

THE SEED AVAILABILITY PICTURE - 1987

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Never before in the history of grass seed production have we seen shortages like we have seen in the 1985 and 1986 harvest years. Because of 100 degree heat during bluegrass pollination last May, the 1986 crop of common Kentucky bluegrass was only 60 percent of a normal crop. Proprietary bluegrass yields, such as Touchdown, Adelphi, and Eclipse, were only 45 to 50 percent of a normal crop this past year.

This poor crop came on the heels of another poor crop in 1985. During 1985, proprietary Kentucky bluegrasses yielded only 40 percent of normal, and 90 percent of normal for common Kentucky bluegrass. Therefore, in early 1986, there was no inventory carry-over of bluegrass seed from the previous year. Normally, nearly half of the bluegrass inventory is carried over from the previous year. Inventory carryover during 85, 86 and 87 was essentially nil.

Yields of the tall fescues, fine fescues, and perennial ryegrasses was fair to good in 1986. Demand for these grasses has remained strong, with the exception of the fine fescues, where demand has remained stable. This has resulted in stable, but not strong fine fescue prices which should continue into the future.

Acreage planted to bluegrasses in 1986 was adequate to supply market needs if yields had been adequate. Acreage planted to Kentucky bluegrass is expected to increase by 20-30 percent in the next two years. This will ensure an adequate supply of Kentucky bluegrass seed in the future, with the distinct possibility of prices dropping by 1988. Acreages of tall fescues are expected to increase 25 to 30 percent in the year to come. Ryegrass and bentgrass acreages are expected to increase by 15 percent and 35 percent, respectively. Demand for these grasses is expected to remain strong and no price slide is expected in spite of greater production.

Increased demand for seed from low interest home loans, participants in the CRP Program, from the lawn care industry, the sod industry, and for overseas has helped maintain the price of grass seed. New acreages, improved varieties, and (hopefully) good growing weather should ensure an adequate supply of turfgrass seed in coming years.