

Texas Poised To Lead The Way

March 2017 By Tony Williams, TCGA, for Cotton Farming
As cotton planters prepare to roll across Texas, a feeling of anticipation is in the air — and for good reason.

Most areas experienced an exceptional crop in 2016, soil moisture is good, the market is looking up, and plans to build a large gin in the Texas Panhandle are in the works. Another factor generating a lot of excitement is farmers having access to cotton varieties that produce outstanding yields and quality if we get a little help from Mother Nature.

Expansion in the Texas Panhandle in terms of the new gin being built and more cotton acres being planted is contributing to industry providers looking for a big year. Everything is very positive right now.

An acreage increase also means producers will have more cotton to bring to market. If prices hold up, this will have a positive affect on their bottom line. In addition, ginners will have more volume to process, which creates economic activity in other areas as well. For example, cotton has to be hauled from the field to the gin, more bales are stored at warehouses, and more cottonseed goes on the market to be traded and crushed.

Benefits Of Acreage Increase

The theme for this year's Texas Cotton Ginners' Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show is "Texas Cotton Leads the Way."

Texas continues to plant a large amount of cotton acres, and based on early surveys, the state potentially will have more than 6 million acres planted in 2017. Texas is pressing forward as the U.S. cotton leader.

Our show is the largest gathering of cotton gin equipment manufacturers and other businesses that provide parts or services to the ginning industry. Visitors from all regions of the Cotton Belt and around the world attend the event to learn about the latest developments in cotton ginning and to purchase equipment or services they need at their facilities.

As the show week begins, full-time gin employees can gain additional knowledge — especially regarding safety — and see the latest industry developments by attending the Southwest Ginners School. Many gin managers allow their employees to go to the school and then attend the show at the end of the week.

TCGA also will host its annual golf tournament at Meadowbrook Golf Course on Wednesday, April 5.

Trade Show Plus Special Activities

The trade show starts at 9 a.m., Thursday, April 6, and is held at the Lubbock Civic Center where more than 130 exhibitors will be on hand to inform you about their products or services. The day's show concludes with a "Taste of Lubbock Party" that is open to all show attendees.

On Friday, show hours are from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. During this time, Plains Cotton Growers Inc. also holds its annual meeting. The day concludes with TCGA's Awards Dinner and Vegas Night Celebration at the Overton Hotel.

Tickets for the awards dinner may be purchased at the show registration booth. Everyone is invited to the Vegas Night Celebration, and no ticket is required. For more information, visit our website at www.tcg.org.

PCG's 60th Annual Meeting

Friday, April 7

Lubbock Memorial Civic Center • 9 a.m.-Noon

Keynote Speaker

Presented by **Farmers Cooperative Compress**

Matt Rush

mattrush.com

More information, including a complete list of speakers, at www.plainscotton.org!

Conaway to Keynote Western Peanut Growers Ag Issues Conference March 31

Friday, March 10, 2017

From WPGA

Western Peanut Growers Association will host an Ag Issues Conference, "Explore the Possibilities of the 2018 Farm Bill," on Friday, March 31, at the Seminole Community Center, 801 North Main Street in Seminole. The conference is open to everyone and begins at 11:30 a.m. Lunch will be served.

Keynote speaker will be House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway. Chairman Conaway will be joined by U.S. Rep. Jodey Arrington (TX-19), U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce (NM-2) and former House Agriculture Committee Chairman Larry Combest for a roundtable discussion.

Prior to the conference, members of Western Peanut Growers Association are encouraged to attend the organization's Annual Business Meeting at 10:30 a.m. For more information on this event, contact the Western Peanut Growers Association, (432) 758-2050.

EWG's 'New' Database Used For Same, Old Purpose: To Attack Farmers.

Friday, March 2, 2017

From Farm Policy Facts

When it comes to attacking farmers and ranchers, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) never takes a holiday. Not even in the midst of a depressed farm economy.

For years, EWG has been using its so-called "farm subsidy" database — a collection of publicly available, but outdated information — to spread a false narrative about farmers and farm policy.

As we have reported in the past, they spin old, irrelevant data to make it look like our agricultural producers are "cashing in" on the farm safety net while leaving out valuable context for why such support exists. This includes many factors outside farmers' control, like devastating weather events, high input costs, sour economic conditions, and foreign subsidies.

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They would never report the amount of money farmers spend from their own pockets, or the overall contribution this makes to the economy we enjoy.

One of the more recent examples of spreading misinformation happened when President Trump announced his agriculture secretary nominee. EWG painted Governor Sonny Perdue as a subsidy recipient, but failed to mention that he has not received farm safety net support since 2004 – more than a decade ago – under policies that no longer exist.

And, now as we begin to debate the next farm bill, EWG has rolled out yet another “database.” This one purports to track funding for four conservation programs in the farm bill over the last two decades.

But, it is more of the same as EWG tries to push another false story. This time it is that current voluntary conservation efforts are not working, that money spent on conservation efforts has been frittered away, and that farming is threatening our natural resources. The only solution, they say, is more government regulations on farms and mandates from D.C.

“They started with a conclusion – we want to regulate farmers – and then they took the data set and tried to match that conclusion,” explained Pelham Straughn, founding partner of the 9b Group, in an interview with Farm Policy Facts. “To compare what we were doing 10 to 15 years ago and lump all of that data in with the things that we are doing today is just not fair.”

“Tracking everything by dollars, by acres, that’s just one part, but it doesn’t get to the outcome,” added John Larson, the executive director of programs at American Farmland Trust, a group dedicated to preserving farmland across the country. “If you look at the timeframe – 1997 to 2015 – that’s a lot of years and the dollars spent is not very much for the number of acres we’re talking about.”

Straughn and Larson both noted that the database and the way EWG is using it does not reflect what is happening on the ground. It ignores years of changes to policy and practices that have made voluntary conservation efforts successful, including the investment farmers make to protect the land, water, air, and wildlife.

“Let’s not forget that it’s farmers that are implementing these conservation practices,” said Straughn. “Also, let’s not forget that these are cost-share programs, so producers are also paying a portion of this.”

Moreover, the very approach to conservation priorities has changed. A decade ago, 54 percent of farm bill conservation funding went to land retirement programs and 35 percent to working lands. Now, more than half of funding is going to working lands.

One shining example of a working lands program, and a specific target of EWG’s latest attack, is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). It is a 100 percent cost-share program, which means that if the producer wants to implement a certain conservation practice, he pays a significant portion of the installation and the federal government provides the other part so land stays in production, but with more sustainable practices and techniques.

Just this week, Timothy Gertson, a fifth-generation rice grower from Texas, described how the program offers collective

benefits to both the farmer and the environment during a House Agriculture Subcommittee hearing. Gertson explained that he “cost-shared the installation of more than four miles of 16-inch underground pipeline to replace irrigation canals,” which resulted in using 20 percent less water needed to grow a crop.

Gertson was able to tailor the voluntary program to fit his specific need. A regulatory framework, like the one EWG proposes, would be a one-size-fits-all approach, which would not account for how vastly different farms can be across the country.

Further, regulatory mandates would strain many farmers, particularly young and beginning farmers, during times like the present when prices are depressed and net farm income has dropped to a historical low.

“We know that in order for the best conservation to be put on the ground, the operation has to be economically viable,” explained Coleman Garrison, the director of government affairs at the National Association of Conservation Districts. “If farmers cannot even survive on their own, that’s not the best way to get results.”

“There are so many variables and factors that a producer doesn’t have control over,” said Larson. “It’s going to be a much more valuable, productive, long-term solution if we’re training and incentivizing people to make changes to conservation practices on their own.”

No doubt EWG will use this new “conservation” database to undermine the farm bill reauthorization effort. But, it is unlikely to get much traction. As Rep. Collin Peterson, the ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, once said, “EWG has no credibility.”

Indeed, we’ve all seen this one before.

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2017 PCG Seed Cost Calculator Now Available

Friday, March 10, 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.

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