

**INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY**  
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I had the opportunity to listen to Elwynn Taylor, Professor/Climatologist with the Department of Agronomy at Iowa State University, at the annual meeting held at the Iowa State University Northeast Iowa Research Farm in Nashua this past week. For those of you who have had an opportunity to hear Dr. Taylor speak, you know he is knowledgeable and very interesting. I thought you might be interested in what he had to say about the 2005 growing season. His predictions are based on history and other weather indicators. In this column, I will share with you a summary of the points Dr. Taylor made during his presentation.

Dr. Taylor handed out a fact sheet which discussed the transition of a nineteen-year cycle of weather risk to agricultural production into a six-year high risk period. Historically, there are two serious Corn Belt droughts during six years or a one-in-three risk of drought in any given year. This is compared with the previous twelve years when historical drought risk was one in twelve. The four hundred percent increase in historical drought risk makes modification of risk management procedures advisable.

Dr. Taylor pointed out that May through August of 2004 was unusually cool, and that September was warmer than usual, which resulted in near record soybean yields and a new record for corn yields. This historically occurs about one-in-ten years. There was a sudden El Nino strength that emerged in late February that may not persist. There is no record of widespread drought during an El Nino event in the U.S. Corn Belt. Accordingly, for the 2005 - 2010 period the historical drought risk is less than one in three if an El Nino is in place and is greater if a La Nina develops.

He also points out that soil moisture reserve as we go into 2005 appears to be normal. Spring is not expected to be excessively cold and the western Corn Belt may expect above usual winter moisture because of the weak El Nino. There are no indicators at this time of widespread drought developing in the Corn Belt for 2005. There is one indicator (warm sea surface temperature north of Hawaii) of a return to drought in the High Plains. With no strong trends in place, Dr. Taylor expects yields in 2005 to exceed the trend by two percent (about forty-two bushels per acre soybean and one hundred forty-five bushels per acre for corn nationally). He summed up his indicators by stating that weather conditions are seldom such that highly reliable forecasts are feasible. Leading weather indicators, however, have proven useful in the anticipation of above or below trend crop yields during the past decade. Indicator models are usually reliable to plus or minus five percent of actual yields.

As you make plans for the coming growing season you may want to keep this information in mind. For continuous weather forecasts you can visit ISU's website [www.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.extension.iastate.edu) and click on weather. If you would like a copy of Elwynn's remarks, contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.