

## **Farm Stress - Help and Hope**

December 2019

by Mary Jane Buerkle

The holidays are upon us, and while they can be stressful for some, for others they can be downright debilitating, intensifying depression and anxiety. Couple that with today's farm economy crisis, and the feelings of stress and isolation can increase dramatically, leading to depression, substance abuse and suicide.

Plains Cotton Cooperative Association, Plains Cotton Growers, and experts at Texas Tech have teamed up to provide information about how to get help and have hope. PCCA has created a page on their website called "Farm Stress – Help and Hope" with resources and facts about mental health crisis. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, 91% believe that financial stress or fear of losing the family farm impacts mental health.

"Every day, farmers and their families deal with factors that are beyond their control, which impact their finances, relationships, and many other aspects of their operation," PCG CEO Steve Verett said. "We urge anyone struggling with stress, depression, or suicidal thoughts to seek help, and encourage everyone to check on their family members, friends and neighbors to offer support and help during these trying times."

Resources include:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255. The call is free and confidential, and they will connect the caller to a counselor in their area.
- Crisis Text Line – text HOME to 741741 to be connected to a trained counselor 24/7.
- Farm Aid Farmer Hotline, 1-800-327-6243. Staff will answer calls Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern time.

More information can be found at <https://pcca.com/farm-stress-help-and-hope/>.

Check out PCG's NEW website!

[www.plainscotton.org](http://www.plainscotton.org)

We'd love to hear your feedback!

## **Harvest Continues Across Texas High Plains**

Friday, December 6, 2019

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Cotton growers across the region have either crossed the finish line or have it in sight as they continue toward the completion of the 2019 crop.

Harvest, ginning and classing activity slowed a little around Thanksgiving, but was ramping back up over the past week. Many growers are finished. Some still must make decisions about harvesting dryland acreage that will not yield enough to justify the expense. This makes it challenging for ginners to estimate how many bales they can expect.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service will release their December estimates next week, and regional industry leaders expect another production decrease from the November report. A lot more will become clear over the next two weeks, and January will be even more telling.

More than 1.25 million samples have been classed so far for 2019 at the USDA Cotton Classing Office in Lubbock, which is near the halfway mark. As is common toward the end of the season, especially after periods of precipitation, color grades are trending downward and leaf grades are trending up slightly. Staple length has remained around 35. Plastic contamination calls have been rare.

In market news, futures continue to hover in the mid-60s. A decrease in crop estimates on Tuesday could edge those a bit higher, but the lack of a trade deal continues to plague the market.

The second tranche of Market Facilitation Program payments have been released and growers should receive those soon if they haven't already. The cotton industry continues to advocate for not only the third tranche, but another round of the program to help growers through challenging financial times.

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## **USDA to Open Signup for Conservation Reserve Program on December 9**

Thursday, December 5, 2019

From USDA

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture is opening signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on December 9, 2019. The deadline for agricultural producers to sign up for general CRP is February 28, 2020, while signup for continuous CRP is ongoing.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing 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.

"The Conservation Reserve Program is one of our nation's largest conservation endeavors and a critical tool to help producers better manage their operations while conserving natural resources," Secretary Perdue said. "The program marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020, and we're hoping to see one of our largest signups in many years."

*("COTTON NEWS" continued on Page 2)*

CRP has 22 million acres enrolled, but the 2018 Farm Bill lifted the cap to 27 million acres. This means farmers and ranchers have a chance to enroll in CRP for the first time or continue their participation for another term.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. The program was originally primarily intended to control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. This Farm Bill program has evolved over the years, providing a variety of conservation and economic benefits from coast to coast. CRP has:

- Prevented more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
- Reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively;
- Sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road;
- Created more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world 7 times; and
- Benefited bees and other pollinators and increased populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds

By enrolling in CRP, producers are improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, and restoring habitat for wildlife. This in turn spurs hunting, fishing, recreation, tourism, and other economic development across rural America.

### CRP Enrollment Options

#### General Signup

CRP general signup will be held annually. The competitive general signup will now include increased opportunities for enrollment of wildlife habitat through the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative.

#### Continuous Signup

While some practices under SAFE will remain available through continuous signup, CRP continuous signup will focus primarily on water quality within the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) Initiative. The 2018 Farm Bill prioritizes water quality practices such as contour grass strips, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetlands and a new prairie strip.

USDA will also be working with Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) partners to relaunch CREP continuous options in each state under new statutory provisions. CREP will continue to target high-priority local, state or regional conservation concerns.

#### Grasslands Signups

CRP Grasslands signup helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands while maintaining the areas as grazing lands.

A separate CRP Grasslands signup will be offered each year following general signup. The sign-up period for CRP Grasslands in 2020 runs from March 16, 2020 to May 15, 2020.

#### Pilot Programs

Later in 2020, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will roll out pilot programs within CRP: CLEAR 30, which allows contracts expiring with CLEAR practices to be reenrolled in 30-

year contracts and in the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) in the prairie pothole region. More information on these programs will be announced in the new year.

#### Land Transition

The CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP) is an option for producers interested in transitioning land to a beginning farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production. CRP contract holders no longer need to be a retired or retiring owner or operator to transition their land. TIP participants may have a lease less than five years with an option to purchase, and they have two years before the end of the CRP contract to make conservation and land improvements.

#### Previously Expired Land

Land enrolled in CRP under a 15-year contract that expired in September 2017, 2018 or 2019, may be eligible for enrollment if there was no opportunity for re-enrollment and the practice under the expired contract has been maintained.

#### CRP Rates and Payments

FSA recently posted updated soil rental rates for CRP. County average rates are posted on the CRP Statistics webpage. Soil rental rates are statutorily prorated at 90 percent for continuous signup and 85 percent for general signup. The rental rates will be reviewed annually. Under continuous signup, producers also receive incentives, including a signup incentive payment and a practice incentive payment.

#### More Information

CRP marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020, and FSA will continue to highlight the impacts of the program that was created in 1985 and the many stewardship-minded farmers, ranchers and landowners who have participated over the years. Learn more.

To enroll in CRP, contact your local FSA county office or visit <http://fsa.usda.gov/crp>. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](http://farmers.gov/service-locator).

## PCG Reminds Consumers to Buy Cotton

Friday, December 6, 2019

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 made with cottonseed oil 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 \$758 on holiday gifts this year, a 12 percent jump from 2018. About 3 in 5 shoppers say they plan to buy clothes as a present this season, which is good because a high percentage of consumers have said they like to receive clothes as gifts, including T-shirts, sleepwear, jeans, and sweaters.

“As consumers, we must look for cotton in the things we purchase, whether it's for ourselves or as a gift,” PCG CEO 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.”

#### 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](mailto:editor@plainscotton.org)