

Rain, Cool Weather Create Uncertainty for Texas High Plains Cotton

Friday, October 6, 2017

By Mary Jane Buerkle

If you've ever wondered what it might be like to grow cotton in Seattle, the past few weeks have been a pretty good barometer, one industry expert mused at the Plains Cotton Growers Friday Morning Advisory Group meeting today.

Cool, rainy weather has been the rule rather than the exception recently, and while growers certainly are thankful for any precipitation, it's the cooler temperatures that have put a bit of a damper on the 2017 crop.

Because of the rainy weather and wet fields, adjusters are still assessing damage from hailstorms and wind almost three weeks ago, and more severe weather is in the forecast for tonight.

"We do not yet know the impact on yield or quality from these weather conditions, but what we do know is that we need some warm, dry conditions to finish out this crop," PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett said, noting that current forecasts do not look favorable, with temperatures projected to drop into the low 40s overnight by the middle of next week.

Some growers are beginning to spray defoliant, and a very small amount of cotton has been harvested and ginned, but harvest is nowhere near in full swing at this point.

Markets responded briefly earlier this week upon the news of yet another tropical weather system barreling toward the Cotton Belt before settling back into the 68-cent range on the December contract as of press time.

Want the facts about the U.S. agriculture and farm policy?

<http://www.farmpolicyfacts.org>

Our View: Will Anything Ever Satisfy Farm Critics? No

Wednesday, October 4, 2017

From Farm Policy Facts

For decades, agriculture's adversaries have said "no" to almost any policy that helped farmers.

When farm policy was reformed to be more free-market oriented, critics said it wasn't enough. When the agricultural sector stood alone and volunteered funding cuts to help close America's budget deficit, critics said it wasn't enough. When farmers began contributing to their own safety net through crop insurance to offset risk to taxpayers, critics said it wasn't enough.

And now that the 2014 Farm Bill has come in tens of billions under budget, critics still say it isn't enough.

"No" appears to be the only message the Environmental Working Group (EWG), Heritage Foundation, U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), Club for Growth, and other perennial farm policy opponents are capable of delivering.

And they are planning a "national summit" in D.C. on Oct. 4 to discuss new ways to say no.

Can farmers or the public attend this summit?

No. But, if it were an open meeting, some tough questions would likely follow. For example:

Do EWG, Heritage and others think it's awkward to advocate the elimination of tools like crop insurance that farmers will need to rebuild following the hurricanes?

No. The crowd will hear opening remarks from a Senator who introduced legislation to effectively dismantle crop insurance just after Hurricane Harvey decimated the Gulf Coast and Irma was bearing down on Florida.

Will Heritage rethink its "Blueprint for Agricultural Policy" now that a former USDA official called out the group for cherry-picking USDA data and including non-farm income to distort agriculture's financial picture?

No. In fact, Heritage just doubled down on its analysis and accused the former USDA official of opposing "freedom in agriculture," whatever that means.

Will groups like the American Enterprise Institute stop paying professors with conflicts of interest to prepare its advocacy materials...especially after Politico exposed AEI's "American Boondoggle" series, which was released during the last Farm Bill?

No. These papers are a big source of fundraising, and the American Enterprise Institute is planning to release a follow-up series later this month.

Do free-trade advocates like Club for Growth recognize the hypocrisy of lobbying to dismantle U.S. farm policy while saying nothing of increased ag subsidies and trade roadblocks in other countries?

No. Not even after a top trade attorney in D.C. took critics to task for ignoring foreign subsidies and weakening America's ability to advance free trade in agriculture on a global scale. As the attorney noted, unilateral disarmament is not a sound farm policy; it's a recipe for foreign dependence.

Do extreme libertarian members of the anti-farm crowd mind working with EWG, which recently proposed a slew of costly environmental regulations for rural America? Conversely, do extreme environmentalists like U.S. PIRG mind that their libertarian counterparts support cutting Farm Bill projects that promote conservation, education and nutrition?

No. Apparently, ideology can be malleable when it is expedient, which explains Wednesday's meeting. With that, here's one final question to consider:

Does anyone actually agree with the "no" crowd that America is better off without strong policies that defend our country's food security?

No. Thankfully, most Americans are far more sensible. According to a 2016 poll, eight in 10 Americans believe agriculture is critical to the country's security, and 92 percent said it was important to provide farmers with federal funding.

Yes, that makes a lot more sense.

(“COTTON NEWS” continued on Page 2)

Upcoming Area Field Days

October 12 – Hockley/Cochran County Cotton Field Day, 9 a.m., North FM 303 (west of Levelland) about a mile up the road on the right. Questions: Kerry Siders, Hockley/Cochran/Lamb County CEA-IPM or Wes Utley, Hockley County CEA-Ag, (806) 894-3159, or Kendra Billbrey, Cochran County CEA-Ag, (806) 266-5215.

October 18 – Swisher County Cotton Tour, 9 a.m., Kress. Questions: John Villalba, Swisher County CEA-Ag/NR, (806) 995-3721.

If you have a field day to add to this list, please email maryjane@plainscotton.org or call (806) 792-4904.

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Applications Available for Class XVI of Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program

Friday, September 29, 2017 By Blair Fannin, AgriLife TODAY

The Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program, also known as TALL, is now accepting applications for its new class beginning in July 2018.

TALL is a two-year leadership development program managed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Applications for Class XVI are due March 15. The applications are available online at <http://tall.tamu.edu>.

“The agriculture industry constantly faces new and unique challenges, and there is a need for individuals who have leadership potential to serve in decision-making positions,” said Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, AgriLife Extension leadership program director. “TALL graduates provide a new pool of proven leaders who can provide the leadership, insight, knowledge and direction to ensure agriculture is viable in the future.”

The program features 455 hours of intensive training per person in seminars, speakers and domestic and international study trips over two years, Mazurkiewicz said. The typical class size is about 24, and participation cost is \$3,000, he said.

“The mission of the program is to create a cadre of Texas leaders to ensure effective understanding and encourage positive action on key issues, theories, policy and economics that will advance the agricultural industry,” Mazurkiewicz said.

“The TALL program is the most comprehensive leadership development program of its kind,” said Wes Chandler, a TALL XIV alumni from Garrison. “This program presents an opportunity for each graduate, from the farm laborer to the policymaker, to find common ground in order to reach a common goal.”

“TALL is an amazing educational experience,” said Grady Martin, a TALL XI alumni from Lubbock. “We had the opportunity to meet leaders in agriculture across Texas, the United States, Mexico, Russia and Poland. Location visits with

the owners and operators provided operational appreciation and understanding not possible in a classroom environment. The TALL program exceeded my expectations exponentially.”

Participants include traditional crop producers, ranchers, bankers and attorneys, as well as those who work in lumber, food processing, agricultural corporations and horticultural industries, Mazurkiewicz said.

U.S. Cotton Sets Goals to Further Reduce Environmental Footprint

September 2017 From the National Cotton Council

With the goal of helping its members meet their current needs while making the world a better place for future generations, the U.S. cotton industry is setting goals aimed to build upon the strong environmental gains already achieved over the past 30 years.

“Our industry wants to be the supplier of choice for those who are committed to only buying cotton that is produced with sustainable and responsible environmental, safety and labor practices,” said National Cotton Council Chairman Ronnie Lee, a Georgia cotton producer. “That is the objective that was set by the Council’s COTTON USA Sustainability Task Force.”

Task Force Chairman Ted Schneider, a Louisiana cotton producer, said the actual sustainability resolution that the Council adopted earlier this year called for the creation of the sustainability task force and specified that it collaborate with U.S. cotton industry associations “on developing industrywide goals for measurable continual improvements in environmental stewardship, farm productivity, and resource efficiency such as land, water, air, input, and energy use.”

Schneider said that among the specific goals being pursued by 2025 are: 1) reducing by 13 percent the amount of land needed to produce a pound of cotton fiber; 2) reducing soil loss by 50 percent, in balance with new soil formation; 3) increasing water use efficiency (more fiber per gallon) by 18 percent; 4) reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 39 percent; 5) increasing soil carbon in fields by 30 percent; and 6) reducing energy to produce seed cotton and ginned lint by 15 percent.

Dahlen Hancock, chairman of Cotton Incorporated whose scientists have worked diligently to develop and refine U.S. cotton’s sustainability initiative, said, “We believe the United States may be the only country in the world with these kind of specific, measurable, quantified goals.”

The Texas cotton producer said the U.S. cotton industry is using science-based metrics and benchmarks developed by Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture to assess environmental impacts and identify opportunities for improvement. Field to Market works across the entire agricultural supply chain to define, measure and advance the sustainability of U.S. crop production.

Hancock, who is the former chairman of the Council’s export promotions arm, Cotton Council International (CCI), said CCI looks forward to “sharing with U.S. cotton’s global customers the strides our industry will continue to make in providing the world with responsibly produced, quality fiber.”

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 editor@plainscotton.org