



Arkansas Cotton Update

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UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

May 8, 2008

Tom Barber - Editor

Number 4

Special Interest Articles: [Cotton Status](#) - [Market Update](#) - [Cotton Fertility](#) - [Extension Contacts](#)

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Cotton Status, Playing Catch-Up (Tom Barber - Cotton Agronomist)

Cotton producers in Arkansas continue to be behind schedule with only 24 percent of acres planted by the first of this week, according to the USDA Agricultural Statistical Service. This time last year approximately 35 percent of the acres were planted and, according to the five-year average, Arkansas cotton producers should have approximately 38 percent of cotton acres planted. One thing to consider is that we have fewer acres to plant this year; thus, it will take less time to get them planted. Some growers were able to accomplish a lot up until today (Thursday), where we were once again blessed with another 0.5- to 1.5-inch shower across the state. Planters started rolling in the field on Tuesday, and I would not be surprised if the acreage planted increased by 15 percent in the last two or three days of good weather. There are some producers that have finished planting cotton around the Marianna area and some that are just getting started. For the most part, after this week most cotton counties should be close to 30-35 percent planted. For those who had to row-up a lot of acres before planting, this rain was needed to increase moisture content in the beds.

The cotton that was planted early has struggled to grow in the cooler and wet conditions. The picture below was taken in my cotton plots in southeast Arkansas. No doubt the cotton has struggled to come up and has struggled since because of the cooler temperatures. Do not be surprised if the cotton you planted this week catches up to some you planted a week to week-and-a-half earlier. The minimum temperature for cotton to grow and develop is 60 degrees (Heat Units, DD60s, etc.). This time of year we accumulate 8 to 11 DD60's per day on average. Lately, we haven't had many days where the average temperature was much above 60; therefore, few DD60s were accumulated, and the cotton has not grown off. This week's warmer temperatures will definitely help some of this cotton that has been real sluggish to finally come alive. The other negative with cooler-than-normal temperatures and wet conditions is **seedling disease**. Today, most producers protect against seedling disease by utilizing various seed treatment options. Seed treatments generally will not protect seedlings as long as in-furrow treatments. Because cotton has been slow to grow off, fields should be monitored closely for seedling disease presence. Any additional stress, such as insect pressure from above-threshold populations of thrips or spider mites will also increase the probability of seedling disease and may result in plant death and stand loss.



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Market Update (Scott Stiles – Extension Economist)

May 07, 2008

New York Cotton Futures

December cotton futures settled two points lower Wednesday to close at 78.87. Trading volume was light. Fundamentals were bearish as the U.S. dollar gained strength on foreign currencies. There was some pressure on the market from rainfall in west Texas cotton growing areas.

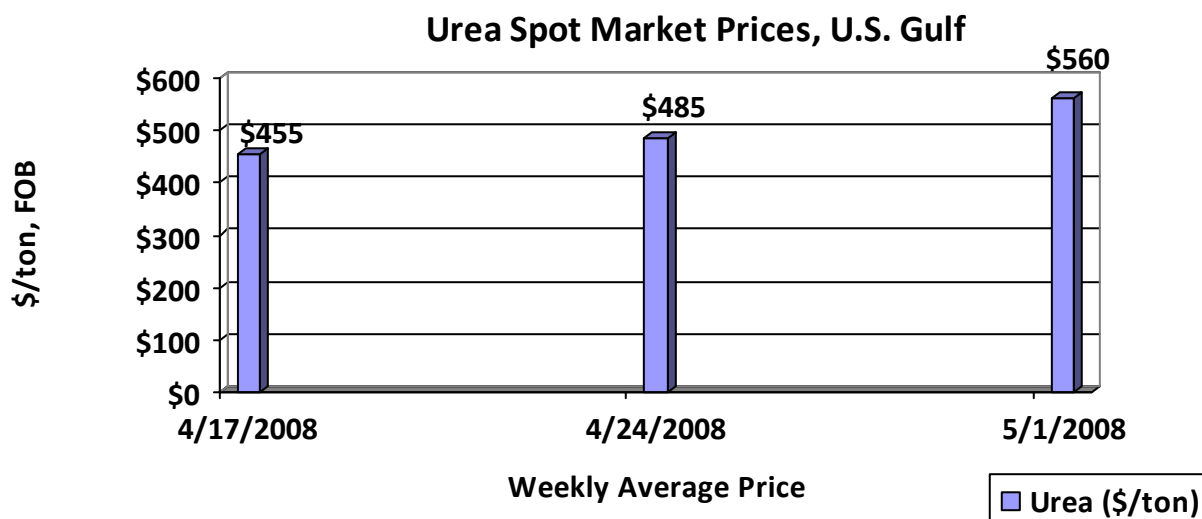
Analysts indicate that cotton prices are likely to drift lower into Friday's USDA supply and demand report. However, Thursday's export sales report should indicate strong sales. Last week, U.S. export sales reached a marketing year high of 649,900 bales.

Futures Recap: May 5 – 7, 2008

May 05, 2008:	Close	Change	Range
Dec '08	77.51	-33	77.27-78.47
May 06, 2008:	Close	Change	Range
Dec '08	78.89	+138	77.00-79.20
May 07, 2008:	Close	Change	Range
Dec '08	78.87	-2	77.90-79.40

Urea Price Outlook

The conditions are right for urea prices to continue rising over the next few weeks. With China out of the export market, urea is expected to be in short supply worldwide through October. Based on normal import demand, there is likely not enough urea on the world market to cover needs through September. Higher prices will be the only means to slow demand and ration supplies.



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Cotton Fertility (Leo Espinoza – Extension Agronomist, Soils)

Nitrogen Fertilization of Cotton

I feel the optimum nitrogen rate for cotton is probably between 90 and 150 lb (our “base” recommendation is 90 lb/a). This looks like a wide range, but of the major nutrients, nitrogen is the most affected by weather conditions. Under optimum weather conditions, 90 to 100 lb N/acre may be enough, but factors such as frequent leaching rains, high yield potential and heavy soils may require higher nitrogen rates. The following are some of the answers to commonly asked questions.

What is the best way to split nitrogen?

- Research on the timing of nitrogen has shown that any approach would work as long as the total amount of nitrogen is applied before first bloom, provided some is applied by first square. Of course, that applies to normal years, *but with late planted cotton it is best to avoid late applications.*
- Single applications of nitrogen are not recommended because of our weather patterns.
- Cotton farmers in other states inject 32 percent with center pivots, typically three applications at the rate of 10 GPA. We need to look into this practice.
- Pre-plant nitrogen seems to be working for some farmers, especially those farming sandy soils. My research with in-furrow fertilizers shows that they can substitute pre-plant N at a lower cost (1–3 gallons per acre). In-furrow applications of P and K have been reported to be of benefit under reduced tillage conditions.

What is the value of residual nitrogen shown on the soil test report?

Nitrogen recommendations are modified based on the amount of carryover. If the soil sample shows more than 30 ppm (60 lb/acre) nitrate-N, then the recommended rate would be 60 to 70 lb N. But nitrogen in the nitrate form is very mobile... A sample collected during the fall may show different levels than one collected during the spring. While farmers may not feel comfortable applying only 60 lb/acre to a cotton field, they should pay close attention to such fields for rank growth, especially if the soil sample was collected before planting.

Are there differences among sources of nitrogen?

All sources are equally effective, as long as they are properly applied. Urea sitting on top of the ground for more than 7 days or liquid applicators running on top of seedlings and not properly calibrated are not a good thing... There are particular considerations for each source, but the use of a given N-source does not guarantee a yield advantage over another.

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Do cotton varieties respond different to nitrogen applications?

While varietal responses are known in some crops, such as rice, the limited information available for cotton does not show that trend. However, I have observed that “full season” varieties tend to uptake more N than “short season” ones, but this doesn’t translate into different requirements. This is another aspect where more information is needed.

With cotton growing in low zinc soils, should we apply zinc?

While a balanced nutrition is important, results from two tests on “low” zinc soils have not shown a yield response, and tissue levels were optimum on the check plots.

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