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Covered corn: Farmers should be OK as long as they have insurance, experts say

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REINBECK - Nearly a half-billion dollars of corn still stands in Iowa fields. Crop insurance experts say farmers need not worry, their investment should be safe.

Monday's U.S. Department of Agriculture Crops and Weather Report said 4 percent of Iowa's corn crop is trapped by about a foot of snow. Fieldwork stopped after the worst snowstorm statewide since 1971.

Producers who didn't get all their corn combined before last week's blizzard likely will have to wait until spring to finish harvest. A University of Wisconsin study shows losses typically range from 24 to 65 percent if gleaned in April or March, respectively. The weather, wildlife and deteriorating stalks all contribute to reduced yields.

Most crop insurance policies expired Dec. 10. William Edwards, an Iowa State University Extension economist, said producers are contacting him wondering if their stranded corn is still covered.

As long as producers notify their insurance agents by Christmas Day, provisions are in place for coverage to continue. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency, which regulates multiple peril crop insurance policies, a weather-delayed harvest is an insured cause of loss.

"They will probably get extensions," Edwards said. "The deadline (is in place) because they don't want people to procrastinate. I don't think that's going on this year. It's not an isolated incident."

An estimated 534,000 acres of corn didn't get touched. Slow-maturing crops, wet corn and a soggy fall are the primary reasons.

Corn statewide averaged 183 bushels per acre. On Monday morning, July corn on the Chicago Board of Trade sold for \$4.28 per bushel. Nearly \$420 million of corn is out in the elements.

Crop insurance will cover loss of quality, reduced yields and revenue losses if revenue coverage was chosen. The cost of drying, if needed in the spring, is not covered.

Matt Wyatt, a claims supervisor for Rain and Hail based in Johnston, is working with clients to make sure harvest extension paperwork is in place. Wyatt, who lives in Reinbeck, covers the entire eastern half of Iowa. He said some farmers have as little as 7 acres remaining and as much as 700.

"A lot of people are worried about (losses). We're doing the best we can to make sure they're covered," Wyatt said.

The recent snow and harvest delays all occurred prior to the Dec. 10 deadline, Wyatt said.

The RMA suggests farmers document crop conditions and actions taken in order to receive an accurate claim payment if one is due. Harvest extensions are granted to settle claims based on production, not appraised value.

Bill Madsen of Brummel Madsen & Associates in Cedar Falls is confident farmers with crop insurance and corn still out will be covered.

"As long as they turn in claims, they're still covered," Madsen said. "We would just adjust the harvest date."