

# Harvest

## Uncertain futures

*War and transportation create questions in worldwide grain market*

By RAY COONEY

The Commercial Review

There's always a degree of uncertainty when it comes to dealing with markets and futures.

That's especially true this year as farmers are pulling corn and soybeans out of the fields.

Demand has generally been down for the U.S. staple crops recently but that could change based on the outcomes of labor negotiations and war in Eastern Europe.

Those factors are impacting producer decisions as harvest rates hover around their five-year averages with overall lower-than-expected yields while prices are high but not as high as they were the last two summers.

How farmers feel about their yields has a lot to do with perspective and expectations, said University of Missouri senior research associate for agricultural and applied economics Ben Brown.

"In general, in the eastern part of the corn belt, crops look good again this year, similar to what they did last year," he said. "The one difference this year over last year is ... when we got into the fields, there were a lot more drowned-out spots and the crop wasn't as good in the eastern corn belt



The Commercial Review

Harvest progress for corn and soybeans in Indiana are about at the five-year average, with 39% of corn out of the fields and 57% of soybeans as of Sunday. Yields have been down from projections at 171.9 bushels per acre for corn and 49.8 bushels per acre for soybeans.

as what many people believed it would be."

Meanwhile, yields in the western corn belt have been slightly better than expected after dealing with a summer

typified by drought conditions.

The soybean crop had been projected to be strong until about a month ago.

"Our soybean crop looked

very good heading through August into September," added Brown, who previously worked at Ohio State University. "In fact, the expectation was a record soybean yield ... And

then it just got dry. Those pods didn't develop. I think that's largely what we're starting to see coming across combine monitors."

See **Uncertain** page 3B

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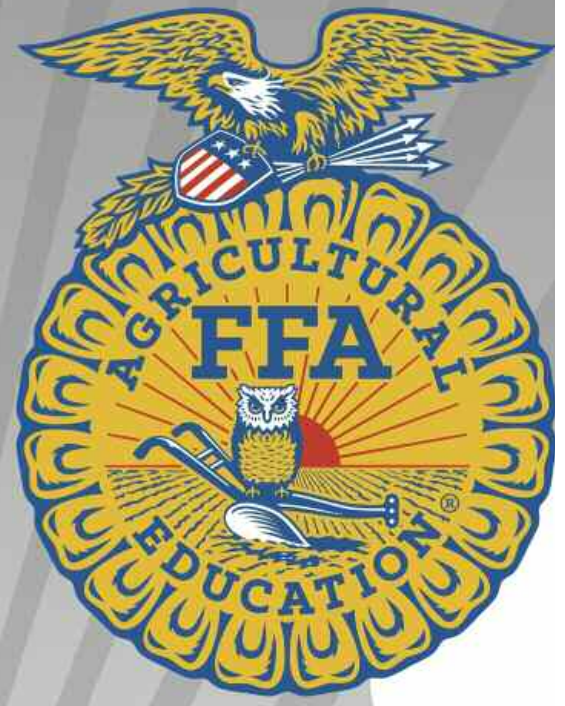
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## IT'S HARVEST SEASON BE ALERT. BE PATIENT. SHARE THE ROAD

## Uncertain ...

Continued from page 1B

The overall result has been yield projections being pulled back nationwide. The United States Department of Agriculture's Oct. 12 report showed corn production down 8% from 2021 with soybean growers expecting a 3% decrease. Based on Oct. 1 conditions, corn bushels were expected to come in at 171.9 bushels per acre, which would be 4.8 bushels per acre less than the previous year. Soybeans were projected at 49.8 bushels per acre, which would be down by 1.9 bushels per acre from 2021.

Monday's USDA crop progress report showed that 39% of Indiana's corn had been harvested as of Sunday compared to the five-year average of 42%. For soybeans, 57% had been harvested as of Sunday compared to a 53% five-year average.

Corn and bean prices are up from the same time last year. Corn prices locally were between \$6.42 and \$6.72 Wednesday as compared to \$5.05 to \$5.49 last year. For beans, local prices this week were between \$12.91 and \$13.35, up from \$11.74 to \$12.06 a year ago.

Prices for the two crops had been below \$4.50 and below \$10, respectively, for several years, before climbing in the second half of 2020.

With those prices, Brown said, demand has pulled back for U.S. products. Also, Argentina was able to provide most of the soybeans China needed this season.

"We've seen struggling export sales numbers ... due to this environment of high prices and high currency," he said. "But we've also had transportation logistics issues here in the United States."

Those transportation

issues have been caused by low water levels in the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, which limit how much product a barge can carry, thus increasing the demand for barges.

"Water levels are at historic lows," Brown said. "It's causing transportation rates, barge rates, to drastically rise. ... We can't fill barges as full as we normally would so it takes more barges to

move the same amount of product. ...

"Transportation is causing a little bit of a bottleneck in terms of getting product down to the Gulf of Mexico to get to export terminals ..."

That also pushes up rail prices.

There is additional uncertainty with railroads as workers were on the verge of a strike last month.

See **Uncertain** page 4B

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—Ben Brown,  
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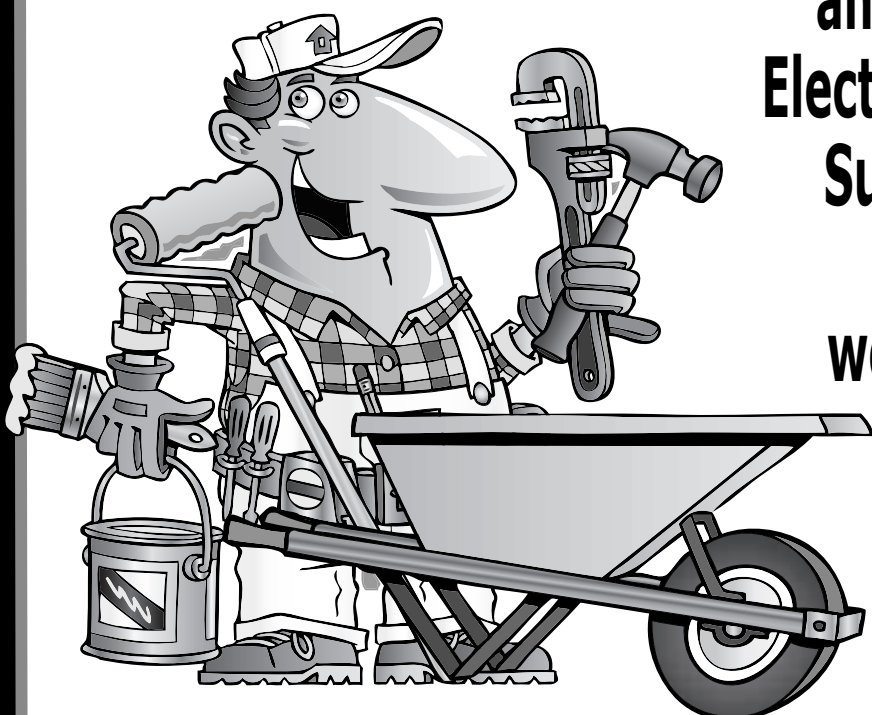
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Yield numbers for corn and soybeans were not as strong as expected in the eastern corn belt, impacted by more drowned-out spots in corn and a September dry period for beans. Meanwhile, in the western corn belt, yields were not as high, but still slightly higher than expected, after a year typified by drought conditions.



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## Uncertain ...

Continued from page 3B  
That was averted when the federal government stepped in and brokered a deal, but some unions have rejected that tenta-

tive agreement. As a result, it is possible in the next month that U.S. rail workers could be on the verge of a strike again.

Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine continues to impact worldwide markets.

When Russia first invaded its neighbor, grain exports were essentially cut off from the Black Sea region. Since then, the United Nations brokered a deal that allows grain to be exported after being inspected in Turkey.

But, Brown said, Russian president Vladimir Putin has been critical of the agreement recently. If he pulls out of the deal when the current iteration expires Nov. 19, that could shut down grain exports from the region again and push buyers to the U.S. market.

"Exports are a hard thing to forecast at the

moment because it very much depends on what happens with that, whether the deal gets extended during the middle of November or whether it expires," he added.

There has also been a decrease in demand for ethanol as gas consumption was low this year because of high prices at the pump. And increasing interest rates and a difficult labor market are also factors that will continue to impact the prices of all consumer products, Brown said.

In the livestock sector, Brown noted that a struggling Chinese economy and high prices are leading to projected weaker demand for pork. (China is the world's largest consumer of pork.)

"We are seeing some softness in China's pork market," said Brown. "Their economy is not

good. They're on the verge of kind of a big economic collapse."

He indicated that cattle herds in the U.S. are continuing to be thinned out. Prices look strong, he added, and are likely to remain high. He compared the beef outlook to that of the strong 2014.

Looking specifically at Jay County and the surrounding eastern Indiana and western Ohio region, he said he expects a bigger impact from wheat this year.

"As I look to places around the country that I think have the potential to increase wheat, Ohio and Indiana, probably more likely northeastern Indiana, I do anticipate to see a little more wheat production this year as we look ahead to 2023," said Brown. "The fundamentals are there. ... There are some pretty nice margins in wheat."

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# Fruitful venture

## Producing apples and berries, Mary Scott Community Orchard in Richmond is one of only a handful of its kind in all of Indiana

By LOUISE RONALD

The Commercial Review

Richmond is now home to one of fewer than a dozen community orchards in Indiana.

As the organizers and volunteers say, "How 'bout them apples?"

Since last spring, Mary Scott Community Orchard has been home to 35 dwarf apple trees, 80 berry plants and a pollinator garden to keep the fruit flourishing.

The raspberry and blackberry bushes produced an abundant harvest and the pollinator plants did their job all season long. Unfortunately, not all of the trees survived their first summer. The ones that did are going strong, however.

The trees' yield: about half a dozen apples and lots of hope for the future.

Community orchards are similar to community gardens (of which Indiana has hundreds) but require a different kind of organization.

"Fruit trees are hard to manage," said Denise Retz, superintendent of Richmond Parks & Recreation. Lots of manpower is needed "to give them the care they really need."

The parks department provided the land (less than a third of an acre) for the orchard, but its budget couldn't stretch to manpower.

So what is Retz's advice for a community that might want to start an orchard of its own?

"Find a champion," Retz said. "Someone who can really see it through."

In Richmond's case, that champion is James "Jay" Barbre, associate professor of teacher education at Indiana University – East.

How is he connected to apples? He isn't. At least he wasn't until the orchard project began.

Barbre describes himself as a "facilitator of other people's expertise."

He first encountered the project



The Commercial Review/Louise Ronald

Jay Barbre, associate professor of teacher education at Indiana University – East, points out some of the plants in the pollinator garden at Mary Scott Community Orchard in Richmond. "There's no way this could have happened without him," said Richmond High School environmental science teacher Rob Bailey.

ect as one of about 50 ideas brought by the parks department to the university faculty for different kinds of partnerships designed to reinvigorate the city parks.

"I zeroed in on the community orchard," said Barbre.

He was interested in creating a source of free, fresh fruit to area residents, but what really appealed to him was the

educational potential of an orchard.

"It was important to me that it be useful ... as a learning tool," he said.

He envisioned students partici-

pating in every stage of the growing process, observing plants and insects, conducting experiments and connecting with the community in new ways.

See **Fruitful** page 6B

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## It's ginseng season

*Hoosiers search woodland areas for root that's valuable and now 'in season'*

By **CAROL KUGLER**  
Herald-Times (Bloomington)

There's a different type of season in Indiana that began Sept. 1 and runs through the end of the year. Participants don't have to carry a firearm, muzzleloader or bow and arrow; instead, all that's required is keen eyesight and lots of walking through the woods with a trowel or knife for digging that's required.

The "prey" is a woodland plant that takes years to mature. The bright red berries nestled between clustered leaves can be difficult to spot but the reward is an often-person-shaped root that's in high demand and expensive.

The plant, ginseng, grows in the shaded forest floors in the eastern portion of North America, where people have harvested it for generations. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Treaty regulates the harvesting, sale and distribution of ginseng.

Wild ginseng in Indiana is considered a vulnerable species by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which limits the export of wild ginseng to roots that are at least four years old.

Laura Minzes is the state's ginseng coordinator with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' nature preserves division. She's in charge of keeping track of how much ginseng, both wild and cultivated, is harvested each year. Besides ensuring the roots harvested are the correct age, she's also looking out for the survival of the species.

In 2021, there were 215,000 pounds of wild ginseng harvested in Indiana and a little over 15 pounds of cultivated ginseng. Minzes said those figures are on par with the ginseng taken in the past three years. She explained cultivated ginseng, which is grown as an agricultural

crop, is popular in northern Wisconsin.

The season for harvesting ginseng in Indiana runs Sept. 1 through Dec. 31. Any plant that's harvested — in order to take the roots, the plant is killed — must have at least three clusters, known as prongs, of leaves. That ensures the plant is at least four years old. Each of the prongs has five leaves. Oftentimes the red berries or remaining seeds are hidden in the space between the leaf clusters.

With the cooler temperatures, many of the ginseng leaves are beginning to turn yellow, making them easier to spot in the undergrowth of wooded areas. Brent Duncan, owner of Duncan's Botanical Products in Smithville, knows how to locate them in the woods outside of his business. He's one of Indiana's 19 ginseng dealers, having taken over his father's business, which was established in 1972.

Duncan said most people dig about a half-pound of ginseng in a day. But it can add up, as Duncan proved, showing a plastic bag with about 38 pounds of fresh ginseng that he said was worth about \$7,000. Those roots will be worth even more after they are dried, which Duncan said makes each root worth about \$600 a pound instead of \$180-\$200.

"It's basically a vegetable," Duncan said. "You can't keep it more than three weeks."

Duncan said it's essential to dry roots before shipping them, so they'll last. He has two primary customers he sells ginseng to, and those roots travel to Hong Kong and are sold throughout Southeast Asia. The roots are primarily used in tea and for cooking as a medicinal additive, he said. About one-third of Duncan's business is dealing with ginseng, which amounts to about 1,000 pounds of roots

a year. While some of the roots are only about five years old, Duncan has at least one root that has bud scars that show it's probably about 40 years old. Even so, the root isn't as large as some other roots he has that are much younger.

"Age has nothing to do with the size of the root," he explained, adding it's the growing conditions, especially the soil, that makes the difference.

Duncan knows that, in large part, because he's purchasing ginseng roots from people in some 30 Indiana counties. The business is time consuming, he said. There's a lot of risk involved because the markets fluctuate and there are state and federal regulations that must be met.

COVID-19 slowed production for the past couple of years, Duncan said. He believes that was due to both people catching COVID as well as receiving more government money, lessening the need to sell ginseng and other roots.

Mike Bartlett, who works for Duncan, agreed the past couple of years were a little slower. "This year it's been better," Bartlett said.

Both Duncan and Bartlett shared how important it is for people digging up ginseng to properly plant the red ripe berries and seeds near where they dig up the plant. Placing the seeds in the hole left by the plant isn't the correct way to ensure more ginseng grows in future years, Duncan said. Instead, he advises people to rake back the leaves in an area, dig into the soil in a line that's about a half-inch deep and then plant the seeds.

In the past few years, Minzes has overseen moving all the data for ginseng to an online form, which has helped law enforcement officials more quickly see what's been harvested, where and by whom.

"Today it's at their fingertips, they can literally get it in seconds," Minzes explained, adding, "There was a lot of illicit activity going on ... similar to with the scrap metal industry."

But that has diminished, she said, with improved access to current data.

For anyone looking to go out to harvest ginseng, they should know they cannot harvest it on federal property, including in the Hoosier National Forest, or on state property, including state forests and parks. Anyone hunting for it on private property must have written permission from the landowner. All harvesting must take place between Sept. 1 and Dec. 31. Each of the plants must have at least three prongs and each prong must have five leaves.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources has a list of the regulations on its web page

on ginseng at [bit.ly/3y6Voy](http://bit.ly/3y6Voy). S. Lt. Angela Goldman, with the DNR law enforcement, said there are two major things law enforcement is looking for this time of year: people who harvested ginseng before the season began and people who are hunting ginseng without permission or on state property.

Goldman explained harvesting ginseng before the season begins is illegal because the fruit and seeds aren't yet mature and therefore new plants can't grow in place of the ones that are harvested. It's a problem before Sept. 1, not after the season ends on Dec. 31 because once ginseng plants lose their leaves, it's almost impossible to locate them.

Property owners who have trail cams this time of year will contact state law enforcement when they see people out digging on their land, Goldman said. "Right now is the height of ginseng season, now that it's cooling down. ... We've got lots of diggers out there now."

Oftentimes people without permission will work in a two-person unit, with one driving the car and the other hunting for ginseng so there's no vehicle stopped beside the road.

She said any property owner who sees someone walking on their land with a trowel, knife or bag with roots, is encouraged to call the DNR central dispatch center at (812) 837-9536.

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Photo provided

Shawn Johnson shows off some of the raspberries he picked at the Mary Scott Community Orchard in Richmond. Raspberry bushes provided an abundant harvest this year. Trees, which take a bit longer to mature, produced a dozen apples.

## Fruitful ...

Continued from page 6B  
“These ideas he comes up with — I just go along for the ride.”

Bailey has a unique relationship with the orchard because he lives nearby.

“I can see it from the middle of the street in front of my house,” he said.

He sees himself as a kind of neighborhood ambassador for the project.

Bailey hopes his neighbors’ interest in the project will grow. He’s noticed more people stopping by to look around.

The orchard has a perimeter fence, but the gate is unlocked. Currently, signs offer information about the plantings. There are plans for a QR code “tour” of the pollinator garden. There are benches for relaxing. Area artists have painted pictures inspired by the community vision. The local library is developing a story walk — a series of signs around the orchard designed to get people of all ages talking about what they are seeing and experiencing.

And next summer, there

should be a lot more fruit to pick.

Mindy Wampler, another teacher involved with the project, is confident the apples will spark even more community interest because anyone can come in and pick them. At no charge.

“Anytime anyone hears the word ‘free,’ their ears prick up,” she said.

Wampler teaches applied skills for Richmond Community Schools’ Exceptional Student Education department. Working

in the orchard has had a profound effect on her students, who have helped with planting and maintenance from the beginning.

“They feel a part of it,” she said. “They know that their help is needed.”

After a unit on butterflies, Wampler’s students visited the pollinator garden and understood what they’d learned in a different way.

“It’s bringing the classroom alive,” she said.

As the orchard continues to

grow, Barbre hopes this kind of opportunity will be available to more and more students.

But that will require effort — physical upkeep of the area and a continued search for funds for improvement. An orchard in disrepair, Retz warns, could be removed.

Barbre is undaunted.

From the beginning, he said, “I very much believed it was possible to do, but I knew I couldn’t do it by myself.”

He didn’t have to.

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