



Arkansas Cotton Update



July 11, 2008

Tom Barber - Editor

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Cotton Status (Tom Barber - Cotton Specialist)

The Arkansas cotton crop is still behind, but reports released Monday, June 7 from the USDA Agriculture Statistics Service indicate that the majority of the cotton crop (61%) is in good to excellent condition, 35% fair and 4% in poor condition. Rainfall that has fallen across the majority of the state has quickly shown the benefit in several fields. Reports indicate that 0.2 to over 2 inches has fallen in several areas across eastern Arkansas; however, there are still many areas that are very dry and need a rain desperately. Fruit retention is still extremely high in most fields; however, it should be watched closely because this cotton will most likely begin to shed within the next couple of weeks. The progress report released on June 7th indicated that approximately 98% of the crop was squaring, which is comparative to this time last year and the five-year average. However, the report indicated that only 8% of the crop was setting bolls by the end of last week. This percentage of boll set is way behind last year's 40% and the three-year average of 31%. The majority of the crop should be blooming by the first part of next week. Once the Arkansas crop moves in to the second or third week of bloom the potential for small boll shed will increase. Cotton sheds naturally, and we have never been able to keep all of the fruit through the bloom period. However, as much as possible stress should be managed to reduce the severity of the shed. Appropriate nutrient levels, adequate moisture and practicing IPM are the main factors to reduce stresses as much as possible. Obviously, there are many environmental stresses that we cannot control, but we should focus on the ones we can to reduce stress on the cotton plant as much as possible.

Verification Program Update - (Frank Groves – Area Agronomist)

Although irrigation has been occurring for several weeks, water may not have been reaching the root zone. Mark Brawner (Lee County agent) dug a hole in the center of the bed a few hours after an irrigation event. He found very little moisture at a depth of 12 inches. Water was simply flushing through the field and failing to move laterally into the seedbed (Figure 1). Part of the problem could be attributed to the use of a middle sweep. In the past when cotton failed to develop at a satisfactory rate, we cultivated and followed with irrigation. This is the first year since we abandoned cultivation that we have been dry enough to notice the difference. Cultivation allowed water to slowly soak. Middle sweeps often times have the opposite effect. The rate of cotton growth appeared to improve slightly over the last week. The root zone has finally made it to the water furrow center and improved soil moisture. Irrigation should continue at once per week.

Growth and development is good in most CRVP fields. A few fields have reached first flower (apogee) while most are probably a week away. As previously mentioned, the lack of adequate soil moisture has been difficult from a plant development standpoint. The target development curve of COTMAN has an apogee of 9.2 nodes above white flower. Of the fields that have flowered, none has reached that mark (Table 1). That value is important because it is an indication of "plant horsepower." Plants with apogee values significantly less than

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9.2 are at risk of early cutout. The St. Francis County field had an apogee of 6.1 and is in desperate need of rainfall. Although the field is pivot irrigated, approximately 40% of the field is outside of the pivot. Several fields across the state are in a similar situation, and rainfall is the only solution.

Square retention was in the mid – 90% range for most fields. Plant bug numbers remain low in most areas. The Drew and Mississippi County fields were treated this week as numbers reached threshold.



Figure 1. Low end of Lee County field during irrigation

Table 1. 2008 CRVP apogee dates

County	Grower	Apogee	Date
Drew	Appleberry	*N/A	July 3, 2008
Greene	Reddick	*N/A	July 7, 2008
Lee	Parten	*N/A	July 10, 2008
Lincoln	Keeter	8.3	July 3, 2008
Mississippi	Edwards	8.2	July 3, 2008
Monroe	Hall	*N/A	July 7, 2008
Phillips	Jackson	*N/A	July 10, 2008
St. Francis	McDaniel	6.1	July 7, 2008

*N/A represents a field where apogee has not occurred

Cotton Insects - (Scott Akin – Extension Entomologist)

Plant bugs. Plant bug numbers are still on the increase in southeast Arkansas, as is the ratio of nymphs to adults. It is likely time to be picking up the drop cloth if you haven't already, especially in blooming cotton. Monitor populations over the coming weeks—if you are nearing a spray, remember that plant bug control can become more challenging as the cotton laps in the middles due to lack of penetration of insecticide into the canopy. Normally, we would have some plant bug efficacy data to share by now, but due to the slow plant bug season, we have not been able to find a “good spot” for testing. Bad news for crop entomologists, but I'd rather have it this way. Nymph numbers are picking up in SE Arkansas, however, and along with that should follow some good efficacy data.

Bollworms. Bollworm moth flights are still variable—agents such as Robert Goodson (Phillips County) have been capturing more moths in traps. We've also been receiving increased reports of moth flushes in fields.

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Remember to look deep into the canopy of blooming cotton for both eggs and larvae—particularly on dried bloom tags (see photo). Heliothine eggs can be hard to see on dried blooms when in the red-ring stage, so be extra careful.



Market Update - (Scott Stiles – Extension Economist)

 **Cotton:** So far, July has been a difficult month for cotton market bulls. Cotton futures have plunged since the June 30 acreage report. As of Tuesday, December '08, cotton had closed lower six out of the last seven trading sessions—and lost a lot of value (over \$50/bale). Recall on June 27 that the December '08 contract closed at 81.40. December traded as low as 70.86 on Tuesday of this week. For the time being, the contract lows made in early December 2007 are serving as support. December '08 was trading 160 points higher at 73.40 mid-day Wednesday. Crude oil and soybeans were also higher while the U.S. dollar was lower—a reason to believe that the recent sell-off in the commodity sector was to blame for some of the drop in cotton prices.

Plus, there hasn't been enough bullish news lately to offer continued price support. As mentioned, the



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recent acreage report was a disappointment to the bulls. The large cotton inventory here in the U.S., low mill demand, and weak global economy are additional factors working against higher cotton prices.

The Texas High and Rolling Plains areas received some light showers Tuesday night on the heels of an improving NASS *Crop Conditions* report released Monday. The current National Weather Service forecast for the Lubbock area includes a 40% chance of rain for Wednesday, 20% on Thursday, and clear by the weekend. High temps are expected to be in the mid-90s. As mentioned in previous weeks, private estimates place cotton losses due to poor germination, sand/wind, and hail damage during June at 1 to 1.2 million acres in the Texas High Plains.

The USDA will update its supply-demand report on Friday, July 11 at 7:30 a.m. CST.



FYI: The next *Cotton Roundtable* will be held on Friday, July 25, at 7:30 a.m. CST, at the Intercontinental Exchange in New York City. The panel will discuss strategies for hedging in volatile markets and provide a farm bill update and crop outlook.

Program speakers will include: Carl Anderson, professor Extension specialist emeritus, Texas A&M University; Mike Stevens, Swiss Financial Services; Jarral Neeper, vice president, marketing, Calcot; and O.A. Cleveland, Mississippi State University, professor emeritus. Special guest speaker will be Joe Nicosia, president and CEO, Allenberg Cotton Co.

There are several listening options. Call (888) 889-5345, to listen over the telephone. When asked for the conference ID number, reply Ag Market Network. The conference will be aired live over the radio station KFLP 900 AM, in Floydada, Texas. You can listen live over the Web at www.AgMarketNetwork.net. Or you can listen to a recording of the event around noon at www.AgMarketNetwork.net.

Questions to the panelists can be submitted via the Web site or submitted in advance by calling Pat McClatchy toll free at (888) 795-8071.

Upcoming Meetings and Field Days

**July 17, 2008 – Agronomic Crops Field Day – Delta Research and Extension Center
Stoneville, MS - 8:00 a.m.**

**July 24, 2008 – Crops Field Day - S. E. Research & Extension Center – Rohwer Division
Rohwer, AR - 8:00 a.m.**

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