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# AgFax: Midsouth Cotton

## May 28, 2002

Here is this week's issue of **AgFax: Midsouth Cotton**, sponsored by Valent U.S.A., maker of Select, Cobra, Orthene and Valor. We welcome your comments. -- Owen Taylor, Editor

## Overview

Weather extremes continue to hurt the crop and are forcing growers to make tough decisions about whether to replant or continue planting at all.

Parts of Louisiana received good rains last week, but a wide area in the state continues to get drier. In the upper Delta, wet and cold weather have taken a heavy toll. Seedling disease is widespread, the crop has been delayed and thrips remain a nagging problem.

The following reports were made Monday and Tuesday, May 27-28.

## Crop Reports

**Tucker Miller, Ind. Consultant, Drew, Miss.:** "Cotton is looking a little better. We're still spraying thrips where the weather went against us. We're trying to get a shot of Orthene on some cotton right now that's at 4 leaves and stunted. It needs help to get over the hump. But we've also got cotton that's past thrips problems. Some early fields that were protected from the weather are at the 9th node and 3 squares.

"We've also just replanted some. Rains on Sunday ranged from 3" at Marks down to none as you go south. Some spots near Greenwood had hail damage, too. But it's dry enough in places that we're watering corn now, mainly from Sumner and Webb down through Indianola and Greenwood."

**Steve Schutz, Ind. Consultant, Coushatta, La.:** "It's still dry here. Our last widespread rain was April 7. A few places picked up a 1-2" Sunday, but it wasn't widespread. Cotton won't come up on the stiff ground, and we're fighting thrips where it is up. I think all our cotton was planted by Saturday, and maybe 60% to 70% is up.

"Cool weather hurt us. It hasn't been warming up until 11 a.m. every day, so we're behind on heat units. We're doing some pinhead sprays. Temik performance has been poor, probably due to the dry and cool conditions."

**Phil Gurley, Gurley's Agricultural Consulting Service, Kennett, Mo.:** "The crop is doing poorly. A lot of replanting was done last week and even a little early this week.

"The cotton is still trying to come out of the wet and cold weather damage. Thrips are all over it, and we're spraying them as quickly as possible with Orthene to give the cotton some relief so it can grow. I don't see the thrips situation easing up soon. Wheat

harvest will be starting in 7-10 days, so they're coming out of that crop, and our numbers in cotton have probably doubled in the last 5 days.

"Some areas got rain Saturday, which took out some more of my cotton that was already sick. We had 3-4 little areas with hail damage. The storm dumped 6" in one strip from Piggot, Ark., to Holcomb, Mo.

"We sprayed saltmarsh caterpillars last week. This is a new pest for us. We sprayed a few fields early last season but have already treated more fields now than we did in 2001."

**John "Kim" Kimbrough, Ind. Consultant, Pro Tech Ag, Lexington, Miss.:** "We're doing a little spraying for thrips. Some cotton is suffering from too much water and cold weather, and all of it's suffering from too much cold weather. Our growers near Oxford in north Mississippi, in particular, have been too wet, but they missed most of the rains Sunday that we got here in Holmes County. We picked up 1.5" here.

"Our north Mississippi growers needed just over a month to plant and replant. Cotton planted before all the cold weather looks bad. We've got some 4-leaf Roundup Ready cotton that we're afraid to treat because it's probably not growing enough to cope with

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the Roundup.

"Cotton planted in the Oxford area last week showed just how much conditions have improved. It came out of the ground in 4 days."

**Chuck Farr, Mid-South Ag Consultants, Crawfordsville, Ark.:** "The weather and the river continue to hinder cotton planting. Some of our growers have thrown in the towel and decided not to plant any more cotton this season because they see too much risk with a late crop. One grower who had 5,500 acres of cotton last year and planned on 3,800 acres this year quit planting Saturday at 1,800 acres. Two more growers with over 800 acres of cotton between them won't plant a stalk now.

"I think our acreage will be off 30-40%. We've replanted 20-30%. The early crop that wasn't killed outright is stunted. We've got some 3-4" cotton at 5th leaf, and we'll really have to watch our Roundup treatments. It's the worst start I've ever seen to a cotton crop.

"Our immediate concern is thrips. Wheat dried down so much in the last 5 days that all the thrips in the country are coming out of it and going into cotton. Cotton with 2 cotyledon leaves has 3-5 thrips per plant. We're also finding large numbers of stinkbugs in wheat fields and roadsides."

**John Raymond Bassie, Ind. Consultant, Bassie's Agri Service, Cleveland, Miss.:** "Things really don't look good. I've got some cotton with 2-3 squares on one end of the row, but a quarter mile away on the lower end of the field the plants are still in the seedling stage. There was too much rain and cold temperatures, and now we're facing the potential for a 2-week difference in defoliation times.

"By Saturday we were probably 80-85% finished with cotton planting. Areas around Shelby and Duncan got 5-6" of rain, and it already was too wet to work there. We've got 1,300 acres behind the Mississippi River levee that looks questionable due to high water.

"We're treating thrips, not because numbers are high but because cotton is so sickly and the few thrips out there are doing a steady job of destroying cotton. I'm spraying cotton that I

wouldn't worry about if cotton was growing faster. I started sweeping this weekend and caught plant bugs in the 3-4% range in some places."

**Keith Collins, Richland Parish Extension Agent, Rayville, La.:** "We finally got a good rain through here Sunday. It only rained .5" in the northern part of the parish, but amounts increased as you went south, and totals down there were close to 2.5". We had enough rain the previous Friday to finish most cotton planting, and this one will bring the crop along. This was our first saturating rain since April 7-8.

"We've got damaged cotton due to thrips and cold, dry weather. Cotton has just been sitting there. Some growers with pivots watered up cotton and have made 3 rounds already. We're ready now for some good growing conditions."

**Ralph Bagwell, Louisiana Extension Entomologist, Winnsboro, La.:** "Rains helped in some areas over the weekend, but a lot of places got little or no rain. Cotton ranges from not emerged all the way up to 9th node. We need rain. There are people watering cotton just to keep it alive. Thrips are terrible in some areas but hardly present in others. Some weather damage is still being mistaken for thrips. We're picking up a few aphids, and they could get worse if it remains dry."

**Gus Lorenz, Arkansas Extension IPM Specialist:** "This is about as bad a start as we've ever had. Warm weather this week will make cotton look better where it's capable of rebounding. In NE Arkansas, county agents estimate that 25% of their cotton has been replanted.

"We're about through with cotton planting. Seedling disease has really held back this cotton, and people are evaluating stands now. Rain is in the forecast again, so that could add to the problems we've already got.

"Thrips are still hitting. We're getting 3-5 days control then have to treat again. One concern is what repeated treatments are doing to beneficials. I'm afraid we're going to be open to more secondary pest pressure.

"Saltmarsh caterpillars are showing up in NE Arkansas. We're recommending Intrepid. Young grasshoppers are

showing up through much of the state, and I've heard of poor performance from some pyrethroid treatments. They're mainly on field edges, working into the closest rows. One option we're recommending at this point is 2 oz/ac of Dimilin in border areas."

**Agricultural Management Services, Clayton, La. (from the firm's weekly report, by Roger Carter, Tim White, Walter Myers and Nate Wellborn):** "Cotton acreage was to be 50% of last year's total. Of intended acres, approximately 90% has been planted. If a stand is not established on the dry-planted acreage, cotton acres will be down 65% from last year's totals.

"Catahoula and Concordia Parishes may have the highest percentage loss in cotton acres. Corn and soybeans inherited most of the cotton acreage. Many farmers opted to take the government money and plant a less expensive crop. This trend will continue until cotton prices get in the 70-cent range.

"Where Command was applied behind the planter, an infurrow treatment of Disyston was required. We recommended that all cotton have an Orthene seed treatment regardless of what other seed treatments or infurrow insecticides were used. It has been obvious the past several years that seedlings from Orthene-treated seed have less thrip problems. The addition of Gaucho, Cruiser, Temik or Disyston helps, but Orthene may be the key.

"Thus far thrip have not been a serious issue, but are requiring some attention on some of the slower growing cotton. We are using Bidrin or Orthene for foliar applications. In areas where moisture is very short, we have opted to do nothing until it rains.

"Aphids are requiring attention on some cotton, especially where Disyston was used infurrow. We are using Trimax and Centric to determine if there are differences in control. Spider mites are appearing earlier than we have ever witnessed. Light populations are present in many fields. If it doesn't rain soon, some treatment will be required.

"Plant bugs are present, but we are hesitant to treat for fear of stimulating worse problems."