

The Turn Row Newsletter

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This crop season has been one where we've come to expect the unexpected. Weather, always an unknown variable, tested us at every turn from planting to harvest. Despite being forced to adjust production practices to deal with these pressures, the crop was poised to deliver some very good yields. Even in the Southwest, acres not previously abandoned have benefitted from late summer rains. The weather continues to try us, though, Tropical Storm Gordon, Hurricane Florence, and excessive rains in general over the past few weeks have dealt a severe blow to yield and fiber quality in many locations, not to mention hinder harvest efforts.

Southeast Conditions

Ever doubtful of USDA's record breaking yield estimates for the Southeast, I was just beginning to warm up to them. That, of course, was up until the events of the past few weeks. First, Tropical Storm Gordon dumping 10 to 20 inches of rain in its path through the panhandle of Florida, Southwest Alabama, and parts of the Midsouth. Though cotton here was later and little was knocked out, winds twisted plants and laid them on the ground. Since then, persistent rains and high temperatures have led to a great deal of boll rot. As



a result, what was once 1200-pound cotton will now struggle to pick a bale. On the east coast, Hurricane Florence wreaked havoc on the Carolina crop making it three out of the past four years where powerful storms have caused severe crop losses. South Carolina and southeastern North Carolina were in the direct path and suffered the greatest damage. Though loss estimates are still being determined, it appears upwards of a half million bales of cotton were destroyed.

All is not lost, however. Many areas within the region have dodged the heavy rains to this point and still have excellent yield potential. Georgia, with its large planted acreage is one of these locations. As harvest begins in earnest this week, we need about two months of sunshine and dry weather to get the most out this 2018 crop.

Southwest Conditions

Rains are finally in the forecast for the Southwest and the timing is far from ideal. Most of the West Texas and Southwest Oklahoma crop is at least partially open with a great deal of

acres ready for harvest. We'll see rain chances throughout the weekend and well into next week forcing producers to the sidelines. Very little cotton has been stripped on the High Plains, so it's still too early to know what to expect out of yield and quality. However, early reports of yields look promising. Attention will now turn toward rain amounts over the weekend and how quickly we can get dried out next week.

Cotton Defoliation and Regrowth

September rains along with 90 plus degree temperatures are certain to stimulate regrowth in cotton. No matter what defoliant tank mix combination is used regrowth can't be prevented under these conditions. The question is what do we do going forward to minimize fiber quality damage? First, defoliate only acreage, which can be harvested within 10 to 14 days after application. This can be very difficult with the frequent rains we've experienced lately. But beyond 14 days is when regrowth becomes a real issue. Tyler Sandlin, Alabama crop specialist and Eddie McGriff, regional Agronomist, are conducting a defoliation trial at the Tennessee Valley Substation. Though their work is ongoing, I have attached a summary of their findings. Read carefully for it provides some useful information as to the effectiveness of potential tank mix combinations on regrowth under various field conditions.

Lint Contamination

Lint contamination, an ever-increasing problem, is threatening our reputation in the world market place as suppliers of high quality cotton fiber. Lint contaminants can vary from grease, oils, rags, cloths, but plastic has become the most prevalent. As part of the NCC Quality Task Force Committee, we were recently presented with some very alarming numbers. Out of all the bales

classed with extraneous matter in 2017, plastic contamination accounted for 91% of those. Furthermore, by color, yellow made up 73% of all plastic contaminants indicating the increasing use of roll pickers as a major contributing factor. The problem seems to be getting worse rather than better. We are averaging 4.2 times as many plastic contaminated samples in 2018 as we did last year at this same time.

Efforts at prevention must be employed at both the producer and gin level if this problem is to be corrected. NCC along with Universities and harvest machine manufacturers have compiled educational materials to assist you in this. These can be found on the NCC website www.cotton.org. I encourage you to review these and stress to farm employees the need to watch and be careful when handling cotton in the field. When moving rolls from the field be careful not to snag wrap on mowed stalks or other objects. Stage rolls so module trucks can load them with little if any damage to wrap. Busted rolls or those not wrapped properly should be handled separately from others in the field and at the gin. Just being conscious of this need throughout the handling process will go a long way in minimizing plastic contamination. Beginning this year there is added incentive to do so. In the past, all contamination was classed as Other, a 61 or 62 depending on the severity. Samples this year found to be contaminated with plastic will be classed 71 or 72. This could bring about some serious market repercussions, so I encourage you to make every effort to eliminate contamination, of any kind. We've seen how important demand is to prices, so we must do all we can to produce a superior product.

Cottonseed Program

In talking with county FSA officials, sign up for the new cottonseed program has been slow thus far. Keep in mind, the current deadline to do so is December 7, 2018. It has been expressed to me by many producers their inability to decide between PLC or ARC is a major reason for the delay. This is quite understandable being a new program and wanting to capitalize on it the best one can. Also, no blanket recommendation can be made because every farming operation is different. Let me suggest going once again to the NCC website www.cotton.org. Here you will find an ARC/PLC Educational tool whereby you can plug in your actual farm information and get a more accurate comparison between the two payment options.

AQCA News

The initial advance for the 2018 AQCA pool cotton has been determined as follows:

Southeast Pool: 15 cents over government loan with full premiums.

Texas/Ok. Pool: 10 cents over government loan with full premiums.

