

PeanutFax: Southeast

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Here is this week's issue of *PeanutFax: Southeast*, sponsored by Valent U.S.A. Corporation, maker of Valor herbicide. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

-- Owen Taylor, Editor

OVERVIEW

Over the last week, planting activity cranked up a little more through Alabama, the Florida panhandle and southern Georgia. Warm temperatures will likely drive germination and seedling emergence next week.

Farther north, concern about tomato spotted wilt virus continues to delay planting. Next week should be more active as the calendar moves closer to May 10.

The moisture situation is mixed. A few low-lying areas are too wet, and rains fell in parts of

central Georgia late in the week. But several of our contacts said a weekend rain would be welcomed. These reports were made Friday.

CROP REPORTS

Dallas Hartzog, Alabama Extension Agronomist, Headland, Ala.: "This is the best start to a season that we've had in three or four years. Farmers have just started planting, and we'll get an awful lot of seed in the ground over the next several weeks. Generally, people are trying to space out the planting, although everything kind of merges together as the summer progresses.

"A few acres of the new varieties are being planted where seed is available. I'm advising everyone to see how these will perform on a small acreage.

"Folks in the eastern part of

the state have caught a rain every week or two and have good moisture, and we've generally had ample moisture in most places up to about May 1. But in another week we'll be looking for another rain."

Rusty Harris, Worth County Extension Agent, Sylvester, Ga.: "We just had a good storm to blow across the county. Some farmers wanted the rain and others didn't. Our peanut planting really hasn't gotten started yet. Everybody is trying to fit closely into that optimum planting time on the index.

"Cotton planting is pretty far along, so I expect that peanut planting will be going big time next week, depending on where a grower is in the county and where the rain fell. They're getting their planter setup finalized now, and the rubber will hit the

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road as soon as it's dry enough.

"As far as the new varieties go, DP1 is getting the most attention, but the seed aren't out there in any quantity. We may have 100 acres. There's a good deal of interest in seeing what's possible with Headline fungicide and the newer varieties.

"We're doing a sizable field test this year with our Extension specialists, and we're hoping that will give everyone some information for 2004."

Edward Kane, Ind. Crop Consultant, Robertsdale, Ala.: "I can't say that everyone is planting yet, but more are getting started every day. Everything should be more wide open next week. Growers who have jumped out and already started are mostly getting their C99Rs going, although some Georgia Greens have probably been planted, too.

"There's still some hesitation about tomato spotted wilt virus and the need to stick as closely as possible to the index. We've also got a number of new growers who haven't started yet because they're still trying to make sure their equipment is set up correctly. Inoculation is a big issue, considering peanuts have never been grown on some fields, and we've got fields that are only in their second or maybe third peanut season.

"Moisture also is a factor in how much planting will get underway. The land that was strip tilled or worked early and put up in beds is in okay shape. But

ground that was worked later has marginal moisture. Some areas got less rain recently, and they're drying fast. A rain over the weekend would help, and there's a chance for it, anyway. Some cotton is being planted here and there, but the emphasis next week will be peanuts."

Howard Small Jr., Ind. Consultant, Colquitt, Ga.: "By now, we've got about 2,000 acres of peanuts planted, and some fields were started in mid April. Right now, my growers have 12 planters running, and this crop could start moving quickly. The air temperature is 92 degrees and the soil temperature is 85. The soil is getting dry on the surface, and our sandier areas, especially in Florida, really need a rain this weekend.

"Our heavier soils in Georgia, though, are still saturated in places. We're seeing some bogging down on hill tops, and there are bottom portions of fields still covered with water.

"Overall, we're in the best shape for surface and ground water that we've had for a long, long time. The ground water levels are as good, in fact, as I've seen them since the early '70s when I moved here. We're finding it within 15 feet of the surface in places. Last year at this time it was 37 feet below the surface between Colquitt and Bainbridge, and it's right at 16 feet now.

"The water table spiked last September after the first hurricane, then dropped in October

and November, and jumped again with the next period of rainfall. It came down again, but then all the rain in March brought it up to 15. All of our streams, ponds and mayhaw flats are full.

"Of course, this all started with those hurricanes in 2002, and that reduced our peanut yields 1,000 pounds last fall, and the cotton just rotted away. But for the first time in a long time, we can say that the aquifer is definitely recharged."

Ben Whitty, Extension Agronomist, Gainesville, Fla.: "Peanuts are moving along now. More of them have been planted. We're entering into some forecasts for hot, dry weather. Earlier in the week this area had some rain, and it was a help, but it's about all gone now. If the forecast is correct, we could see some effect on planting progress.

"In the first part of next week there should be enough moisture in most locations. But later in the week I expect it to be more variable from one place to another if it doesn't rain.

"Overall, though, we're in better shape than we were this time last year. We have some 90 degree temperatures in the forecast this weekend and nighttime temperatures in the mid to upper 60s. That's after a period of nighttime readings into the 50s. In the last week or two I've had calls about slow germination, but with things warming up I think that problem will go away."