



Arkansas Cotton Update

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UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

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Tom Barber - Editor

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Cotton Status, (Tom Barber - Cotton Agronomist,)

We are currently in a frustrating weather pattern. We have not had many days, much less weeks that were “optimum” conditions for cotton planting and rapid emergence and growth. Approximately 54 percent of the crop has been planted, according to the Arkansas Agriculture Statistics Service. Some cotton is up but is not growing because of the cool temperatures. In many fields, the cotton is struggling to make a stand fighting cool wet conditions, seedling disease and crusting issues. The wet weather has made it difficult to finish planting and make timely weed control applications. We have seen several instances of seedling disease and will probably see more after the fields dry out from the recent floods. I have walked several fields with skimpy stands and received many calls concerning re-plant decisions.

Re-plant Decisions

My predecessor, Dr. Bill Robertson, collaborated with Dr. Gus Lorenz, in 2003, to publish an article in *Cotton Comments* that provides excellent information for cotton re-plant decisions and cutoff planting dates. I have summarized some points below, but the entire article can be found on the website at [http://www.aragriculture.org/crops/cotton/comments/Cotton Comments 04 03.pdf](http://www.aragriculture.org/crops/cotton/comments/Cotton_Comments_04_03.pdf).

Let's hope we don't have to make a decision to re-plant; but if we do, it is often a difficult decision to make. In fields with questionable stands, you must consider several things before making a re-plant decision.

1. What is the calendar date?
2. What is the population of plants that will survive?
3. What is the health of those plants, especially their roots?
4. What is the population uniformity — are there large skips and frequent skips?
5. What is the productive capability of the soil, and is the field irrigated?
6. How much yield potential will be lost by replanting?

Two major considerations in replanting are soil type and moisture. If the soil is a types that dries quickly, replanting decisions must be made ASAP and carried out before moisture falls out of the beds; lately this hasn't been a problem. If plant distribution is fairly uniform in fields with productive soils, good yields can be made with low plant populations, perhaps in the low 20,000 plants per acre range, or as low as 1.5 plants per row-foot with no or few skips. If the stands are broken with numerous skips, re-planting is in order at populations below 30,000 plants per acre, depending on the size and frequency of skips. Dr. Sandy Stewart, my counterpart at the LSU AgCenter, has some interesting data concerning the number and size of skips that lead to yield loss. The

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preliminary data suggests that if you have 10 – 13 skips that are 3 feet or longer in 80 feet of rows, then a re-plant will probably be justified. In some cases, a grower may "spot-in" areas of the field with his planter.

Calendar date is significant; a stand you would plow up on May 1 would probably be kept on May 25. Variety selection is also important when replanting. It is not a good idea to plant a full-season variety, if the replanting date is the last week of May or first week of June. An early-maturing variety will do better when the season is shortened because of a late planting date.

If re-planting is necessary, continue to use fungicides, especially if the first stand died from seedling disease. Use a burn-down herbicide to kill the old stand of cotton and any weeds that may have emerged on the row. Always remember "If you have enough cotton left to make the decision difficult, you probably have enough to keep."

Latest Possible Planting Date

This year has been a terrible year to plant and get a good stand of cotton. Cooler temperatures and frequent rainfall, have kept equipment out of the field and seed in the sack. As a result, many growers will plant cotton later than they ever have. Several growers have called with concerns about how much yield potential will be lost with cotton planted later in May. The yield potential of this later planted cotton depends on factors out of our control and relies almost totally on the type of fall weather we have this year. Many growers may have an example of later planted fields that yielded as good as the earlier planted cotton. On the other hand, some can remember cold fall weather and an early frost. A general rule of thumb for Northeast Arkansas is the possibility for a two percent yield loss for each day that cotton is planted past May 20. For Central Arkansas, approximately four days can be added to this May 20 planting date. In Southeast Arkansas, cotton can be planted approximately six days after May 20.

Increased management will be needed on later-planted fields to prevent further delays in maturity. Excessive nitrogen rates should be avoided to prevent further delays with rank growth. Timely insecticide, herbicide and plant growth regulator applications will be needed to prevent stresses leading to further delays. Timely irrigation is also important to reduce fruit shed during periods of hot daytime and nighttime temperatures. Late planted fields will need to be managed intensively to prevent stress and further delays that will push maturity later into the fall. Increased seeding rates can also help with later planted cotton, because a higher plant density will push plants to mature earlier. This is a hard sell to make, especially with the cost of seed, seed treatments and technology fees. These are all suggestions that can be found in the Cotton Comments article I mentioned previously. Visit http://www.aragriculture.org/crops/cotton/comments/Cotton_Comments_04_03.pdf, for more information.

Market Update (Scott Stiles – Extension Economist)

2008 Ending Stocks Moving in the Right Direction

Last Friday, the USDA updated the cotton balance sheet for the 2007 – 2008 marketing year and provided some outlook for 2008. For the 2007 crop, the national average yield was down nine pounds, to 879 pounds per acre. That decreased yield lowered production by 190,000 bales from the April estimate to a total of 19.21 million

2301 South University Avenue, P.O. Box 391, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

PHONE: (501) 671-2186 FAX: (501) 671-2297

E-MAIL: tbarber@uaex.edu CELL: 501-944-0549

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bales. Usage was also reduced. Mill use was cut by 100,000 bales and exports were cut by 300,000 bales. These cuts increased projected ending stocks to 9.9 million bales — the highest level seen in the past 40 years. With steady use and a 1.4 million acre reduction in 2008, the USDA projects ending stocks to fall by 4.3 million bales, or 43 percent. 2008 U.S. production is based on harvesting 8.4 million acres (10.6 percent abandonment rate) with a national average yield of 830 pounds — almost 50 pounds lower than the 2007 national average yield.

COTTON	USDA 2007-08 May 10	USDA 2008-09 May 10
Planted (million acres)	10.8	9.4
Harvested (million acres)	10.5	8.4
Yield (lbs./acre)	879	830
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning Stocks • Production 	9.5 19.2	9.9 14.5
Total Supply	28.7	24.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mill Use • Exports 	4.6 14.2	4.3 14.5
Total Use	18.8	18.8
Ending Stocks	9.9	5.6
Stocks-Use Ratio	53%	30%

Market Outlook:

Export demand is picking up lately, particularly from China. Yet, cotton futures don't seem to regard export demand as highly as the movement in other commodities such as corn, soybeans and crude oil. For much of the year, December '08 futures may trade in a range of 76 – 82 cents, with particular attention being given to broader economic issues (i.e. the U.S. dollar) and Texas growing conditions. Longer term cotton futures (specifically 2009 contracts) will be supported by the need for additional acreage. The huge 2007 carryover of 9.9 million bales will likely keep 2008 futures subdued. 2009 will be a different story, on the heels of a 1.4 million acre reduction and 25 percent production decline. The world still counts on U.S. cotton exports. Notice in the table above that 2008 exports are projected to equal 2008 production.

Thrips (Scott Akin – Extension Entomologist)

With more than 70 percent of cotton planted in Southeast Arkansas, it seems that our current concern is the non-stop rain we have received all spring. One thing to watch out for once the rain stops, however, is thrips—particularly those coming out of wheat. We have a great deal of wheat out there this season (some starting to dry down right now), and I am concerned about the numbers of thrips we may face, so be on the lookout. You may have an insecticide seed treatment (e.g., Cruiser[®], Aeris[®], etc.) or granular Temik[®] in-furrow, but still keep a close eye on your cotton before the 5th leaf stage. Last season, many areas sustained above-threshold numbers of thrips on both Temik- and seed-treated cotton. As mentioned last year, this was a case of extremely high thrip numbers overwhelming the plant. Thus, even with what may have been 75 – 90 percent control provided by whatever preventative thrips treatment you used, above-threshold numbers remained. I would not

2301 South University Avenue, P.O. Box 391, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

PHONE: (501) 671-2186 FAX: (501) 671-2297

E-MAIL: tbarber@uaex.edu CELL: 501-944-0549

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be too surprised if we observe the same this year, so keep a close eye on your cotton. You may have to go in with a foliar application before the 5th leaf, so be prepared.

2008 Cotton Scouting Schools – May 29 and 30.

The 2008 cotton scouting schools have been scheduled for Jonesboro at the County Office on May 29 and Rohwer at the new Rohwer Research Learning Center on May 30. Registration at both locations will begin at 8:30 a.m. The program will last through lunch. Lunch will be sponsored by Bayer Crop Science.

Arkansas Division of Agriculture - Extension Cotton Specialist Contact List

Tom Barber	Cotton Specialist	501-944-0549 cell	tbarber@uaex.edu
Gus Lorenz	IPM Coordinator/ Entomologist	501-944-0942 cell	glorenz@uaex.edu
Glen Studebaker	Entomologist	501-454-1922 cell	gstudebaker@uaex.edu
Scott Akin	Entomologist	870-723-5537 cell	sakin@uaex.edu
Ken Smith	Weed Specialist	870-723-5527 cell	ksmith@uamont.edu
Cliff Coker	Plant Pathologist	870-723-5519 cell	ccoker@uamont.edu
Scott Monfort	Plant Pathologist	870-659-0648 cell	smonfort@uaex.edu
Terry Kirkpatrick	Nematologist	870-777-9702 office	tkirkpatrick@uaex.edu
Scott Stiles	Economist/Farm Management	870-972-2481 office	sstiles@uaex.edu
Terry Griffin	Economist/Farm Management	501-259-6360 cell	tgriffin@uaex.edu
Leo Espinoza	Soil Fertility Specialist	501-837-8693 cell	lespinoza@uaex.edu
Dennis Gardisser	Agricultural Engineer	501-944-0319 cell	dgardisser@uaex.edu
Phil Tacker	Irrigation Specialist	501-944-0708 cell	ptacker@uaex.edu
Dharmendra Saraswat	Geospatial Specialist	501-671-2191 office	dsaraswat@uaex.edu
Frank Groves	Verification Program Coordinator	870-723-5704 cell	fgroves@uaex.edu

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