

Heat, Wind, Hail Plague Texas High Plains Cotton; High Temps in Forecast

Friday, June 16, 2017

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Mother Nature has not been kind to many cotton growers in the PCG service area in these first few weeks of the growing season, with high winds, intense heat and severe weather causing stress and damage to fields across the region.

Over the past ten days, hail has impacted fields near O'Donnell, New Home, Brownfield, Plainview, and Floydada, among other areas. It is too early to tell the extent of the damage, but some growers expect a complete loss.

Seemingly relentless winds and temperatures soaring into the upper 90s and even 100s have taken their toll on young cotton plants trying to establish a good stand. Rainfall has been spotty and often accompanied by severe weather.

Kerry Siders, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent-IPM for Hockley, Cochran and Lamb counties, reported in his West Plains IPM Update that what growers thought could be thrips damage to cotton – “cupped, puckered, damaged cotton leaves” – actually was caused by the heat and wind. He noted that the damage seen now in his area is on the uppermost new tender leaves.

“...It may be 102 degrees out there, but that bare soil surface could reach well over 120 degrees,” Siders said. “Combine that with the constant wind, that will pucker anything up. So what happens is the tender leaf margins become desiccated or injured to a point where they cannot develop normally. Meanwhile the leaf continues to develop around the center portion of the leaf causing this cupped appearance.

“This is not thrips, not herbicide damage, no disease, no genetic failure, just plain HOT! And until this weather breaks with a more moderate temp of less than 97 degrees, decreased wind speed, higher humidity, needed rainfall - these symptoms will continue to be seen in cotton as well as other crops,” Siders said in his update.

In Lubbock, temperatures on Saturday are forecasted to be well above 100 with winds out of the south and southwest at 10 to 15 mph before a drop back to the low 90s on Sunday and Monday.

NCC, ACSA, AMCOT Submit Comments on NAFTA Negotiating Objectives

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From the National Cotton Council

The NCC was joined by the American Cotton Shippers Association and AMCOT on comments submitted to the Federal Register regarding the Administration's negotiating objectives in the modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico.

On the NCC's website at www.cotton.org/issues/2017/nafcom.cfm, the comments stated that NAFTA has been a source of strength for U.S. cotton and the

trade pact is crucial to the industry's long-term survival -- in large part due to the duty-free trade in raw cotton and cotton textile products. The comments noted that Mexico is buying 9% of our nation's raw cotton exports (almost a million bales) and 15% of U.S. cotton textile and apparel exports. Canada purchases 6% of U.S. cotton textile and apparel exports. Overall, the North American market accounted for just over \$2 billion in annual U.S. exports of raw cotton fiber and cotton textile products from 2014-2016.

The comments underscored the importance of maintaining NAFTA's benefits by emphasizing how the U.S. cotton industry is heavily dependent on access to export markets. The comments noted that some 95% of U.S. cotton is exported in some form. On average, about 75% of U.S. cotton production is sold to foreign buyers as raw cotton fiber, while another 20-25% is exported as textile products, whether in the form of yarn, thread or fabric.

Currently, though, U.S. cotton exporters face competition from growths originating from countries/regions such as Australia, Brazil, West Africa and Central Asia while the U.S. cotton textile industry has faced a surge in competition from textile industries in Vietnam, Bangladesh and Indonesia. China and India are the world's two largest producers and spinners of raw cotton, and China also is the largest producer and processor of manmade textile fibers, principally polyester, that are substitutable for cotton fiber.

The comments emphasized U.S. negotiators' objectives regarding the trade pact's modernization should be to preserve NAFTA's current benefits while encouraging further regional integration of the cotton and textile supply chain. This could be achieved through improvements to measures affecting trade in textiles and apparel, particularly the textile rule of origin - the purpose of which is to ensure an agreement's benefits accrue to its parties, not countries outside the agreement.

For textile and apparel products, NAFTA uses a yarn-forward rule of origin that has boosted growth in regional trade and facilitated regional integration to the U.S. cotton industry's benefit. Unfortunately, NAFTA also includes exceptions that weaken the yarn-forward rule of origin's effectiveness. Among the exceptions the NCC would like to see eliminated are tariff-preference levels that allow certain fabrics and yarns to enter a NAFTA country from a third country, be processed into a finished textile product, and still receive duty-free treatment under the agreement.

Among other modernizations the NCC is seeking are 1) strengthening provisions covering a statute that requires the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to purchase only textile products with 100 percent U.S. content, with limited exceptions and 2) establishing a customs enforcement task force to combat duty evasion and other forms of textile-related customs fraud.

The NCC's textile priorities track very closely with the priorities of the National Council of Textile Organizations as part of the NAFTA modernization.