

**2015 County Production Figures In;
PCG Area Produced 3.8 Million Upland Bales**

Friday, May 13, 2016

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Above average rainfall and a relatively low abandonment rate were two key factors in Texas High Plains growers producing about 3.8 million bales of cotton in 2015, the area's largest crop since 2010, according to final production estimates from the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

This is an increase from the 3.25 million 480-pound bales produced during the 2014 growing season but about 200,000 bales less than the 4 million bales projected by NASS in their January 2016 report.

Planted acreage in 2015 was down about 745,000 acres from the previous year, totaling about 3.1 million acres. Producers brought more than 92 percent of that to harvest at about 2.9 million acres. The 2015 abandonment rate of about 8 percent is the lowest since 2010, when the area had its lowest abandonment rate in history at 4 percent. In 2011, the abandonment rate hit a record high at 66 percent, and it was 44 percent in 2012, 55 percent in 2013 and 33 percent in 2014.

According to the final county level production estimates released on Tuesday by NASS, the Plains Cotton Growers 41-county service area accounted for more than two-thirds of the 5.72 million bales of upland cotton produced in Texas this past season. Statewide production was down 7 percent from 2014, and the average yield per acre statewide was down 5 percent from last year at 610 pounds per acre.

On a national basis, Texas growers accounted for about 46 percent of the 12.4 million upland bales produced in the United States in 2015, maintaining their position as the No. 1 cotton producing state in the nation. Georgia was second with 2.25 million bales. In 2015, the top 11 cotton-producing counties in the nation were within 80 miles of Lubbock, reinforcing the area's claim as the nation's largest cotton patch.

A complete rundown of 2015 crop statistics for planted and harvested acreage, yield per harvested acre and total bales produced in PCG's 41-county service area is included in the table that accompanies this article.

Gaines County was the top-producing county on the High Plains in 2015, with 372,200 bales 480-pound bales of cotton and averaging 720 pounds per harvested acre. Lubbock County, last year's top-producing county in the entire nation, fell to third in 2015 with 358,000 bales, just under second-place Lynn County with 365,200 bales. Overall yield per harvested acre on the High Plains averaged 633 pounds in 2015, up from 589 in 2014.

Joining Gaines County in the top ten cotton-producing counties in the High Plains Region (reported in 480-lb bales) were: Lynn, 365,200; Lubbock, 358,000; Dawson, 328,800; Hockley, 282,400; Crosby, 239,100; Floyd, 226,500; Terry, 222,100; Lamb, 164,900; and Hale, 160,500.

As for yield, Hartley County ranked at the top for 2015, averaging 1,182 pounds per harvested acre. Ranking second and third in yield per harvested acre were Castro County (1,136 pounds), and Sherman County (1,128 pounds).

A complete listing of the 2015 upland cotton production totals for Texas and other states is available on the NASS website (<http://www.nass.usda.gov>). Just click on the "Quick Stats" link to search for the data you want to find.

**2015-crop Upland Cotton Production
Plains Cotton Growers, Inc. 41-County Service Area**

County	Planted (Acres)	Harvested (Acres)	Yield per Harv. Acre	Production (Bales)
Andrews	•	•	•	•
Armstrong	•	•	•	•
Bailey	62,600	50,200	670	70,100
Borden	41,100	40,330	447	37,530
Briscoe	23,600	22,700	873	41,300
Carson	25,600	24,100	848	42,600
Castro	11,100	9,800	1,136	23,190
Cochran	124,400	110,700	604	139,200
Crosby	192,400	190,400	603	239,100
Dallam	•	•	•	•
Dawson	300,800	294,900	535	328,800
Deaf Smith	•	•	•	•
Dickens	29,200	29,000	429	25,890
Floyd	148,100	143,700	757	226,500
Gaines	275,400	248,200	720	372,200
Garza	44,200	43,400	622	56,200
Hale	117,800	106,200	725	160,500
Hansford	•	•	•	•
Hartley	4,900	3,900	1,182	9,600
Hemphill	•	•	•	•
Hockley	239,000	207,000	655	282,400
Howard	141,300	140,100	301	87,900
Hutchinson	•	•	•	•
Lamb	128,100	115,000	688	164,900
Lipscomb	•	•	•	•
Lubbock	246,000	229,700	748	358,000
Lynn	295,600	274,800	638	365,200
Martin	177,900	172,400	404	145,100
Midland	•	•	•	•
Moore	•	•	•	•
Motley	21,100	20,530	429	18,330
Ochiltree	•	•	•	•
Oldham	•	•	•	•
Parmer	15,100	11,820	761	18,740
Potter	•	•	•	•
Randall	•	•	•	•
Roberts	•	•	•	•
Sherman	12,700	11,130	1,128	26,150
Swisher	45,900	41,800	872	75,900
Terry	204,600	178,500	597	222,100
Yoakum	111,800	100,100	725	151,200
1-N Comb. Co.	47,300	40,450	1,036	87,330
1-S Comb. Co.	42,000	40,400	587	49,400
High Plains Total	3,129,600	2,901,260	633	3,825,360

(weighted)

Korean Textile Executives Tour

U.S. Cotton Belt

Friday, May 6, 2016 From Cotton Council International

Textile executives from nine Korean companies participated in the five-day COTTON USA Special Trade Mission, which toured the U.S. Cotton Belt and met with U.S. cotton exporters. This COTTON USA tour emphasized U.S. cotton's advantages and encouraged business relationships, with the intention of increasing exports of U.S. cotton in the future.

"The Special Trade Mission gave us a great opportunity to be assured of the excellent quality of U.S. cotton," Do Hyung Lee of Taihan Textile said. "After this tour our company will continue to source primarily from the U.S."

The Korean delegation began its tour in New York City with a seminar at ICE Futures. Next, the textile executives traveled to the Cotton Belt's four major growing regions and met with members of industry organizations including: Cotton Incorporated, the National Cotton Council, USDA, Supima, as well as merchants, coops and producers in each region.

Korea currently ranks as the sixth largest U.S. cotton importer. The nine Korean companies who participated represented 80% of Korea's total cotton consumption and U.S. market share with these companies is currently estimated at 53 percent. It is also important to note that many Korean textile mills also have textile investments outside of Korea, primarily in Vietnam. Those spinning mills in Vietnam are estimated to consume 166,000 additional bales of U.S. cotton this year.

The EPA has extended the comment period on the use of dicamba herbicide in dicamba-tolerant cotton and soybeans to May 31.

To submit your comment about this new technology, visit <https://www.regulations.gov/#!submitComment;D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2016-0187-0001>

USDA Announces Conservation Reserve Program Results

Thursday, May 5, 2016 From the USDA

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced the enrollment of more than 800,000 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program. Through CRP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture helps farmers offset the costs of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and strengthen wildlife habitat. Farmers' and ranchers' participation in CRP continues to provide numerous benefits to our nation, including helping reduce emissions of harmful greenhouse gases and providing resiliency to future weather changes.

This was one of the most selective sign-up periods in CRP's 30-year history, with a record high Environmental Benefits Index cut-off and the lowest-percentage of applications accepted. The high bar means that the per-acre conservation benefits are being maximized and that acres enrolled address multiple conservation priorities simultaneously.

A nationwide acreage limit was established for this program

in the 2014 Farm Bill, capping the total number of acres that may be enrolled at 24 million for fiscal years 2017 and 2018. At the same time, USDA has experienced a record demand from farmers and ranchers interested in participating in the voluntary program. As of March 2016, 23.8 million acres were enrolled in CRP, with 1.7 million acres set to expire this fall.

Over three million acres have been offered for enrollment this year across the three main categories within CRP, with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) receiving over 26,000 offers to enroll more than 1.8 million acres during the general enrollment period, and over 4,600 offers to enroll more than one million acres in the new CRP Grasslands program. Coming off a record-setting 2015 continuous enrollment of over 860,000 acres, more than 364,000 acres already have been accepted for 2016 in the CRP continuous enrollment, triple the pace of last year.

FSA will accept 411,000 acres in general enrollment, the most competitive selection in the history of the program, with the acreage providing record high conservation benefits. USDA selected offers by weighing environmental factors plus cost, including wildlife enhancement, water quality, soil erosion, enduring benefits, and air quality.

The results of the first-ever enrollment period for CRP Grasslands, FSA will also accept 101,000 acres in the program, providing participants with financial assistance for establishing approved grasses, trees and shrubs on pasture and rangeland that can continue to be grazed. More than 70 percent of these acres are diverse native grasslands under threat of conversion, and more than 97 percent of the acres have a new, veteran or underserved farmer or rancher as a primary producer. FSA continues to accept CRP Grasslands offers and will conduct another ranking period later this year. Acres are ranked according to current and future use, new and underserved producer involvement, maximum grassland preservation, vegetative cover, pollinator habitat and various other environmental factors.

Participants in CRP establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP is currently protecting more than 100,000 acres of bottomland hardwood trees, nearly 300,000 acres of flood-plain wetlands, and 300,000 acres each for duck nesting habitat and nearly 250,000 acres of upland bird habitat. In addition, CRP is creating economic benefits that include at least \$545 million per year in recreation benefits and water quality benefits from reduced sedimentation of \$587 million per year.

Since 2009, USDA has invested more than \$29 billion to help producers make conservation improvements, working with as many as 500,000 farmers, ranchers and landowners to protect land and water on over 400 million acres nationwide.

To learn more about FSA's conservation programs, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation> or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov/>.

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 us all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email editor@plainscotton.org