

Crop Year Begins With Mixed Conditions

Friday, May 29, 2020

By Mary Jane Buerkle

As the first final planting date approaches for the Plains Cotton Growers service area, conditions across the region are mixed, with some growers enjoying beneficial rains that will boost their early crop and others experiencing everything from painfully dry conditions to severe weather that will force some to start over – or plant something else altogether.

Planted acreage for the PCG service area is expected to be about normal, but it remains to be seen how much will be viable. In the northern parts of the PCG service area, where the May 31 final planting date is in immediate sight, most cotton has been planted and in some areas, has been for two weeks. Generally, central counties have until June 5 to plant, and southern counties have until June 10. For information on a specific county's final planting date, contact PCG.

Garza County was the target for severe weather over the Memorial Day weekend, with a confirmed tornado, damaging hail, high winds, and anywhere from 3 to 8 inches of rain in three hours. Growers from the affected area report that the ground is packed and they likely will not be able to save their planted acres. Severe storms have impacted several other counties across the region as well.

Some areas in the region still are in desperate need of a rain, especially on dryland acreage. For example, West Texas Mesonet stations in Seminole, Denver City, Muleshoe, Amherst, Welch, and Plains have recorded only a few hundredths of an inch of rainfall in the month of May.

AFPC Releases Overview of CFAP

Thursday, May 28, 2020 By Paul Schattenberg, AgriLife TODAY

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University in College Station has released a new report providing details and insights into the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

“Overview of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, CFAP,” was produced by center co-directors Bart Fischer, Ph.D., and Joe Outlaw, Ph.D., along with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agricultural economists David Anderson, Ph.D., College Station, and Justin Benavidez, Ph.D., Amarillo.

(PCG EDITOR'S NOTE: The report is available at www.plainscotton.org, or directly from the AFPC website at <https://www.afpc.tamu.edu/research/publications/files/699/RR-20-02.pdf>)

Recently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released details on CFAP and announced that sign-up for the program will be from May 26 to Aug. 28. In providing direct support to farmers and ranchers, USDA is drawing on two separate funding authorities: \$9.5 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security, or CARES Act, and \$6.5 billion from the Commodity Credit Corporation, or CCC.

“Given the scope of the challenges facing the agricultural industry, more assistance will undoubtedly be needed as the impact of the pandemic continues to unfold,” Fischer said. “This report is based on our review of available information, but eligibility for the new program will ultimately be determined by USDA.”

Fischer said the CFAP's \$19 billion package contains two primary components:

- First, the USDA's commitment to partner with regional and local distributors to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy and meat, beginning with the procurement of an estimated \$100 million per month in fresh fruits and vegetables, \$100 million per month in a variety of dairy products and \$100 million per month in meat products.

- Second, the USDA's commitment to provide \$16 billion in direct support to agricultural producers where prices and market supply chains have been impacted and to assist producers with additional adjustment and marketing costs resulting from lost demand and short-term oversupply for the 2020 marketing year caused by COVID-19.

“This report provides an update on both components of CFAP,” Fischer said.

The CFAP provides much-needed aid for producers who have been significantly affected by COVID-19, Outlaw noted. Despite the fact the coronavirus relief bill provided a \$14 billion replenishment for the CCC, the funding is not available until after June 2020. As a result, they are drawing on existing CCC funding to operate the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

(“COTTON NEWS” continued on Page 2)

Important Program Deadlines

U.S. Department of Agriculture Key Programs

ARC-CO and PLC Election and Contract 2020 Crop Year

June 30

Crop Acreage Certification Deadline

July 15

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Application

August 28

Yield Update for PLC Program

September 30

Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) Application

December 31

(program funds will remain available until expended or December 31)

Small Business Administration Key Programs

Paycheck Protection Program

Signup Ends June 30

Economic Injury Disaster Loan

Signup Ends December 31

According to the report, commodities eligible for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program include:

- Livestock: cattle, hogs and sheep (lambs and yearlings only).
- Dairy
- Wool
- Non-specialty crops: malting barley, canola, corn, upland cotton, millet, oats, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers, durum wheat and hard red spring wheat.
- Specialty Crops — Fruits: apples, avocados, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapefruit, kiwifruit, lemons, oranges, papaya, peaches, pears, raspberries, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes and watermelons.
- Specialty Crops — Vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, dry onions, green onions, peppers, potatoes, rhubarb, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes and taro.
- Nuts: almonds, pecans and walnuts.
- Other: beans and mushrooms.

In relation to the \$16 billion in direct payments to agricultural producers, the report provides clarification on payment rates and eligible commodities, payment limits and income tests, and payment reductions. It also provides payment calculations and examples by commodity.

While CFAP provides a significant amount of aid, there are several losses not covered, Fischer said.

“As noted in another recent report by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center, losses to Texas agriculture alone could exceed \$8 billion,” he said. “As Congress continues to debate the next steps, there remain some ongoing items of concern for those involved in production agriculture.”

He identified some of those additional items of concern as:

- 2020 Row Crops: CFAP only provides assistance for crops held in inventory as of Jan. 15. In other words, it provides no assistance for the 2020 crop year.
- Livestock: While livestock producers in general and cattle producers in particular are the biggest recipients of assistance from CFAP, the estimated support for cattle is still significantly less than half of the damages estimated by industry. While animals marketed between Jan. 15 and April 15 and held in inventory from April 16 to May 14 will be eligible for a CFAP payment, there likely will be calls for additional assistance. Also, those producing poultry on contract and paid by pounds produced may accrue significant additional losses.
- Others in the Supply Chain: CFAP provides no direct benefits to anyone in the supply chain after leaving the farm gate. For example, ethanol producers are under tremendous strain. Also, the merchandising supply chain for cotton has incurred significant carrying charges, logistical costs and market disruptions not currently addressed by CFAP.

“We hope this information on CFAP will be of use to producers as they sign up for the program,” Fischer said.

Connect With PCG!

Find us on Facebook and Twitter
<http://www.facebook.com/plainscottongrowers>
<http://www.twitter.com/PCGNews>

Subscribe to PCG Email Services!
<http://ow.ly/gp7KZ>

Texas High Plains Cotton: Time to Guard Up Against Thrips

Friday, May 22, 2020

by Dr. Suhas Vyavhare

Cotton planters are rolling across the Texas High Plains. While a lot of cotton seed will go into the ground over the next couple of weeks, some of the early planted stuff is making its way above ground. Thrips are one of the first insect pests that we experience on seedling cotton. I am seeing thrips swarms all around and can find them on almost everything that is green. It will not be too long before these tiny insects land on the emerging cotton. We usually experience higher thrips pressure in the areas north of Lubbock. Under good growing condition, plants do recover from thrips injury without economic yield loss, but when additional stresses such as cold temperatures, sandblasting and or nematodes are present, thrips infestation can delay growth and reduce yields substantially.

Thrips species composition in the South Plains region is mainly formed by onion thrips (*Thrips tabaci*) and the western flower thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*). Preventive insecticide seed treatments provide a good control against these species for up to ~3 weeks after planting. However, this can vary with growing conditions and the weather. Almost all our in-furrow or insecticide seed treatments used are neonicotinoids (e.g. imidacloprid, thiamethoxam). Remember, these are water-soluble insecticide compounds that are taken up through the roots and translocated into growing leaf tissues and hence need enough soil moisture to be effective.

When scouting for thrips, there is truly no substitute for whole plant inspections from a representative sample from across the whole field. We may find adult thrips (winged) in almost every field but it is important to know that presence of adults alone will not warrant foliar insecticide application. The presence of immature thrips (wingless) is a good indicator of whether the seed treatments are still effective enough or not. The action threshold for thrips is one thrips per true leaf and our suggestions as rescue treatments include acephate, dicofol (e.g. Bidrin) or spinetoram (Radiant). Timing of insecticide application is critical. Research indicates that insecticide application beyond 1st true leaf stage will not result in significant yield gains. Also, remember, it is not uncommon to see "look-a-like" thrips symptoms under our environment—beware of similar symptoms from sandblasting, residual herbicides and high temperatures before making spray decisions. We cannot control the environment or the market but we sure can save money and time by avoiding ill-timed or unnecessary insecticide applications.

Dr. Suhas Vyavhare is an Extension Entomologist based in Lubbock.

Farm Stress: Help and Hope
<https://pcca.com/farm-stress-help-and-hope/>

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