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PREVIEW

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**Agroclimatic procedures related to crop production in the North  
Central Region of the U.S.A.**

**Aceves-Navarro, Lorenzo Armando, Ph.D.**

**The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1988**

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PREVIEW

AGROCLIMATIC PROCEDURES RELATED TO CROP PRODUCTION  
IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION OF THE U. S. A.

by  
Lorenzo Armando Aceves-Navarro

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

Major: Horticulture and Forestry

Under the Supervision of Professor R. E. Neild

Lincoln, Nebraska

November, 1987

**TITLE**

Agroclimatic Procedures Related to Crop Production in the  
North Central Region of the U.S.A.

**BY**

Lorenzo Armando Aceves-Navarro

**APPROVED**

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AGROCLIMATIC PROCEDURES RELATED TO CROP PRODUCTION  
IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION OF THE U. S. A.

Lorenzo A. Aceves-Navarro, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1987

Adviser: Ralph E. Neild

Though commonly available for many locations, summaries of weather normals on fixed time periods of one month are too long and out of phase with critical operations and stage of crops development such that their use in agriculture is limited. Discussed here is a procedure whereby these monthly data are used to derive daily normals that are more closely oriented to agricultural applications.

Agroclimatic parameters were developed for use in conjunction with these derived daily normals to determine and evaluate the growing seasons for a series of different crops. Normals from 132 stations were used to map determinations of the growing seasons for wheat, a cool season crop, and corn, a warm season crop in the North Central Region. Also presented are maps showing the potential for a second "double crop" after wheat and agroclimatic zones for corn. Applications of daily normals and agroclimatic parameters to other crops and agricultural situations at specific locations in the North Central Region are also discussed.

PREVIEW

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, my wife,  
Alejandrina, my son, Christian, and my daughter,  
Lorena, for their support and comprehension.

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PREVIEW

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
LIST OF APPENDIX TABLES .....	ix
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION ..	1
1. Objectives .....	2
II. AGROCLIMATIC NORMALS .....	3
A. Generation of daily values .....	5
B. Climatic data .....	9
C. Agroclimatic parameters .....	11
1. Beginning of the growing season .....	12
2. Ending of the growing season .....	17
3. Growing degree days as related to thermal capacity and crop phenology .....	20
3.1. GDD phenology models .....	27
III. AGROCLIMATIC NORMALS FOR WHEAT AND CORN IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION .....	32
A. Agroclimatic normals for wheat in the NCR .....	33
1. Beginning of the wheat growing season .....	33
2. Date of maturity and end of the wheat growing cycle .....	35
3. Moisture balance in the wheat growing season .....	39
4. Potential double cropping after wheat .....	43

B. Agroclimatic normals for corn in the NCR .....	54
1. Beginning of the corn growing season and earliest planting date .....	55
2. Ending of the corn growing season .....	56
3. Length of the corn growing season .....	58
4. The latest corn planting date in the NCR .....	59
5. Thermal capacity of the corn growing season .....	61
6. Moisture balance in the corn growing season .....	63
7. Agroclimatic zones for corn in the NCR .....	70
IV. EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF AGROCLIMATIC NORMALS AS APPLIED TO AGRICULTURAL SITUATIONS AT SPECIFIC LOCATIONS .....	73
A. Determination of the planting and harvest season for a series of vegetable crops .....	73
B. Determination of GDD requirements for developing a sequential planting schedule for sweet corn .....	79
C. Effect of planting time on different corn developing phases .....	81
D. Expected maturity dates and days from planting for different corn hybrids, locations and time of planting .....	85
V. LITERATURE CITED .....	89
VI. APPENDIX .....	101

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Monthly temperature °F (Y) and Julian day number at the mid-point of each month (X) at Albert Lea, Minnesota. -----	6
2	Daily temperatures generated by AGCLIM for Albert Lea, Minnesota. -----	10
3	Average daily temperature normals during the planting seasons for grain crops of the principal growing areas in the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. -----	14
4	Temperature parameters to determine the beginning of the growing season for different crops in the North Central Region. -----	15
5	Daily average temperature thresholds for the ending of the growing season for different crops. -----	18
6	Reported base temperatures for GDD computations for different crops. -----	24
7	Ranges of growing degree day requirements for selected crops. -----	25
8	Growing degree day requirements for different corn phenological stages. -----	29
9	Growing degree day requirements for different winter wheat phenological stages. -----	30
10	Growing degree day requirements for different grain sorghum phenological stages. -----	31
11	Daily temperatures generated by AGCLIM for Colby, Kansas. -----	34
12	Daily accumulated GDD-40 generated by AGCLIM for Colby, Kansas. -----	36
13	Daily accumulated precipitation generated by AGCLIM for Colby, Kansas. -----	39
14	Daily accumulated potential evapotranspiration generated by AGCLIM for Colby, Kansas. -----	40

## LIST OF TABLES (continued)

TABLE		PAGE
15	Daily accumulated GDD-50 generated by AGCLIM for Colby, Kansas. -----	46
16	Daily temperatures generated by AGCLIM for David City, Nebraska. -----	75
17	Latest harvest date parameters for peas, carrots, sweet corn, snap beans and cucumbers. -----	76
18.	Physiological and real time required to harvest peas, carrots, sweet corn, snap beans and cucumbers. -----	77
19	Growing, planting and harvest season for peas, carrots, sweet corn, snap beans and cucumbers at David City, Nebraska. -----	78
20	Planting and estimated harvest dates for different sweet corn strains at Kenton, Ohio. --	80
21	Accumulated precipitation and average temperature in the corn reproductive phase for different planting dates at Williamsburg, Iowa. -----	84
22	Field corn hybrid maturity classification. -----	85
23	Expected dates and number of days from planting for specific GDD accumulations at different planting times and locations in the NCR. -----	88

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Bar graph of normal monthly average temperatures for Albert Lea, Minnesota. -----	6
2	Actual monthly temperature normals and estimated daily temperature at the mid-point of each month for Albert Lea, Minnesota. -----	8
3	Locations and distribution of climatic stations used for developing agroclimatic normals. -----	11
4	Relationship of latitudes and seasonal temperature patterns to the beginning of the growing season for wheat and corn at different locations. -----	16
5	Relationship between the seasonal temperature curve and the growing season for grain sorghum at Hebron, Nebraska. -----	19
6	Relationship between the seasonal temperature curve and the growing season for peas at Hebron, Nebraska. -----	21
7	Comparison of the seasonal temperature curves and the thermal capacity for warm season crops at Atkinson, Nebraska, and Alma, Michigan. -----	26
8	Date of first spring occurrence of 37° F (beginning of the wheat growing season) in the NCR. -----	35
9	Date of accumulation of 2400° (GDD-40) since the first spring occurrence of 37° F (estimated wheat maturity date) in the NCR. ----	37
10	Number of days to accumulate 2400° (GDD-40) in the NCR. -----	38
11	Accumulated precipitation between first spring occurrence of 37° F and 2400° (GDD-40) (wheat growing season) in the NCR. -----	41
12	Accumulated potential evapotranspiration between first spring occurrence of 37° F and 2400° (GDD-40) (Wheat growing season) in the NCR. -----	42



## LIST OF FIGURES (continued)

FIGURE		PAGE
13	Moisture balance between first spring occurrence of 37° F and 2400° (GDD-40) (wheat growing season) in the NCR. -----	43
14	Seasonal temperature patterns as related to the thermal requirements for wheat and the potential thermal capacity for double cropping at Colby, Kansas. -----	44
15	Days remaining for double cropping after a 2400° (GDD-40) wheat strain in the NCR. -----	47
16	GDD-50 remaining for double cropping after a 2400° (GDD-40) wheat strain in the NCR. -----	48
17	Accumulated precipitation for double cropping after a 2400° (GDD-40) wheat strain in the NCR. -----	49
18	Accumulated potential evapotranspiration for double cropping after a 2400° (GDD-40) wheat strain in the NCR. -----	50
19	Moisture balance index for double cropping after a 2400° (GDD-40) wheat strain in the NCR. -----	51
20	Potential areas for planting grain crops after a 2400° (GDD-40) wheat strain in the NCR. -----	52
21	Potential area for planting grain crops after a wheat strains requiring 1800° and 2400° (GDD-40) in the NCR. -----	54
22	Date of the first spring occurrence of 55° F (beginning of the growing season for corn) in the NCR. -----	56
23	Date of last autumn occurrence of 57° F or first autumn freeze (ending of the growing season for corn) in the NCR. -----	57

## LIST OF FIGURES (continued)

FIGURE		PAGE
24	The number of days between the first spring occurrence of 55° F and last autumn occurrence of 55° F or first autumn freeze (length of the corn growing season) in the NCR. -----	58
25	Seasonal temperature pattern as related to the latest corn planting date at Ankeny, Iowa. -	60
26	Latest planting date of a corn hybrid requiring 2400° (GDD-50) in the NCR. -----	61
27	Accumulated GDD-50 between the first spring occurrence of 55° F and the last autumn occurrence of 55° F or first autumn freeze (thermal capacity during the corn growing season) in the NCR. -----	62
28	Total precipitation between the first spring occurrence of 55° F and last autumn occurrence of 55° F or first autumn freeze (Corn growing season) in the NCR. -----	64
29	Total potential evapotranspiration between first spring occurrence of 55° F and last autumn occurrence of 55° F or first autumn freeze (corn growing season) in the NCR. -----	65
30	Moisture deficit in inches between the first spring occurrence of 55° F and the last autumn occurrence of 55° F or first autumn freeze (corn growing season) in the NCR. -----	66
31	Moisture balance index (ratio PPT?PET) during the corn growing season in the NCR. -----	68
32	Moisture balance index based on growing season and preseason precipitation in the NCR. -	70
33	Agroclimatic zones for corn, based on thermal capacity and moisture balance index in the NCR. -----	72

## LIST OF FIGURES (continued)

FIGURE		PAGE
34	Growing, planting and harvest seasons for a series of vegetable crops at David City, Nebraska. -----	78
35	Development rates of corn at different planting dates at Williamsburg, Iowa. -----	83

PREVIEW

## LIST OF APPENDIX TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
A1	Name, number and geographical coordinates of selected stations in the North Central Region. -----	102
A2	Average air temperatures at planting time for different seasons and crops in the North Central Region. -----	105

PREVIEW

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. General description of the North Central Region

The North Central Region (NCR) of the United States consists of the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The region is located between 36° and 49° north latitude and between 80° and 104° west longitude. The NCR includes the Corn Belt and the northern half of the Wheat Belt (Havighurst, (41)). Although the NCR represents only 21% of the total area of the continental United States, it is the most important grain-producing region in the U.S.A. (White et al., (126)). It produces 85% of the corn, 80% of the oats, 71% of the soybeans, 71% of the rye, 49% of the wheat, and 46% of the grain sorghum in the U.S.A. It is also an important livestock region, with 79% of the hogs, 45% of the dairy cows, and 40% of the beef cattle in the U.S.A. It is also the largest grain-producing region in the world (USDA, (118)).

The topography and soils are relatively uniform throughout the NCR. However, a perpendicular pattern of isotherms and isohyets, with temperature decreasing from south to north and precipitation decreasing from east to west, creates a complex interaction affecting the time and duration of the growing season and the moisture available for crops.

In temperate regions, the growing season is largely determined by temperature. However, only a few of the many climatological definitions of the growing season are crop-oriented. Realistically, the growing season begins when the temperature becomes warm enough to initiate seed germination or break dormancy of overwintering crops such as winter wheat or alfalfa. The season ends when temperature becomes too high or too low for crop growth or crop quality.

The growing season should be warm and moist enough to meet the thermal and moisture requirements for different crop species. Reported in the literature are temperature thresholds for determining the beginning and ending of the growing season. The thermal requirements of certain crop species and strains are also reported. Temperature thresholds and temperature requirements for other crop species and strains can be determined from analyses of climatological and phenological data. Monthly temperature and precipitation normals are available for climatic stations throughout the NCR. Statistical techniques are also available for developing necessary daily temperature and precipitation values from these monthly climatic normals.

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to: 1) describe the use of monthly climatic summaries to develop agriculturally

oriented normals; 2) map agroclimatic normals for important cool and warm season crops in the NCR; and 3) present examples of the use of agroclimatic normals in different agricultural situations at selected specific locations in the NCR.

## II. AGROCLIMATIC NORMALS

Monthly normals of temperature and precipitation (1951 to 1980) are available for many locations in the NCR states (NOAA, (86)). These data allow comparison of seasonal climatic patterns between locations and are useful for planning certain activities. However, monthly climatic normals are often too long and out of phase with critical stages of crop development so that their use in agriculture is limited (Neild et al., (77)).

Life on earth evolved in a changing environment. Daily and seasonal changes in light, temperature and moisture are related to the earth's 24-hour rotation about its axis and its 365-day revolution around the sun. In temperate regions, plant growth and development are closely related to the occurrence of critical values in the rise or fall of seasonal temperature. They are also related to accumulations of temperature and precipitation between developmental stages. For example, winter wheat usually breaks dormancy when normal daily temperature first rises above 37° F. Corn

is usually first planted when normal temperature first rises above 55° F (Kincer, (57)). Studies with alfalfa in Minnesota show that about 1035° growing degree days above 36° F (GDD-36) are needed to reach first cutting (Sharrat, (108)). Studies in the U.S.A. (Michigan and Nebraska), Canada, England and U.S.S.R. show that the optimum time for planting winter wheat is also temperature related. This optimum period usually first occurs in September or October, when the temperature decreases to about 60° F and when there are only about 450°-550° F (GDD-40°) remaining for the seedling to develop three leaves (Bootsma and Suzuki (10), Wiese et al. (127), Croxall and Smith (25), Fernsted and Dreier (31), and Fedoseev (30)). Such daily temperature averages and accumulations may be used as agroclimatic parameters. They are not time-restrictive, but permit critical stages of plant development and associated agricultural operations for a particular location to be oriented to climatic patterns on a phenological or bioclimatic time scale. Thus, in temperate regions, daily average temperature can be used to determine the usual time when seasonal temperatures are warm or cool enough to initiate or limit plant growth. Daily temperature accumulations enable estimations of the expected times of occurrence of different stages of crop development and the moisture available for growth. Daily climatic normals are needed before parameters such as these can be used (Neild et al., (79)).