starches, oils, livestock feed, ethanol fuel and many other products like crayons, paints and paper. Dent corn also is used to make corn syrup sweeteners and other ingredients that appear in all kinds of foods from soft drinks to baked goods. Corn serves as a livestock feed source with 50% of the crop being used for feed. A 56 lb. bushel of corn fed to livestock produces 5.6 lbs. of retail beef, 13 lbs. of retail pork, 19.6 lbs. of chicken or 28 lbs. of catfish.