

## Southwest Michigan Field Crops Updates September 6, 2019

**Unless we have a late-breaking topic to address, we are transitioning to monthly newsletters for the remainder of the 2019 growing season.** Here are updates from the MSU Extension Field Crops team in Southwest Michigan. If you have any items you would like me to include in future email updates—whether events you want others to know about or topics you would like to have addressed—please send me an email or call the office.

## Silk Nitrate and Soil Harvest Study Cooperators - Final Call

As we head into harvest season, I am finalizing the group of cooperators for the [stalk nitrate and soil health study](#) funded by MDARD's Fertilizer Grant and would welcome a few more. The goal of the study is to gather data from across the state in different management situations to look for trends. If you have a couple of commercial corn fields you are interested in learning more about with regards to soil health or if you would like to do a retrospective check on nitrogen management, let me know right away.

## USDA Opens Signup for Market Facilitation Program

Signup is now open for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program to assist farmers who continue to suffer from damages because of unjustified trade retaliation from foreign nations. Through MFP, USDA will provide up to \$14.5 billion in direct payments to impacted producers, part of a broader trade relief package announced in late July. The sign-up period runs through Dec. 6. MFP payments will be made to producers of certain non-specialty and specialty crops as well as dairy and hog producers. Contact your local FSA office for details.

## Prevented Plant Acres in Michigan

The following maps were developed by the FSA. It is interesting to see the acreage for each county and the crops prevented. Though we in the southwest were not

impacted to the extent as our friends in the southeast, central and thumb regions, we still have a significant number of acres that will need to be reconditioned for next year.

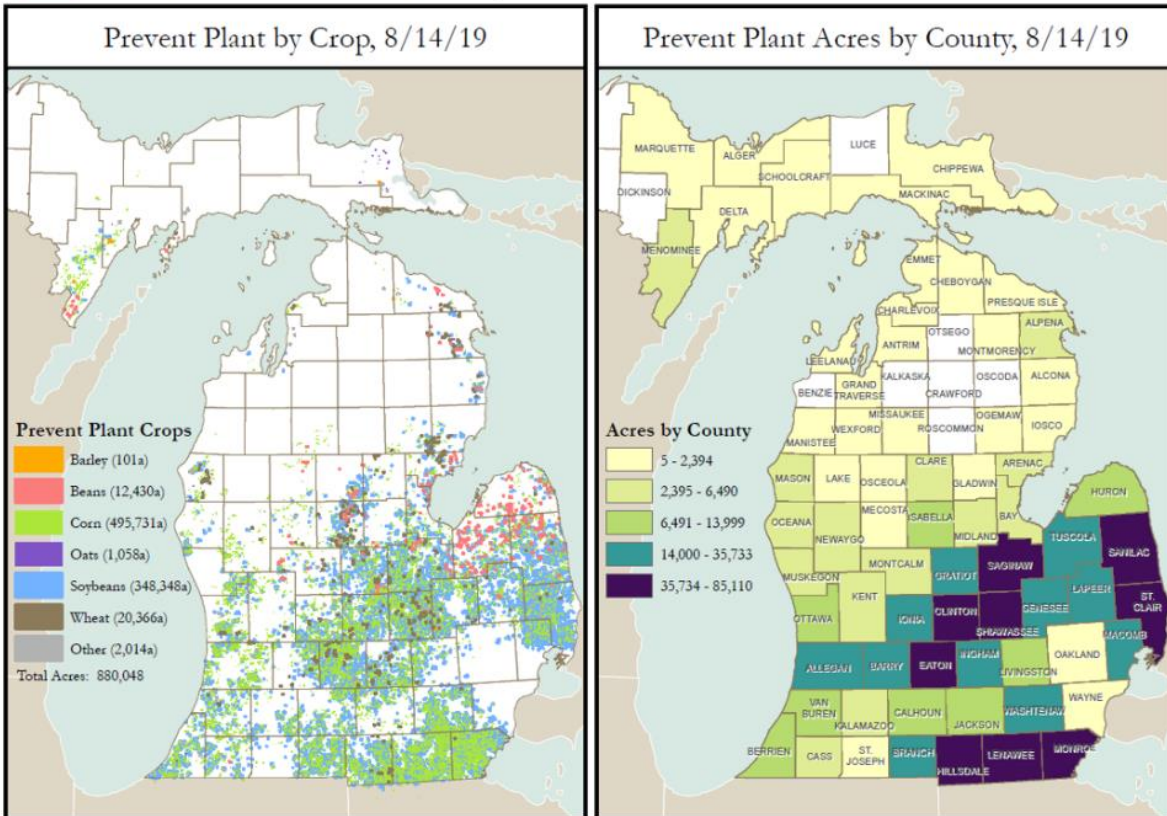
## Combine Calibration

The final session of the Field Crops Virtual Breakfast series for the season featured MSU's wheat specialist Dennis Pennington talking about "Calibrating Yield Monitors". Calibration is important to ensure accurate data collection to improve accuracy and precision for creating management zones, yield maps, or variable rate prescriptions. Monitors have a moisture monitor and an impact sensor that send voltage readings that are used to calculate yield. Hand-held moisture measuring equipment is highly variable, so it is best to take samples to the elevator or a higher quality device when calibrating. Each combine is different, so reading the owner's manual to calibrate is essential. Use the advanced calibration method rather than the "wizard" to allow for multi-point calibration. This avoids over- and under-estimation when yield is between the high and low yield points. You can do this by running with several cut widths or at different ground speeds to get multi-point data. Several settings that need to be calibrated include distance traveled, temperature, weight, mass flow vibration, lag time, cut width, GPS offsets, and others. Calibrations should be done at least once per year and ideally once per crop each year. To hear more details from this presentation and to sign up to receive emails about next year's series, visit the [Virtual Breakfast webpage](#) on the [Field Crops team's website](#).

## Fall Management of Alfalfa

(from A&L Lab's September newsletter)

Fall is a critical time of year to manage alfalfa to ensure maximum productivity and stand longevity. Unlike annual crops such as corn and soybean, fall is when the alfalfa plant begins to store additional sugar, protein, and nutrient reserves in the crown and root system, which will provide protection from the cold winter weather and facilitate vigorous growth next spring. In a year such as this one, where hot and dry weather this summer was especially stressful to the plant, it is crucial to allow the alfalfa crop to prepare for the cold months ahead.



Map Created 8/20/19, sja. Data Source: CLU extracted on 8/14/19, Crop Acreage Reporting Certification Data extracted from EDW Data Marts Acreage > County Crop Acreage reports on 8/15/19.

One of the most important management practices involves timely harvest. Final cuttings should be made early enough in the fall to allow the crop to regrow adequately and replenish necessary reserves before a killing frost and should generally be completed by early to mid-September, depending on your location and local climate. More guidance on the exact timing can be obtained from state Extension publications or your local Extension agent. This is also a good time of year to assess the overall health and quality of an alfalfa crop, including evaluating stand density and root and crown health, allowing you to address any problems before they become serious.

Also critical for maintaining a successful alfalfa stand is managing the fertility of the crop. Fall is a good time of year to make fertilizer and lime applications. Low levels of nutrients, particularly potassium (K), can also lead to reduced stand health and vigor. In addition to the other essential functions of K in the plant, K plays an important role in the plants' ability to resist subfreezing temperatures, and low levels of K in the plant can lead to increased winterkill if conditions are favorable. In addition, maintaining a proper pH with liming is critical for a number of reasons, including maximizing the availability of other nutrients and ensuring successful nitrogen fixation. Since lime requires adequate soil moisture and time in order to

affect soil pH, making lime applications in the fall allows the liming material time to react and can have a greater effect on next year's crop.

Careful management of your alfalfa crop this fall can mean a stronger, more vigorous crop next year. Therefore, taking some time to care for your alfalfa crop today can mean better results tomorrow and beyond.

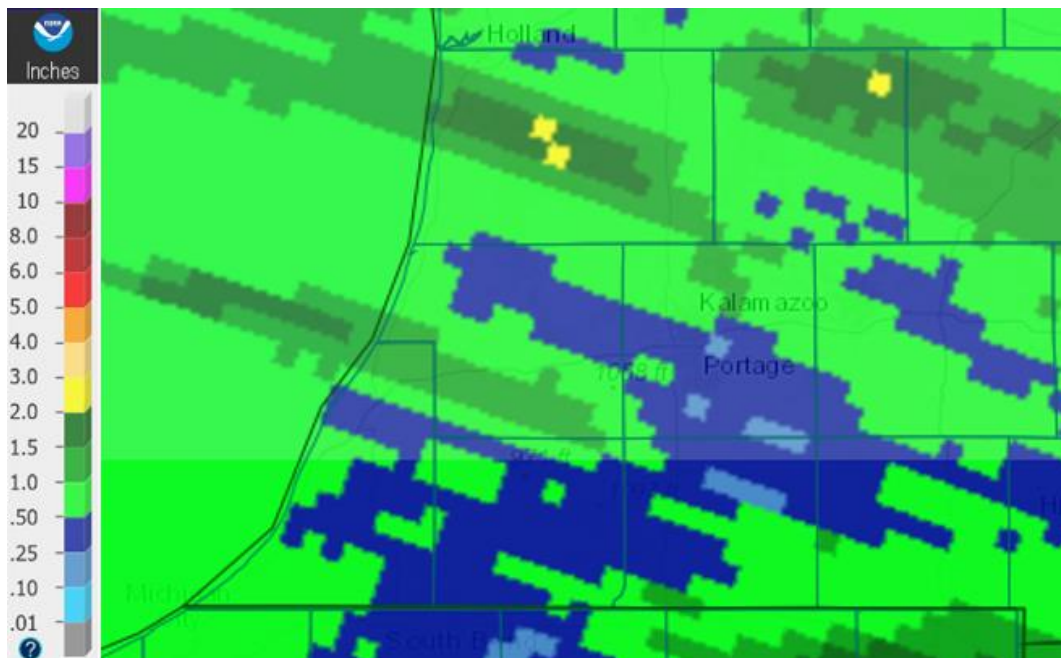
## Weather and Crop Update

Last week was 2-3 degrees cooler than normal which did not help much in maturing the crops in a timely manner. Rainfall this past week ranged from 0.08" in Ceresco to 1.4" in Charlotte with an average of 1/2" for the region. We lost ground with accumulated growing degree days, but we are still roughly a week ahead of normal. Some light scattered frost visited the northern lower peninsula, but no other frost events are predicted at this point. The weekend should be fair and dry with the next chance of rain not coming until the middle of next week, and that is not expected to bring significant amounts with less than 1/2" predicted by next Thursday. Hurricane Dorian will not impact us here in Michigan. The 6-10 day outlook is calling for warmer than normal temperatures heading into the second and third weeks of September. Precipitation forecasts are variable, but Jeff thinks we will be below normal for the rest of the month. The 3-4 week outlook for the end of September is also calling for warmer and drier than normal conditions.

MSU Extension's field crop pathologist Martin Chilvers says tar spot is less severe overall this year but he has seen some isolated hot-spots within fields. No lodging has been seen to date. We have one confirmed field in St. Joseph County where the corn husks have turned nearly white and the tar spot lesions (black flecks) are visible throughout plant.

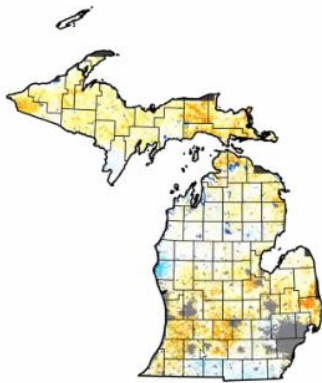


Tar Sport confirmed cases to date in 2019.



Rainfall totals for the past 7 days as of September 5<sup>th</sup> in southwest Michigan. Totals ranged from 0.08” in Ceresco to 1.39” in Charlotte with a regional average of 0.54”.

**Quick Drought Response Index**  
Michigan



September 1, 2019  
(Week 35)



**U.S. Drought Monitor**  
Michigan



August 27, 2019  
(Released Thursday, Aug. 28, 2019)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

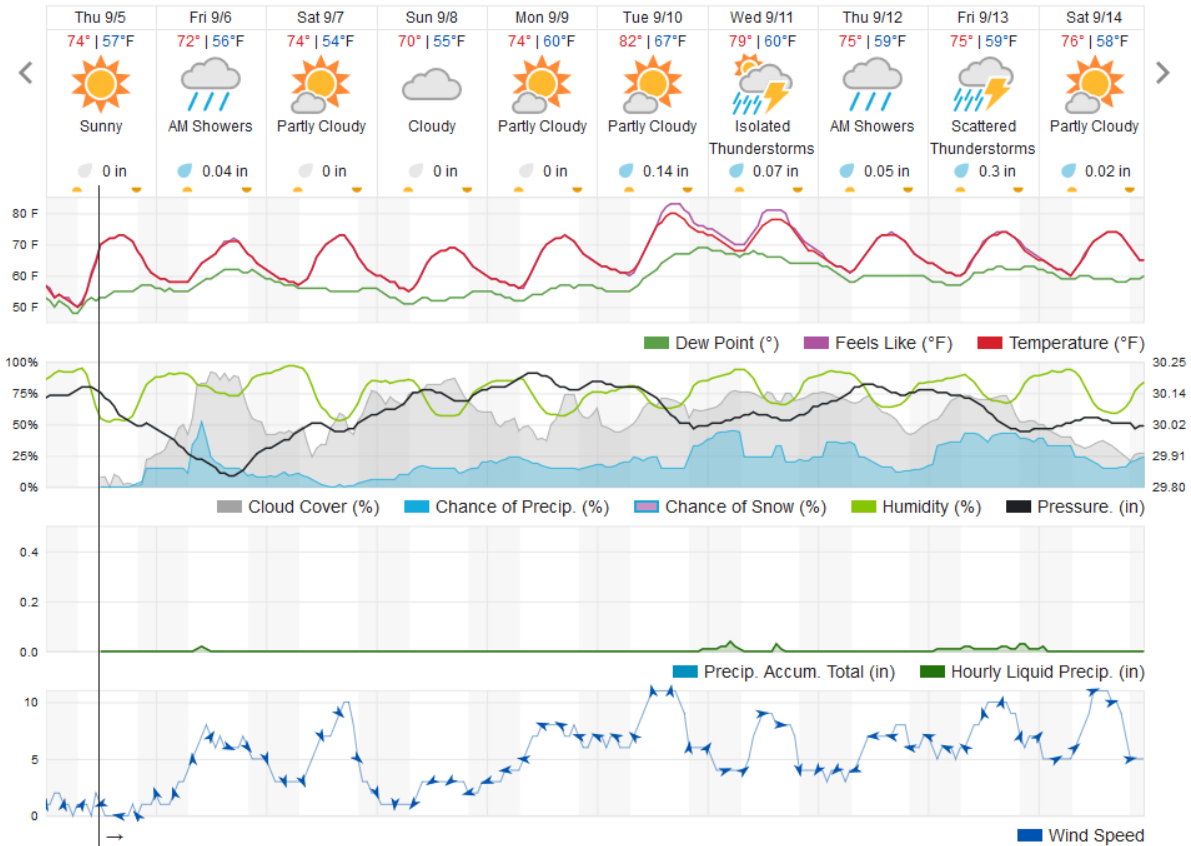


The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

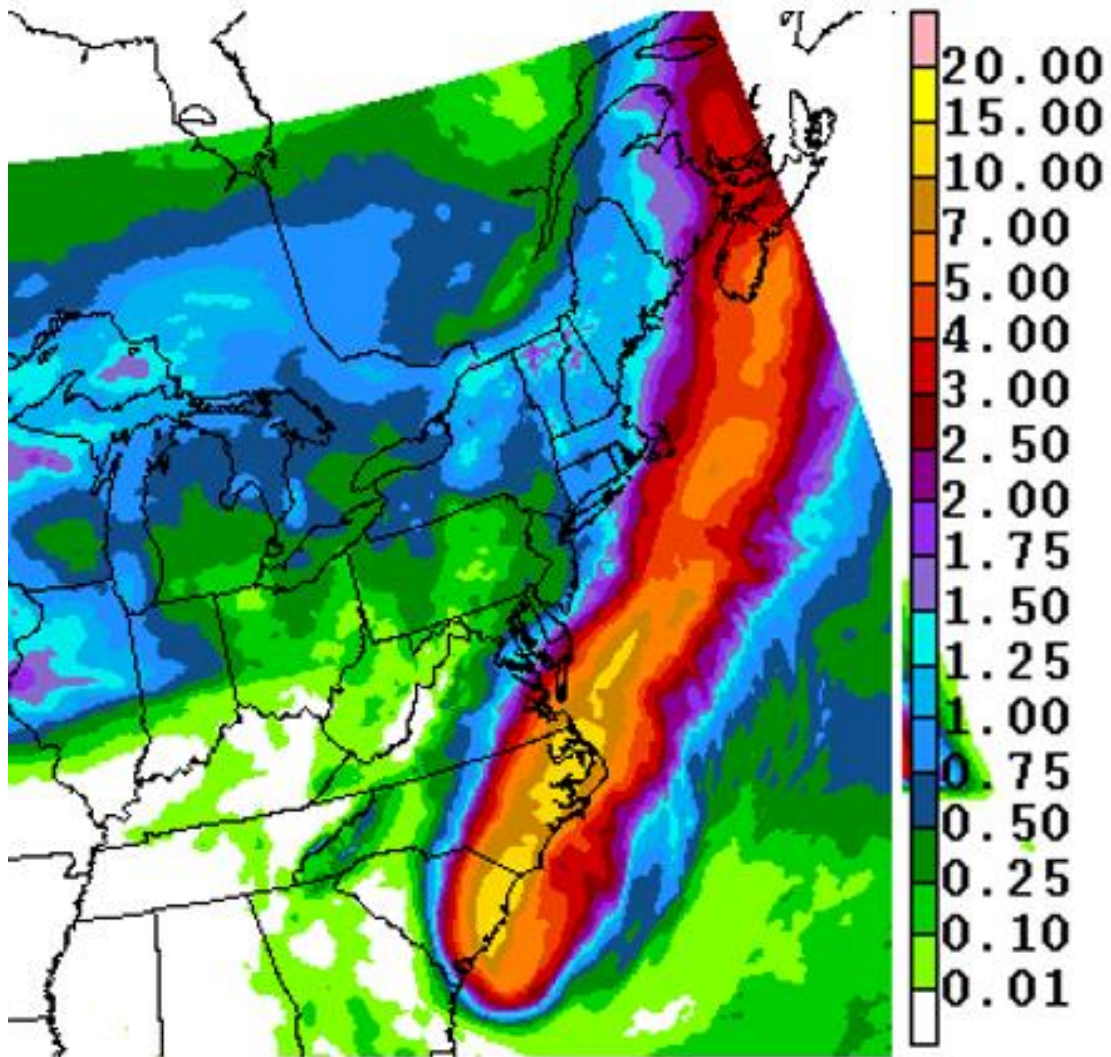
Author:  
Jessica Blunden  
NCEI/NOAA

USDA, NOAA, and other agency logos.  
droughtmonitor.unl.edu

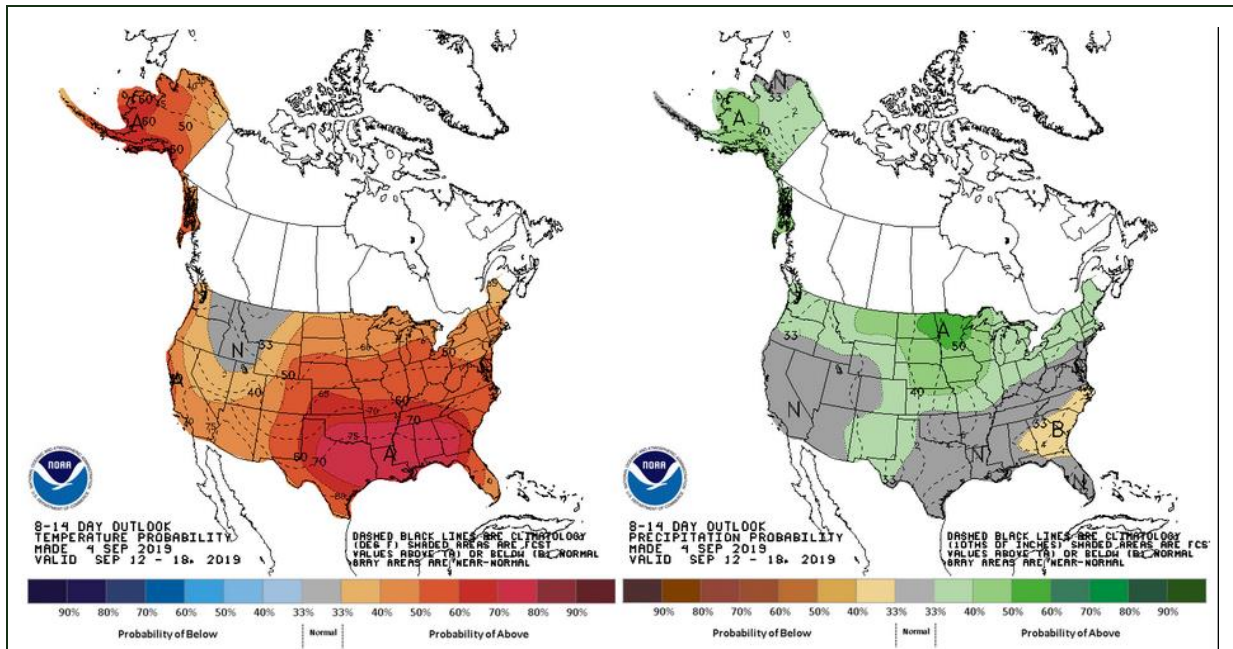
The latest version of the drought monitor now includes much of the south central and southwest region.



The 10-day forecast for Centreville according to wunderground.com.



Forecast for precipitation totals for the week of Sep 5-12, 2019....less than 1/2 inch AGAIN by next Thursday.



National Weather Service 8-14 day outlook (Sep 12-18) for temperature (left) and precipitation (right)—the 6-10 day outlook is essentially the same. Broken record: MSU’s ag climatologist Jeff Andresen says he would put our chances of precip at normal or even below-normal again which looks similar to the 3-4 week outlook.

## Calendar

Titles are clickable links to online content when highlighted and underlined

**Sep 5** **Cass MAEAP Field Day**. 4-7pm. Crane Pond DNR office, 60887 M-40, Jones, MI. Managing for Forestry Health and Profit. Program offers 2 RUP credits. Co-sponsored by SWMLC, DNR, SWxSW CISMA & MAEAP. Dinner provided to registrants. Call Erez Brandvain, the Cass County MAEAP Technician, at 269-228-7084, to register or email [Erez.Brandvain@macd.org](mailto:Erez.Brandvain@macd.org).

**Sep 12** **Swine Influenza Symposium**. 8:30am-5:00pm. Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, East Lansing. MSU Extension in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services will be providing a one-day training entitled, *Keys to Success: A Symposium on Educating Youth and Adults about Swine Influenza and Other Zoonotic Diseases*. Registration, parking and lunch are free. Register online. If you cannot attend the event in person but would like to participate via Zoom, please register and select the box under “cannot attend in person.”

**Sep 18** **Tar Spot Field Day**. 2-5pm. 6270 116<sup>th</sup> St, Fennville, MI. This program will discuss tar spot incidence and severity in 2019, development of the disease this season and what yield impacts we might expect this season. There is no



cost for this program, but we do request that you register for the event so that we can contact you in case the weather forces us to reschedule the field day.

**Sep 24**      **2019 Soybean Harvest Equipment Field Day**. 10:45am-3:30pm. 1350 12 Mile Road, Burlington, MI, Calhoun County. The following topics and equipment will be demonstrated: Draper heads, auger heads, air-assisted reels, harvest loss measurements, and how ground speed and reel settings affect harvest losses. Cost is free, lunch included, pre-registration is requested (269-673-0370 ext. 2562) before noon on Friday, Sept. 13th.

**Sep 25**      **Calhoun County Cover Crop Demonstration Plots**. MSU Extension in cooperation with the Homer FFA is planning a short field tour of cover crop demonstration plots in Homer, MI on Wednesday, Sept. 25 from 10am-12pm. The plots are located at 24425 M-60, Homer, MI. Plots will include a replication of statewide strip plots as well as several recommended mixes for a variety of goals.

## MSU Extension Digest Briefs

### Options for immature corn

**PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2019**

One challenge this year is wondering whether the corn crop will mature before frost and what to do with it if it does not. This is an opportune year for cash crop producers and livestock producers to be talking with one another about feed options.

### Cover crop recipes: Post corn, use cereal rye

**PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2019**

The following recipe provides an introductory approach to integrating cover crops into a corn rotation going to soybean.

### Using climatology to estimate first freezing temperatures of the fall season

**PUBLISHED ON AUGUST 30, 2019**

Statistics help narrow down the timing of first freezing temperatures across Michigan.

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