

Texas Cotton Crop Estimates Increase

Friday, December 9, 2016

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Texas High Plains cotton growers remain on pace to produce their largest crop since 2010, according to the latest upland cotton production estimates released today by the National Agricultural Statistics Service in their December report.

Estimates for the region now are at 4,670,000 bales, up 295,000 bales from the November NASS report. The Northern High Plains almost will double their production from 2015 to 2016 – from 731,500 bales to surpassing the million-bale mark in 2016 at 1,310,000, and the Southern High Plains is expected to produce 3,360,000 bales.

Yield per acre for the Northern High Plains is 844 pounds, and 604 for the Southern High Plains. Harvested acres remain at 745,000 in the NHP and 2,670,000 in the SHP. The abandonment rate still stands at 8.3 percent.

Statewide, the production number increased to 7.4 million bales, up 500,000 from the projected 6.9 million in the November report. The nationwide estimate for upland cotton increased to 16 million bales, up 400,000 from an estimated 15.6 million in the November report and up 28 percent from 2015.

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Fire Damages Crosby County Gin

Thursday, December 8, 2016

By Josie Musico, A-J Media

Associated Cotton Growers is recovering from a fire Tuesday that damaged part of its main building and its bale press.

The gin is located about 2 miles north of Crosbyton.

Sparks broke out about 12:30 a.m. The gin was operating a night shift, but workers escaped without injuries.

What triggered the blaze is still unknown.

"We don't really know," gin Manager Heethe Burleson said.

"We're still investigating to see where it started."

Volunteer fire crews spent the night extinguishing the fire.

"Our local fire department did an amazing job getting it put out," Burleson said.

While management is still determining the amount of damage, the blaze significantly disturbed the ginning season. Burleson estimates it was only about 40 percent complete.

Other area gins, including Cotton Center Co-op and Lorenzo Co-op, are helping Associated Cotton Growers finish this season. Burleson's next step is to meet with an engineer to start rebuilding, with a goal of being back to normal operations by the 2017 harvest.

"We've never missed a beat because we have so many neighbors that are helping us gin our cotton," he said. "We want to make sure that our customers are taken care of. We want to make sure their cotton is ginned in a timely manner. Associated Cotton Growers wants to continue to be an asset to not only our producers, but also to our community."

Crosbyton's volunteer fire chief did not immediately return a phone call. No one was present when A-J Media visited the fire station Thursday.

PCG Reminds Consumers to Buy Cotton

Friday, December 9, 2016

By Mary Jane Buerkle

With the holiday shopping season upon us, whether you're taking advantage of a sale to purchase something for yourself or satisfying a loved one's Christmas wish list, consider something made from cotton. This could be a pair of trendy jeans, a set of soft cotton towels or sheets, something for your favorite foodie, or even cold, hard cash – U.S. paper currency is made of 75 percent cotton and 25 percent linen.

According to the Cotton Incorporated *Lifestyle Monitor* Survey, holiday shoppers plan to spend \$744 on holiday gifts, up significantly from \$603 in 2015. A high percentage of consumers have said they like to receive clothes as gifts, including T-shirts, sleepwear, jeans, and sweaters.

If you need a gift for someone who enjoys cooking, something to consider is flavored gourmet cottonseed oils from Acala Farms. These oils are heart-healthy with zero cholesterol and zero trans fat, and have a high smoke point. They come in fun flavors including fried shallot, hot habanero, jalapeno lime, sweet guajillo pepper, toasted cumin, smoky chipotle, fresh roasted garlic, chili cumin, fresh cilantro and curry spice, in addition to plain, pure cottonseed oil. Some suggested uses include drizzling it on warm pasta, steamed vegetables, popcorn or salad, or using it in cooking various meats. While Lubbock-area retailers have yet to bring the oils to their store shelves, you can find them online at www.acala-farms.com.

"As consumers, we must look for cotton in the things we purchase, whether it's for ourselves or as a gift," PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett said. "Take a minute to check the tag, because each time we purchase cotton products, we're helping ensure the success of our industry."

Upcoming Ag Conferences

December 13 – Swisher County Ag Day, Swisher Memorial Building, 127 SW 2nd, **Tulia**. Registration 8 a.m., 4 CEUs (2 General, 1 IPM, 1 L&R) offered. Contact John Villalba, Swisher County Extension Agent-AG, 806-995-3721.

December 15 – Yoakum County Cotton Quality Conference, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Plains Community Building, 1006 Avenue G, **Plains**. 3 CEU's in L&R offered. BBQ lunch provided and free to attend. Contact Bubba Lamolinare, County Extension Agent-AG, 806-456-2263.

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January 4-6 – Beltwide Cotton Conferences, Hyatt Regency Dallas. Early registration deadline is December 16. More information can be found online at <http://www.cotton.org/beltwide/>.

January 13 – West Plains Ag Conference, Levelland, South Plains College in the Sundown Room, from 7:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. 5 CEU's (3 Gen., 1 L&R, 1 IPM) will be offered. Contact Kerry Siders, Extension Agent-IPM, for more information at 806-894-3150.

January 17 – Ag Conference, American Legion Hall, 1021 S 8th St., Brownfield. Registration will begin at 7:45 a.m. 5 CEU's offered. Contact Zach Bradshaw, County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-637-4060.

January 18 – Caprock Crop Production Conference, Floyd County Friends Unity Center at Muncy. Registration will start at 7 a.m., program from 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. 8 CEU's from TDA and 10 CCA are pending approval. Contact Caitlin Jackson, County Extension Agent-AG, 806-675-2347 or Cristen Brooks, County Extension Agent-AG at 806-983-4912 for more information.

February 7 – Hale/Swisher Crops Conference – Location TBA. Amount of CEU's not determined yet. Contact Jason Miller, Hale County Extension Agent-AG, for more information at 806-291-5267.

TWDB Conducts Work Session in Lubbock

Friday, December 9, 2016 By Carmon McCain, HPWD

Rural and agricultural water issues were the focus of a Dec. 7 work session of the Texas Water Development Board held at the McKenzie-Merket Alumni Center on the Texas Tech University campus.

"It's important to come to Lubbock and discuss issues that are important to agriculture and rural communities," said TWDB Chairman Bech Bruun of Austin. "With the legislative session just around the corner, it is a good opportunity for the TWDB Board members to visit this area and learn about these concerns. We want to do whatever we can at the agency to better help the residents of Texas."

Board Member Kathleen Jackson of Beaumont echoed Bruun's sentiments.

"Rural issues are of great importance to me. When a rural community runs out of water, then I feel as if Texas has run out of water. The answers to these problems won't come out of Austin, but rather from those in attendance today. We (the TWDB) must draw upon the leadership of those in this part of the state," she said.

Senator Charles Perry of Lubbock welcomed the TWDB members to Lubbock. He chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.

"It is important to maintain the livelihood of areas west of Interstate 35 through education, health care, and adequate water supplies. Your Zip code should not determine your quality of life," Perry said.

As the 85th Texas Legislature nears, Perry said there needs to be an honest discussion about the cost and worth of water.

"It is difficult for a public official to advocate an increase in water rates when residents turn on their tap and water is provided to them at a very low cost. We must pay a fair price

for development and for the worth of water," he said.

Representatives from the Texas Department of Agriculture and TWDB staff shared information about their agency's programs that are available to agriculture and rural communities.

Cameron Turner provided information about the TWDB's agricultural water conservation program which provides financial assistance for upgrade of irrigation equipment to improve efficiencies. Through Fiscal Year 2016, the program has committed more than \$100 million in grants, loans, and transfer of funds to implement strategies and practices to improve irrigation water use efficiency and conserve water.

The majority of the work session was devoted to a roundtable discussion relating to TWDB agricultural and rural programs. The TWDB Board members invited representatives of small and medium cities, regional water providers, engineering firms, Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., and the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation to share their experience and insights with the group.

"We (the TWDB Board Members) want to have a candid discussion with you. Tell us how we can improve our services and meet your needs," said Board Member Peter Lake of Tyler.

Bruun said the TWDB is now in the second year of financing water management strategy projects through SWIFT (State Water Implementation Fund for Texas). Political subdivisions, including municipalities, counties, and various districts (water improvement, irrigation, and groundwater conservation), can submit applications for low-interest loans, extended repayment terms, and deferral of loan payments between Dec. 1, 2016 and Feb. 3, 2017.

He noted that the TWDB has surveyed entities to determine why they are not using SWIFT and/or state revolving funds to finance water-related projects. Some reasons include:

- Application process appears to be too cumbersome.
- Better loan rate in the open market.
- Concern that loans cannot be paid off early.
- Concern that water projects for funding must be included in the State Water Plan. Individual projects can occur quickly. This requires amendment of local regional water management plans in order for the projects to be included in the State Water Plan.
- Misconception that this program is for large loans only.
- Municipalities do not want new debt.
- Municipal tax base of small towns with less than 1,000 in population cannot support new debt.
- Requirement that a political subdivision be a "sponsor" for SWIFT funding for agricultural projects.
- Some municipalities have projects in mind-but are not ready to move forward with them.
- Too much time between application approval and having "cash-in-hand" for shovel-ready projects.

"We hope the public was able to learn more about TWDB financial programs and how they can benefit those in rural areas. Certainly, there are still some challenges, but we are working to make improvements to streamline the process," Bruun said.

A brief public comment period wrapped up the three-hour work session.

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