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Here is this week’s AgFax: Midsouth Cotton, sponsored by the Midsouth Cotton Team of Syngenta Crop Protection. To request a subscription, go to agfax.com/subs.

OVERVIEW

Over the last week, things have gone from bad to worse in many parts of our coverage area. Continued rain and below-normal temperatures stalled cotton and kept growers out of the field. Only since Saturday and Sunday have farmers in many areas been able to return to their fields. Seedling disease, wet-weather blight, sand blasting, hail and thrips have taken a toll to some degree on a large part of this crop.

This morning, temperatures dipped into the mid to high 40s in areas south of Interstate 20. A slight warming trend is in the forecast after Wednesday. As we closed this issue late Tuesday afternoon, isolated showers were popping up in parts of Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee.

CROP REPORTS

Charles Denver, Denver Crop Consulting, Watson, Ark.: “From April 10 to May 10, we’ve had an enormous amount of rain, maybe 20 inches in places. It’s been cold, and cotton looks sick in many fields. Whatever was used at planting for insects has mostly played out, and nearly everybody is treating thrips now. A lot of Roundup has gone out, mostly within the window, but some also was a hair late. It depended on when cotton was planted and how it came up.”

Harold Lambert, Ind. Consultant, Innis, La.: “The southern part of my area is getting real dry again, and cotton planting there is just about finished. In the northern part, we’ve still got good moisture, and a few more cotton fields may be planted there. Only a couple of small areas at the very north end of my area received too much rain, and that required some replanting or spot planting.

“Our oldest cotton is about four true leaves, and if it had a seed-applied insecticide, it’s had to be treated for thrips. A fair amount of cotton is at the first true leaf stage, and I anticipate that quite a bit of it will require a thrips treatment. We’re already dry in places, and the seven-day outlook is for a zero percent chance of rain, and I don’t think we’ll see the plants take up enough systemic to hold thrips back.”

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The rains broke a fairly severe drought here. One field with cotyledon plants had to be sprayed with a light insecticide rate for burrowing bugs, something I’ve never had to treat before. The field was in the middle of a huge amount of no-till soybeans, and they inundated the cotton to the point that they were taking out the stand.”

Mike Sartor, Ind. Consultant, Sartor’s Ag Consulting, Clinton, Miss.: “For the most part, people are back in the fields. In the three counties I work, we’re about 90% planted and have cotton ranging from just emerged to six true leaves.

“We’ve had light thrips pressure, but it probably looked worse than it was because of cold nighttime temperatures. A week-old leaf looks a little crinkled, anyway, and cold conditions pucker these younger true leaves a bit more. There’s some thrips feeding, but not enough that I’m pressing anyone to treat. Terminals still look okay. In some cases, growers are adding thrips material to Roundup applications. It will do some good, at least by extending coverage another seven to ten days. We’ve got good stand counts, for the most part. We’re replanting in a few places where there was no doubt that it’s necessary.”

Tucker Miller, Ind. Consultant, Drew, Miss.: “We started off better than we ever had, as far as early planting and emergence goes. Now, everything has turned around with all the rain and cool weather, and this has become one of the worst starts I can remember. We’ve got everything from wind damage to herbicide damage. Insects didn’t amount to much until the last day or two. We started making a few thrips treatments today (Monday). We’re still trying to finish the last 10% of our planting, and should be able to wrap it up in a couple of days.”

Lee Rogers, Rogers Entomological Service, Steele, Mo.: “We have most of our cotton planted, and growers are trying to finish up what’s left. Cool weather is still hanging around. The cotton’s that’s up is brown and yellow, and it needs warm conditions and sunshine. We actually got off to a good start. The weather was dry and warm, then it started raining in late April, and it’s been wet up until this last weekend. Our heavier ground is still wet. Hopefully, we’ll dodge this current round of showers. There’s a 50% chance today (Monday) and a 40% chance Tuesday. There will be some replanting. It’s been too cool for much thrips activity, but we expect it will pick up with warmer weather.”

Chuck Farr, Mid-South Ag Consultants, Crawfordsville, Ark.: “The best way to describe things right now is with a four-letter word — ugly. After nine inches of rain, we quit counting. About 50% of our cotton has been planted. Of what has been planted, we may have to replant 70%. It rained and rained, and now it’s cold. We’re wearing jackets right now (Monday afternoon).”

Sandy Stewart, Louisiana Extension Cotton Specialist, Alexandria, La.: “Cotton is growing slowly. This week we should have drier weather and more sunshine, but temperatures will be below normal. DD60s may only run four to six a day, and we would love to see 10 or even 15 a day to get the crop moving. Several thousand acres in Franklin and Tensas Parishes suffered hail damage, and some of that will have to be replanted.”

Tom Barber, Mississippi Extension Cotton Specialist: “The worst cotton I’ve seen, so far, has been around Clarksdale. The older cotton, in particular, had been through a good deal of wind and sand blasting, plus hail in places. When you scan across a lot of those fields, it pretty much looks like dirt because there’s so little green. Thrips are around, and wet-weather blight is developing, too. The weather did a complete flip-flop. In April, we had temperatures that were more like May. Now here we are in May with conditions we wouldn’t be surprised to see in April. Cotton that’s up isn’t growing, and seed treatments are wearing off.

“It’s dry enough in many areas to replant, and people are doing field work. In Coahoma County, the growers I visited Monday said they would finish planting before they did any replanting. I received one report of replanting around Tunica County.”

Scott Gifford, Gifford Crop Consulting, Manila, Ark.: “We’re starting to pick up some thrips. It finally got dry enough Sunday for growers to begin planting again, and some replanting is underway, too. About 10% of the cotton I work will probably be replanted. Part of that is due to cold conditions, and we also have fields that were planted deep ahead of a three-inch rain, and that seed didn’t make a stand. The cotton that’s up doesn’t look too good. Mainly right now, we need sunshine. The weather has done a complete turnaround on us. We suddenly went from powder-dry conditions to three weeks of steady, soaking rains.”

Scott Stewart, Extension Cotton Entomologist, Jackson, Tenn.: “The only reason that a majority of our crop doesn’t look bad right now is because it hasn’t been planted yet. Only 35% to 40% has been planted, and only 20% to 25% has emerged to a living stand. A fair amount of replanting is going on. We’re getting scattered showers today (Tuesday), but the forecast looks pretty favorable, and in the next seven to ten days we should finish planting most of our cotton. Some of our earliest cotton is getting its first Roundup application and something for thrips. With the weather like it is and cotton growing so slowly, I’m not discouraging anyone from spraying for thrips.”