

USDA Forecasts 2020 Cotton Acreage Increase

Friday, April 10, 2020

By Mary Jane Buerkle

The latest estimates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Prospective Plantings Report, released March 31, show a projected increase in upland cotton planting in Texas, from 7.05 million in 2018 to 7.3 million to be planted in 2020, up 4 percent.

The USDA report is up more than a half-million acres from the National Cotton Council's estimate in February of about 6.75 million acres to be planted in Texas. Nationwide, the USDA predicts 13.5 million acres of upland cotton to be planted, also up from the NCC survey, which projected just more than 12.75 million acres.

However, it should be noted that USDA surveyed growers during the first two weeks of March, before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic really began to take hold of the cotton market. Futures prices weren't anywhere near optimal at that time, and plummeted even further toward the end of March. At press time, December futures were trading at almost 56 cents.

USDA will further revise their estimates this summer, after they conduct surveys in June.

"This initial estimate is a benchmark for what we may expect growers to plant, but a lot already has happened since the USDA's first survey, and we still have some time for growers to finalize decisions," PCG CEO Steve Verett said. "The good news is, planting conditions are excellent, and we remain hopeful that our growers can have a promising year."

Links for Trainings and CEUs

Here are some Texas A&M AgriLife Extension online trainings you, an employee or someone you know may need:

Auxin Training (1 Laws & Regs CEU):
<https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=AGCH-001>

Texas Pesticide Applicator Training Course (required to obtain TDA Pesticide License):

<https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=AGCH-015>

Paraquat Training (1 Laws and Regs CEU, good for three years; anyone who will be applying or mixing paraquat products must be licensed as well as completed the training): create account at <https://campus.extension.org/login/signup.php>

CEU's

Minimizing Drift:

<https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=AGCH-012>

Herbicide-Mode of Action:

<https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=AGCH-018>

Aquatic Vegetation Management:

<https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/product?catalog=WFSC-002>

Here is the Texas Department of Agriculture Pesticide CEU online & correspondence course link:

<https://ceusearch.texasagriculture.gov/CourseList.aspx>

Thank you to Kerry Siders, EA-IPM for Hockley, Cochran and Lamb counties, and Debbie Slocum, Assistant Regional Director-Pesticides for TDA Region 1, for sharing this information!

Farm Stress - Help and Hope

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by Mary Jane Buerkle

These uncertain and unprecedented times, coupled with challenges in the farm economy, can intensify depression and anxiety. 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 (but are not limited to):

- 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/>.

PCG Posts 2020 Seed Cost Calculator

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By Mary Jane Buerkle

The 2020 version of the Plains Cotton Growers, Inc. Seed Cost Calculator is ready and available for download from the PCG website at <https://plainscotton.org/seed-cost-calculator/>.

The PCG seed cost calculator is an interactive Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that allows producers to calculate an estimated cost per acre, for both seed and technology, based on published suggested retail prices. The calculator has become a popular tool among producers interested in comparing seed and technology prices as they work to finalize their cotton variety selections.

The 2020 version of the spreadsheet includes recently updated listings for conventional, Roundup Ready FLEX, XtendFlex, GlyTol, Bollgard II, TwinLink, Enlist and Widestrike varieties, including numerous stacked gene versions of these technologies that will be available for sale in West Texas in 2020.

Questions about the seed cost calculator can be directed to Shawn Wade at (806) 792-4904 or shawn@plainscotton.org.