SEPTEMBER 15, 2004

Here is this week’s AgFax: Midsouth Cotton, sponsored by FMC Corporation, maker of Aim® herbicide/defoliant and Mustang Max™ insecticide.

HARVEST SURVEYS

We will start our harvest survey reports next Friday, September 24. Each week we will ask a portion of our readers by email how defoliation and harvest are progressing. Those responding will only be identified by location (county and state) and occupation.

For logistical reasons, the harvest reports are only available by email. If you would like to switch to electronic delivery for the remainder of the season, write your email address on this week’s cover sheet and return it to 601-992-3503. Or, you can check our web edition each Friday night for that week’s harvest report. Go to: agfax.com/midsouth.

OVERVIEW

We delayed this week’s issue an extra day to get some last-minute perspectives on where Hurricane Ivan might head and how the storm will influence harvest decisions for the rest of the week.

As we closed this issue Wednesday afternoon, Ivan appeared set to make landfall someplace between the eastern Mississippi Gulf Coast and the western edge of the Florida Panhandle, then turn northeasterly. Areas in the projected path included eastern Mississippi, most of Alabama and Middle Tennessee.

Arkansas, parts of Louisiana and even western Mississippi may be affected little, if any.

But, as we found in our calls this week, many growers remain cautious about defoliation. Some materials are going out, but many producers will wait until Ivan passes before spraying much more.

These reports were made Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning.

CROP REPORTS

Reynold Minsky, Ind. Consultant, Lake Providence, La.:

“We’re beginning to defoliate, and a little picking has started. One field averaged 2 bales/acre, and we’re surprised and delighted about that. This was on some black land, not our better cotton ground.”

Lee Rogers, Rogers Entomological Service, Steele, Mo.:

“We’re starting into defoliation in a big way this week. I’ve been pulling samples for micronaire evaluations but don’t have any results yet. It looks like a pretty good crop, but a lot still depends on heat units and the direction the hurricane takes.”

Ronnie Bibb, Jimmy Sanders Seed Co., Hollandale, Miss.:

“We’re just getting started good with defoliation. One of my growers picked a little this morning. We’re maybe 20% defoliated.

“The hurricane is on everyone’s mind. One grower said he will watch the weather tonight (Tuesday) and try to get an idea about Ivan’s path. He’s got one shot of defoliant on now. If it looks like extra day to get some last-minute perspectives on where Hurricane Ivan might head and how the storm will influence harvest decisions for the rest of the week.

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A clean cotton harvest starts with a clean field.

Don’t let problem weeds interfere with your cotton harvest. Add a little kick to your tank with Aim® herbicide from FMC — the perfect tank-mix partner with an ethephon plant growth regulator for added weed-control. Aim is an effective and economical harvest aid, providing fast cotton defoliation while it kills and dessicates tough problem broadleaves. That way, they won’t fight with your harvest equipment and reduce lint grade. Its unique mode of action controls weeds other herbicides miss. In fact, Aim controls or suppresses more than 20 tough broadleaf weeds and sedges — even ALS- and triazine-resistant biotypes. For more information, see your FMC representative.
Ivan will hit between New Orleans and Mobile, we'll probably get a lot of rain, so he will start picking the next morning and not wait for that second shot of defoliants. But if Ivan makes landfall east of Mobile, he will delay picking and make his second defoliation application.

“His leaf drop is good, but there's still a bottom skirt. He would just as soon pick after all the leaves are off. But, if it does look like we'll get a lot of rain, he figures it’s better to pick some cotton now with trash than to let it ride out a lot of rain and wind, then maybe end up with nothing to pick.”

Sandy Stewart, Louisiana Extension Cotton Specialist, Alexandria, La.: “A lot of cotton has been defoliated, and pickers are running just about everywhere. Most gins had planned to start up later this week. The hurricane has put further defoliation on hold. Growers are trying to pick the cotton that’s been defoliated and wait another day or two to see what the storm does.

“Defoliation has gone real well, so far. Just about any combination has worked. The cotton is well cut out, and we’ve had good weather conditions for defoliation.”

Tom Barber, Mississippi Extension Cotton Specialist: “A lot of cotton was sprayed last week, and a little more defoliant has gone out this week. But some people are hanging back now to see how Hurricane Ivan develops. A little picking has started, both in the hills and the Delta. So far, it’s just a very small percentage of our crop.”

Bill Robertson, Arkansas Extension Agronomist-Cotton, Little Rock, Ark.: “People are really watching the weather. The latest forecast seems to indicate that the storm will move east of Arkansas, but a lot of growers are cautious about more defoliation this week. They figure that cotton is a lot more weather-proof with leaves still on the plant. I’ve talked to some growers who are putting out materials this week, but nobody is going at it hard and heavy.

“I haven’t seen any pickers running, but late last week I saw a few modules around a gin at Winchester. Based on what I’ve seen and heard, all the materials are working pretty good. The plant has a strong boll load and has really worked down the nutrients. We’ve had dry conditions lately, and that also is helping knock the leaves off.”

Scott Stewart, Extension Cotton Entomologist, Jackson, Tenn.: “We’ve got folks who are holding off on defoliation due to concerns about the hurricane. I talked to growers who were expecting to start today (Wednesday) but decided, instead, to begin early next week.

“Right now it doesn’t look like Ivan will be a big factor in West Tennessee, but growers are being cautious, and I really can’t blame them. I’ve just looked at some cotton in Middle Tennessee, and it’s not as far along as the crop on this side of the state. Altogether, maybe 5% of our cotton has received an application, and a little of that was done last week. I haven’t seen any picked.”

Gary Wolfe, La-Ark Agricultural Consulting, Ida, La.: “Quite a bit of our cotton has been defoliated, and we’re starting to gather a little. The first cotton we picked was on replanted dryland acreage. That field got pretty dry after the cotton emerged. It averaged 860 lb/acre, and that’s the only field that’s been completely ginned to the point that we’ve got yield numbers. Overall, I think we’ll have a decent crop. It won’t be as good as in the last 2 years, but it still could average 1,000 lbs/acre. Right now, at least, it appears the hurricane will miss us.”

Trent LaMastus, Ind. Consultant, Cleveland, Miss.: “Upwards of 65% of our cotton has received at least one defoliation application. Less than 5% has been picked. I’ve heard about some real good yields, from 850-900 lbs/acre on buckshot and 2.5 bales/acre or more on better cotton land. It looks like a decent year.

“The grower with that 850 lb/acre yield picked it on about the worst ground he has, so his yields should only go up from there. We’ve got some DPL 444 that might go 1,350 lbs/acre or better.

“Some growers who haven’t started picking yet will get into the field this week, while others won’t have anything ready until next week. The hurricane has been a point of uncertainty. Some people have really jumped out there and started picking. Others are holding off and betting that the hurricane won’t come up this way.

“One grower tried picking a little and found that he was knocking off many of the green bolls that he still might be able to pick. Even with the hurricane out there, he decided to park his equipment and wait.

“We’re actually going to spray some late, late cotton today (Wednesday) for stinkbugs. This cotton was replanted, and it didn’t start blooming good until August 1. But we’ve stayed on top of irrigation, growth regulator timing and insects, and those plants have a great fruit load that looks like it will mature out.”