



SOURCES: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistics Service; Ohio Department of Agriculture; Ohio Department of Development, "Ohio Statistical Abstract," June 1997; National Weather Service; and Midwestern Climate Center.

Unseasonable summer weather has been of great concern to Ohio farmers. Rainfall has varied widely from month to month, and temperatures have generally been below normal. It appears, however, that the state's two most important crops—corn and soybeans—have been spared by a bit of genetic tinkering.

The critical growing period for corn is the silking, or pollination, stage, which occurred this year when rainfall was below normal.

Nonetheless, as of August 24, the USDA rated 67% of the state's corn crop as good to excellent and another 26% as fair. ("Fair" means that yield loss is possible, but the extent is unknown.)

Soybeans reach their critical growing period at the end of August, when they set in pods. Ideal growing conditions would be temperatures in the mid-80s and average soil moisture. As of late August, 68% of the state's soybean crop was categorized as good to excellent,

while only 7% was judged as poor to very poor.

The reason these crops are thriving despite adverse weather is that the seeds were genetically bred to be resistant to stressful conditions, including droughts, heat waves, fungi, and diseases. Their recovery capabilities are also better than ever. With the harvest season fast approaching, the USDA is predicting that this year's yields will exceed 1996 levels by seven bushels per acre for soybeans and by 17% for corn.