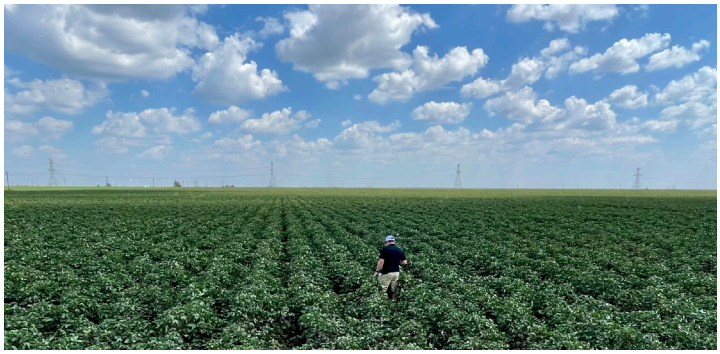
THE TURN ROW



SEPT. 16 2022

AUTAUGA QUALITY COTTON

> THE CROP'S **FATE** LIES IN OUR ABILITY TO GET IT OUT OF THE FIELD IN A **TIMELY MANNER.**

HARVEST PREPARATION

By: Jeff Thompson & David Mullins

Like a steeplechaser, this year's crop has cleared hurdles, ran through water, battled the heat, and is stumbling toward the finish line. Honestly, it cannot get here fast enough before other obstacles are thrown in the path. It has been a season of extremes across the Cotton Belt. Tragically, the race for many in the Southwest never began as poor stands and failed plantings were commonplace on dryland acreage. Compare that to the Southeast where, after a late start and a dry June, ample rainfall has resulted in a crop with excellent yield potential. Yet still, its fate lies in our ability to get it out of the field in a timely manner.

SOUTHEAST CONDITIONS

Though it has been anything but easy, cotton in this region holds a great deal of promise. But so did that of the previous two seasons going into harvest before late rains robbed yield and quality. The growing season began with planting delays brought on by cool, wet conditions followed by an extremely dry June which worked in our favor. Since early July, despite the oppressive heat, ample rainfall has made for excellent growing conditions. However, looking at the southern most areas, it is obvious too much of a good thing is possible as two months of persistent rain has severely limited yields.

Recently, extended periods of random showers, high humidity, and cloudy skies have exacerbated boll rot and hard lock throughout the region especially in earlier cotton. As a result, estimated losses exceed half a bale in severe cases. Dry, sunny weather is desperately needed now that we are beyond the last bloom date. USDA currently projects average yield in the Southeast to be 893 pounds per acre. With the crop rapidly maturing, defoliation began in earnest this week. Thus, we are a couple of weeks away from knowing just how good our early crop might be. With this knowledge and barring any tropical disturbances or additional adverse weather, we expect the later crop to be even better.

SOUTHWEST CONDITIONS

Hat's off to the cotton that's still standing in the Southwest. It's had a tough year but seems to be finishing out strong. Between the lack of moisture and excessive heat this summer, it will be interesting to

CHOICE COTTON

see what type of quality this year's crop brings. With over 70 days of 100-plus degree temperatures, it's amazing how anything is left standing.

Luckily the heat has started to lighten up, and many areas have received some much-needed rain over the past several weeks, which has proven to be very beneficial in filling out bolls. Crop adjusters started doing boll count appraisals today, and as we suspected, there will be more cotton acres abandoned before it's all said and done. From the highway, some of this dryland cotton doesn't look bad. But once you step out in it, it doesn't take long to see there's not much there. Generally speaking, it's mostly small, immature bolls that wouldn't make it through the cotton stripper anyway.

We'll start seeing some defoliants go out next week, mostly on dryland cotton that matured early. However, it's still going to be a few more weeks before the bulk of this crop is ready. For those with cotton to defoliate, the Texas AgriLife Extension agency has created a budget spreadsheet to help make decisions on harvest aids. Just go to: https://lubbock.tamu.edu/files/2022/09/2022-Cotton-Harvest-Decision-Budget.xls

HARVEST AIDS

The timing of harvest aid applications can influence both yield and fiber quality. Applied too early, the top crop is at risk and micronaire adversely affected. Conversely, applied too late, the crop is unnecessarily exposed to the elements resulting in potential fiber quality and yield issues. An added twist this season, where boll rot has already become an issue, harvest aid applications are apt to be delayed in hopes of preserving a top crop to offset the damage. Thus, the timing of these applications must be on a field-by-field basis but not necessarily in line as to when they were planted.

Most everyone has their method in determining when a field is ready to be sprayed. Most common:

1. Open Boll Method – When making field observations, one finds 60 to 70 percent of the harvestable bolls are open.
2. Nodes Above Cracked Bolls (NACB) – When the node count above the upper most cracked boll is four or less.
3. Knife Test – Upon cutting into the youngest harvestable bolls with a pocketknife, the mature fibers string out and seed coat is a tan/brown color.

There are a host of effective harvest aid products found under various trade names. Each have their own advantages and disadvantages so read labels carefully. Some simply provide leaf drop, while others exhibit boll opening properties and/or prevent regrowth. When making your selections, consider crop conditions within a field and impending weather. Research has shown using tank mix combinations provide the most effectiveness. An example would be combining a phosphate material for leaf drop, Ethephon for boll opening, and Dropp (thidiazuron) to prevent regrowth. Also, coverage is extremely important so use a minimum of 20 gallons of water when making ground applications. Under current temperatures, expect adequate defoliation within 10 to 14 days. As temperatures cool, the same products will take longer to work.

COVER CROPS

The planting of cover crops following harvest is rapidly becoming a widespread practice. Rightfully so and one we strongly recommend, considering benefits far outweigh the cost. Establishing a green cover by seeding cereal grains or legumes rather than allowing

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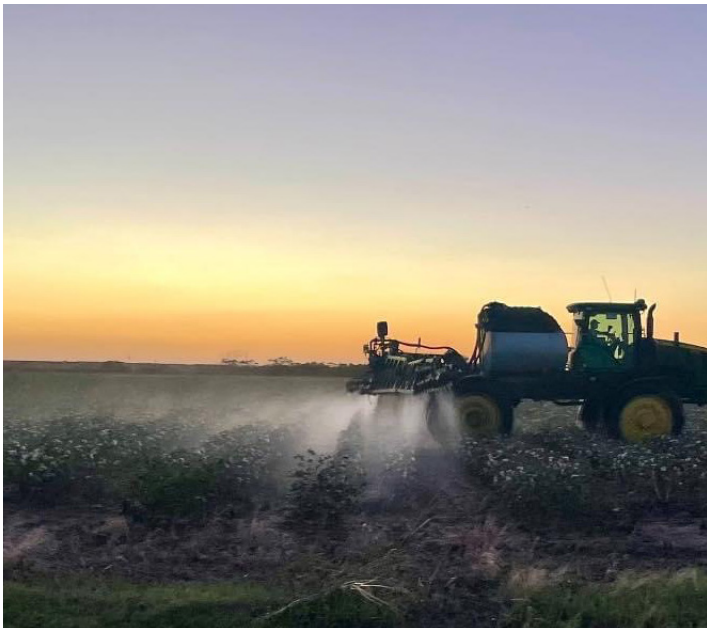

the soil to remain bare throughout the winter will pay dividends on next year's crop. Cover crops improve soil quality by increasing organic matter, reducing erosion, and minimizing compaction. Also, they will reduce pests by suppressing weeds, reducing nematode populations, providing an environment for beneficial insects, and minimizing thrips damage in the spring. Lastly, it enhances soil fertility by reducing leaching, pulling nutrients from the subsoil, while legumes supply nitrogen. There are several cover crop species from which to choose or combine. The table below highlights these and their effectiveness in providing the above-mentioned benefits.

	Reduce Compaction	Provide Residue	Control Erosion	Suppress Weeds	Reduce Nematodes	Forage Quality
Crimson Clover	Fair	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Fair	Excel
Vetch	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Good
Oats	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Poor	Good
Rye	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Ryegrass	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good
Wheat	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Fair	Very Good

In split field trials, yield increases of over 200 pounds per acre have been observed in cotton when planted behind a cover crop versus those that were not. In addition to the potential for increased yields, cover crops provide soil improvements that will provide value for years to come.

In closing, there seems to be a dozen tasks going on at one time during harvest. This often distracts our attention from the task at hand that could lead to personal injury or worse. We encourage you to be mindful and careful in all you do so this harvest season will be a safe and bountiful one.

Until next time,

Jeff Thompson & David Mullins

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