

Wet Weather Slows Kansas Soybean Harvest, Raises Risk of Pod Shattering

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According to the U.S. Drought Monitor website, as of Tuesday, October 28, 2025 at 8am (weekly reporting deadline), most of eastern Kansas is at D0(abnormally dry) to D1(moderate drought conditions). While our pastures and wheat acres were needing the moisture, the recent rains and wet weather have delayed soybean harvest and increased the risk of pod shattering.

Prolonged wet conditions can cause soybeans to reabsorb moisture after pods have dried. When alternating dry and wet periods occur, the pods swell and shrink, creating stress that can cause them to split open and release seeds prematurely.

“If moisture reaches the seeds, they may begin to sprout in the pod,” said agricultural specialist Ignacio Ciampitti. “Once seeds fall to the ground, that’s direct yield loss before harvest.”

Even a small number of lost seeds can add up quickly. Research shows that just four seeds per square foot left on the soil surface equals roughly one bushel per acre of yield loss.

Once conditions allow harvest to resume, farmers are encouraged to prioritize fields showing early signs of shattering or sprouting to minimize losses and protect seed quality. Early sprouting greatly reduces overall seed quality.

Several factors can contribute to pod shattering, including nutrient deficiencies, insect or hail damage, and—most notably this year—unfavorable weather. Management strategies such as timely harvest and careful combine adjustments can help reduce yield losses.

Harvesting soybeans before all the leaves have dropped can be challenging, as the plants can gum up the combine, but taking the time to work slowly and using well-maintained, sharp equipment can pay off in yield preservation.

Farmers will need vigilance and careful management remain key to protecting both yield and seed quality to finish up this challenging crop production year.

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