

2017 PCG Seed Cost Calculator Now Available

Friday, February 17, 2017 By Mary Jane Buerkle

The 2017 version of the Plains Cotton Growers, Inc. Seed Cost Calculator is ready and available for download from the PCG website at <http://www.plainscotton.org>.

The PCG seed cost calculator is an interactive Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that allows producers to calculate an estimated cost per acre, for both seed and technology, based on published suggested retail prices.

The calculator has become a popular tool among producers interested in comparing seed and technology prices as they work to finalize their cotton variety selections.

The 2017 version of the spreadsheet includes listings for more than 100 conventional, Roundup Ready FLEX, XtendFlex, GlyTol, Bollgard II, TwinLink, Enlist and Widestrike varieties, including numerous stacked gene versions of these technologies that will be available for sale in West Texas in 2017.

PCG Annual Meeting Scheduled for April 7

Friday, February 17, 2017 By Mary Jane Buerkle

Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., will host their 60th Annual Meeting on Friday, April 7, 2017 in the Banquet Hall of the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with registration, and the program will start promptly at 9 a.m. The meeting is held in conjunction with the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show, April 6-7, 2017, in Lubbock. For more information on the TCGA Annual Meeting and Trade Show, visit <http://www.tcg.org/>.

Current PCG president Johnnie Reed, who farms near Kress, Texas, will preside over the meeting and PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett will report on the status of PCG operations and activities. An award recognizing the 2016 High Plains Cotton Agent of the Year also will be presented at the meeting.

The keynote speaker, sponsored by Farmers Cooperative Compress, will be Matt Rush. Matt is the fourth generation in his family to be a New Mexico farmer and cattle rancher. He and his dad partner on a farming and ranching operation and to support his farming habit, Rush travels the country as a professional speaker conducting leadership and motivational seminars. The Zig Zigar Corporation recently recognized his talent and skill as a speaker and trainer inviting him to become one of their first ever Platinum Level speakers. He also is the Executive Vice President of the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway and Kim Kitchings, Senior Vice President, Consumer Marketing for Cotton Incorporated, also are scheduled to speak. The program will feature an update on the Plains Cotton Growers, Inc. PAC and an announcement about the 2017 Celebrate Cotton Game.

Additional information about PCG and the Annual Meeting can be found at <http://www.plainscotton.org>.

USDA to Survey Producers' Planting Intentions for 2017

Tuesday, February 14, 2017 From USDA-NASS

Beginning the last week in February, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service will begin surveying approximately 84,000 of the nation's farmers and ranchers to determine their plans for the upcoming growing season. The Southern Plains Regional office will contact approximately 8,000 producers in Oklahoma and Texas, almost 10% of the national total.

The Prospective Plantings report is highly anticipated by the agricultural industry, as it provides the first look at planting intentions for the 2017 crop year. In addition, this report will provide the first estimate of harvest acres for winter wheat and oats, as well as grains and oilseeds stored on farm. The March Agricultural Survey gathers the factual data to provide indications for the estimates, and is based on producer response to the survey.

Producers may use this report to make marketing decisions for the upcoming growing season, while agri-businesses rely on the data to allocate resources to help better serve the industry. Government agencies, particularly those within USDA, will use the data to help make policy decisions and administer farm programs that effect producers - not only this year, but in years to come as the current 2014 Farm Bill is set to expire in 2018.

As with all NASS surveys, the results of this survey will be available in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified. The Prospective Plantings report and the Quarterly Grain Stocks report will be released on March 31, 2017, and will be available online at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/>.

**Upcoming Area Meetings
and Ag Conferences**
See the list at plainscotton.org

Lubbock Chamber to Host "Salute to Ag" Luncheon Featuring Combest, Sell, Verett

Friday, February 17, 2017 From the Lubbock Chamber

The Lubbock Chamber of Commerce will host a Salute to Ag Luncheon on Tuesday, March 21, at the Texas Tech McKenzie-Merket Alumni Center. The serving line will begin at 11:30 a.m., with the program beginning promptly at 12 p.m.

The luncheon will feature former Congressman Larry Combest and Tom Sell from Combest, Sell & Associates as they join a discussion with Steve Verett from Plains Cotton Growers.

Tickets for the luncheon are \$35. Chamber members can purchase tickets at a discounted price of \$25. Reservations are required by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15. Register at <http://www.lubbockchamber.com> or by calling the Chamber at (806) 761-7000. ("COTTON NEWS" continued on Page 2)

HAC Chairman Mike Conaway: Cotton Will Account for Biggest Change in Next Farm Bill

Saturday, February 11, 2017 By Ron Smith, SW Farm Press

Getting cotton back into Title 1 as a covered commodity will be the biggest change anticipated in the next farm bill, says Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee Mike Conaway, R-Texas.

Conaway, speaking at the opening session of the National Cotton Council annual meeting Saturday in Dallas, Texas, said, “We have to get cotton back in Title 1, either as cottonseed or as lint. STAX did not work well for producers.”

Conaway does not dismiss the possibility of having cottonseed covered in the current farm program as an “other oilseed,” a strategy attempted during the Obama Administration without success. Conaway credited former Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack for a “one-time” program to offset ginning costs. “I disagreed with him on his position with cottonseed, but his lawyers said he couldn’t do it and ours said he could. You tend to believe the lawyers you are paying.”

With a new administration and a new Secretary of Agriculture who comes from a cotton state (Georgia’s former Governor Sonny Perdue), Conaway says cottonseed may get a new look.

“I am anxious to get (Secretary of Agriculture designee) Sonny Perdue confirmed,” he said. “He has a lot of paperwork to fill out since he has a ton of business interests, and an FBI background check to go through. But he should be confirmed quickly. I don’t expect his confirmation to be particularly contentious.”

Conaway added that President Trump has expressed support for agriculture as “the backbone of America. He also says the United States deserves a good farm bill and one that’s completed on time.”

The process is beginning, he said. “We will not have field hearings; they are too expensive. But we will have listening sessions, which will be less formal. We want to hear from farmers, and how the farm bill affects the way they do business.”

Conaway said he expects some efforts to split nutrition and commodity titles as the farm bill debates begin. “If it’s easier to pass both bills by keeping them together, we will,” he said. “If it is easier to pass both bills by splitting them, we will do that. What I will not allow is to split the bills so that (detractors) can defeat both.”

He expects to see mostly fine-tuning of current legislation, with the exception of cotton, some dairy adjustments and the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program, where “some county payments are out of line.”

He added that a hearing next week on the state of the rural economy will address the precipitous drop in farm income, a 46 percent decline, “the worst in decades. The Ag committee will also weigh in on your behalf every chance we get. This committee backs U.S. agriculture.”

SNAP DEBATE

Conaway said the nutrition program would be an important part of the coming debate that will include findings from 16 hearings on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, “what works and what doesn’t work.”

He adds that the last opportunity to reform SNAP “snuck up on us and was driven by money. This time around it will be driven by policy, particularly considering the potential to get people on the program and then back off. We want to do the policy first and then consider the cost. We have to establish what we need to do first.”

He described a situation in which the working poor have opportunities to advance but by taking the initiative they lose more benefits than they gain in income. “People will operate in their own best interests,” he said. “Work should be the key. We will always have people in need of constant help—the disabled, elderly, the mentally ill. We have to get to the root causes of hunger.”

He says the people working and struggling to feed their families are the most vulnerable. A single mother who has a financial setback, he said, can’t adjust the rent or the car payment. “She has to cut the food budget.”

REGULATORY ROLLBACK

Conaway expects to see regulations rolled back, especially when a new EPA director takes over. He says tax reform proposals are in the works but do not have enough “specificity” for meaningful debate.

He mentioned repeal and replace of Obamacare only briefly, noting that efforts were ongoing.

He also turned to trade issues and potential snags with the new administration. “Trade is a big deal with agriculture,” he said. “We sell it or smell it, and we want to sell it. TPP was a good deal for agriculture except for rice and tobacco.”

He noted that President Trump’s proposal to work on bilateral trade deals might have merit but needs to go forward.

TRADE

He also said a trade imbalance consists of two factors—imports and exports. “Exports mean a lot to agriculture and we have to begin considering both factors.”

In a press conference following the general session, Conaway said he expects some of President Trump’s campaign rhetoric regarding trade, especially with China and with tariffs on Mexican imports, will be tempered and that advisors will provide sound counsel on best courses of action. “Tariffs just mean higher prices for our consumers,” Conaway said.

Lamesa, Texas, cotton farmer Shawn Holladay asked Conaway how budget reconciliation might affect funding for agriculture programs. “If we get cotton in the program, are we still looking at cuts?” Holladay asked.

Conaway said the atmosphere prevalent during 2014 farm bill discussions included record production and record prices and the feeling of many was that prices would not retreat to previous levels. “Today, the need for a safety net is apparent,” he said. Crop prices are low. He also noted that the 2014 bill has resulted in lower expenditures than expected, despite the significant loss of farm income in 2016.

Conaway, in concluding remarks, encouraged farmers to engage consumers, educate them to the value of farm programs in providing “the most abundant, safest and most affordable food in the developed world.

“Encourage consumers to talk to their legislators. Consumers are the biggest beneficiaries (of agriculture programs). They need to be at the table and involved in legislation.”

Editor’s Note:

“Cotton News”, a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: editor@plainscotton.org