

Texas Cotton Crop Estimates Increase

Friday, December 15, 2017

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Texas High Plains cotton growers remain on pace to produce one of the largest crops in the region's history, according to the latest upland cotton production estimates released earlier this week by the National Agricultural Statistics Service in their December report.

Estimates for the region now are at 5,570,000 bales, up 175,000 bales from the November NASS report. The Northern High Plains is expected to produce almost 50 percent more cotton than in 2016 – from 1,524,000 bales to 2,230,000 in 2017, and the Southern High Plains is expected to produce 3,340,000 bales, which is down slightly from 2016.

Yield per acre for the Northern High Plains is 927 pounds, and 697 for the Southern High Plains. Harvested acres remain at 1,155,000 in the NHP and decreased by 20,000 from the November report to 2,300,000 in the SHP. The abandonment rate remains at about 20 percent.

Statewide, the production number increased to 9.5 million bales, up 400,000 from the projected 9.1 million in the November report. The nationwide estimate for upland cotton remained at 20.7 million bales, same as in the November report and up 25 percent from 2016.

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NCC Thanks U.S. Trade Representative for Support of U.S. Cotton Producers

Thursday, December 14, 2017 From the National Cotton Council

National Cotton Council Chairman Ronnie Lee thanked the leadership of U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and the U.S. negotiating team for their support of U.S. farmers at the World Trade Organization's 11th Ministerial Conference held this week in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Lee, a Georgia cotton producer, said, "We appreciate Ambassador Lighthizer and his team of negotiators from USTR and USDA for their efforts and their insistence that the WTO remain focused on the long-term goal of a balanced outcome that will expand trade. This was especially important for cotton, as some WTO members continue to call for concessions above and beyond the reforms we have already made, without anything in return."

Lee noted that through the semi-annual dedicated discussions established by the WTO in December 2013, cotton is the only agricultural commodity with an explicit mechanism that allows for the evaluation of domestic support, export subsidies and market access.

Ag Census Under Way

Thursday, December 7, 2017

From Farm Policy Facts

Farmers and ranchers across America will have their voices heard in the USDA Census of Agriculture, and the data collected in the coming months will certainly help shape agricultural policy for years to come.

The census began in 1840 and is conducted every 5 years to get a complete picture of American agriculture.

Farm operations that produced and sold at least \$1,000 of agricultural product in 2017 are included. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service started mailing surveys to producers of all sizes in December, and responses should be collected by February 5.

The resulting data will be used by farmers, ranchers, trade associations, researchers, policymakers, academics and many others to help make important decisions in farm policies, technology development, rural development, and more, according to USDA.

For example, the last census helped quantify several important trends in agriculture, such as the number of farms selling directly to consumers and retailers, a 144 percent increase in farms using renewable energy and the upward march of farm expenses – a trend that has continued even as crop prices have fallen, precipitating an historical decline in net farm income.

Of course, census information can also be misused by professional critics like the Environmental Working Group or Heritage. These groups often take advantage of the census' low \$1,000-sales threshold used to define a farmer – generating comparisons that make full-time family farms seem larger than they are.

Farm Policy Facts explored this topic in detail last December, noting:

Bear in mind, \$1,000 in sales doesn't translate to \$1,000 in profit. It is simply a measure of revenue that does not consider expenses.

So, if a weekend gardener spent \$5,000 caring for his plot throughout the year, had a bumper crop of cucumbers, and sold them for \$1,000 to a vendor at the local farmers' market, he would have a \$4,000 loss – and he would be defined as a farmer.

So, when critics say that farm policy benefits mostly go to the top 10 percent of farms, they are essentially complaining that the men and women who grow the bulk of America's food and fiber are receiving a bigger share of the safety net than the \$1,000-revenue growers.

Updating and better understanding census data will be particularly timely as Congress continues the debate over the 2018 Farm Bill amid a slumping farm economy. And even though some will likely misuse the census to attack America's farm safety net, it still enables farm advocates to quantify the need for strong farm policies in these difficult times.

For more information about the census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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

<http://www.farmpolicyfacts.org>

Dicamba Label Update and Mandatory Training for Applicators

Monday, December 11, 2017

From Texas Row Crops

by Scott Nolte, State Extension Weed Scientist; Gaylon Morgan, State Extension Cotton Specialist; Josh McGinty, Extension Agronomist at Corpus Christi; Pete Dotray, Weed Scientist at Lubbock.

Dicamba tolerant cotton and soybean varieties were brought to the market in 2015 and 2016, respectively, and were followed in 2017 by the newly registered dicamba herbicides formulated specifically to have lower volatility. Following a challenging launch in 2017 of these newly registered herbicides in some states, the EPA worked with companies registering the new dicamba formulations to make revisions to those product labels in an effort to reduce incidence of off-target movement during application. In mid-October, revised labels for XtendiMax® with VaporGrip® Technology, Fexapan Plus VaporGrip® Technology, and Engenia® herbicide were approved and released by the EPA and the corresponding companies, Monsanto, DuPont and BASF, respectively.

Notable revisions include the addition of new restrictions as well as clarifications to previous label language. New restrictions include the following:

- Classification of these three products as Restricted Use Pesticides
- Required record keeping of all applications for 2 years
- Annual mandatory auxin-specific training for every person that will be applying the product to any crop.

While restricted use classification and record keeping are currently in effect for these products in Texas, the mandatory auxin-specific training for all applicators is a new change that applies to not only those with an applicators license but also to those making applications under someone else's license. This requires awareness for all applicators to ensure their ability to use these herbicides in 2018 and in subsequent years.

Clarifications to label language include but are not limited to what qualifies as a "susceptible" or "sensitive" crop, requiring the use of downwind buffers, clarification around temperature inversions and restricting the application time to only include sunrise to sunset, tightening the windspeed window from 3-15mph down to 3-10mph, and amplifying the language on sprayer cleanout to prevent cross-contamination.

The Texas Department of Agriculture has approved the auxin-specific herbicide training for applicators that will be provided through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Allied Industry. This training aims to educate applicators on the requirements and practices for keeping these dicamba based products on-target and will satisfy the newly mandated auxin-specific training requirement.

Trainings started the first week of December and will be delivered in various 2017/2018 winter meetings and via video presentation(s) by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, BASF, and Monsanto. The specific times and locations of these training opportunities will be announced over the next months. Please contact your local County Extension Office for available training in your area.

PCG EDITOR'S NOTE: PCG will share information about these trainings as we are notified. Please contact us at (806) 792-4904 or email editor@plainscotton.org if you have information on these meetings.

House Agriculture Committee Launches Farm Bill Landing Page

Wednesday, December 13, 2017

From HAC

Ahead of the 2018 Farm Bill, House Agriculture Committee Chairman K. Michael Conaway (TX-11) today announced the launch of a new online resource which can be accessed through the committee's current website, <https://agriculture.house.gov/farmbill>.

This landing page is designed to provide updates and information related to the 2018 Farm Bill. Following its launch, Chairman Conaway offered the below remarks:

"I'm committed to completing a farm bill on time. We've spent the past three years preparing—holding 113 hearings and six listening sessions around the country. We recognize what's at stake. We're working on getting the policy right and will use this site as a resource as we advance the next farm bill."

Elevating Efficiency Is 2018 Beltwide Cotton Conferences' Goal

December 2017

From the National Cotton Council

The 2018 Beltwide Cotton Conferences, set for January 3-5 at the Marriott Rivercenter in San Antonio, Texas, will provide insight on current research and emerging technology – to help attendees improve production, processing and marketing efficiency.

The 2018 BWCC will begin at noon on January 3 with the half-day Cotton Consultants Conference – open to all attendees. Among scheduled topics selected by the consultant community are: looking ahead to Bollgard III use, a review of year one of Dicamba use, thrips control, bacterial blight, nematodes, cotton root rot and fungicide seed treatments. Also included will be a regulatory update and presentations on growing cotton economically and on contamination prevention.

Registration costs for the 2018 BWCC before December 15 are: \$200 for NCC/Cotton Foundation members, university and USDA researchers, Extension personnel, associations and consultants; \$400 for non-NCC/Foundation members; and \$80 for students. Information on the 2018 BWCC is at www.cotton.org/beltwide/.

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