

RiceFax: Midsouth/Texas Edition

Introduction:

Here is your third issue of RiceFax, our weekly newsletter covering crop conditions in the rice production regions of the Midsouth and Texas. We gather reports on Monday and Tuesday each week and distribute RiceFax each Tuesday evening. RiceFax is sponsored by Valent USA as a service to Midsouth and Texas growers and rice workers. If you have questions or suggestions, please call or drop me a line.

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Overview:

■ Planting is getting underway in the Midsouth on a wider basis. Rain last week through much of the region brought progress to a halt. Some areas, especially along the Mississippi River, received 2-3" of rain as the front passed through. Cool temperatures late last week delayed germination and emergence where rice had already been seeded. Patchy frost was reported as far south as Interstate 20.

■ Texas and Louisiana coastal areas are dry and getting drier. Our contacts this week are comparing conditions to the start of last year's disastrous season. Planting is nearly complete in most areas. In some places, surface water could begin to run short without good, general rains. Planting continues and is nearly complete through the coastal area.

Texas/La. Gulf:

Johnny Saichuk, Louisiana Extension rice specialist, Crowley, La.: "We're now getting into the slow part in south Louisiana, getting the last 15% planted. Central and northern Louisiana are just starting to kick into planting. The crop looks great up to this point. But the critical issue right now in this part of the state is the lack of rain. We're in the midst of what could be a spring drought. The weather pattern is very similar to this time last year. We missed the rain with the last cold front. Guys with surface water are running out, and those with wells are going to be spending some money.

On one yield verification field, we're having trouble this week getting water on everywhere to do some weed work. We also had record lows in some areas Saturday night and relatively low humidity levels. It feels good to people, but this weather hasn't been worth a darn for rice."

Derrol Grymes, Coastal Ag Research, East Bernard, Texas: "Most of the rice is in the ground, and the rice coming up now looks good. We need a rain before long. It's starting to dry up really fast. We had a north wind for three days and now southwest winds, and it seems like it's been blowing about 10 mph all the time since last Wednesday. Farmers in the area reported some patchy frost Saturday morning."

Arlen Klosterboer, Texas Extension rice specialist: "Planting is progressing, but the weather is a concern. The whole (Texas) rice belt is essentially dry. It's looking like last year. Beaumont has only had a half-inch of rain since April

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1. That's very unusual, no two ways about it. There's enough water east of Houston. The watershed there has had plenty of rain, and reservoirs are full. But rainfall just seems to cut out when you get into the rice belt. The lack of rainfall isn't holding up planting, but there certainly is a concern about whether we're in for a repeat of 1998. We also had a cold spell late last week and into the weekend, plus we've got dry winds. We're seeing slight leaf burn, and it's setting back growth a little. The weather has warmed up now, but a good, general rain would certainly make everyone feel better."

Midsouth:

Leslie McFadden, Consultant, Beedeville, Ark.: "In our area as of today (Monday), we probably had 8-9% planted, and maybe 20% of the rice I work has been planted. We're about a week behind normal on planting. If it doesn't rain between now and Friday, everyone will get caught up in a hurry. Most of the ground has already been worked and smoothed off, and some P and K has been put out. It's just a matter of fluffing up the ground a little now. We've got Jefferson, LaGrue, Drew, Kaybonnet and Bengal already in the ground, and some brewers' rice is coming."

John Raymond Bassie, Bassie's Agri-Service, Cleveland, Miss.: "We've got 5% planted overall, though some people as of today (Monday) probably had 75% planted. Very little is up. It's been wet, and that's held things back. There still were places today that couldn't be worked because of rains last Tuesday and Wednesday. About 75% of what

we're planting is Lemont with Priscilla following that."

Allen McKnight, Delta Ag Consulting, Greenville, Miss.: "Probably less than 5% has been planted, so far. Most people were just getting ready when the rain hit last Wednesday, and we got one to three inches. Things have been drying up fast, and we're seeing people back in the fields. If we miss the rain this week, half or more of the crop will be planted here this week. People who were all ready last week don't want to get caught again, so they'll be going full force. One grower finished about 600 acres. He hustled up and planted with a truck."

Shane Holzhauser, Field Representative, Stratton Seed Co., Stuttgart, Ark.: "I wouldn't even say we're 25% planted in this immediate area. Nothing is up yet. Seed is really just starting to germinate. The rain has held us back. We will get a lot done this week, but there's a chance of rain late in the week. Last year this time, we were about done."

Jay Coker, consultant and farmer, DeWitt, Ark.: "On the prairie between Stuttgart and DeWitt, maybe 50-60% will be planted by the end of today (Tuesday). Less than 5% of the crop has emerged. We could really use a rain or flush over the next 7-10 days to promote some emergence. Temperatures below 40 degrees last week really set things back. We had good moisture but no really good germination and almost no emergence. Temperatures have warmed, but soils have dried quite a bit and we've got crusting."

Reynold Minsky, Minsky Consulting Services, Lake Providence, La.: "We're just

planting a little rice now. Maybe 5% has been planted. We haven't flushed any rice yet. Some acreage had a rain on it. We need a rain on the western and southern parts of the parish (East Carroll) right now."

Joe Street, Mississippi Extension Rice Specialist, Stoneville, Miss.: "We're about 25% planted now in Mississippi. We've gotten back in the field in the last couple of days, especially in the northern part of the state, and people are gearing up everywhere else. Most of what's being planted is Lemont, and Priscilla will replace some Lemont and some Cypress."

Cary Cheek, Southern Soil Management Corp., Gilbert, La.: "We really haven't gotten going yet. With the cool weather last week, everybody held off. Rain has held up field preparation, and people are working it now. We should start seeing some rice going in the ground early next week."

Curt Johnson, Rice Technical Services Consultant, Farmland Tech Services, Dermott, Ark.: "Between 15-20% has been planted in what I work between Pine Bluff and Eudora, but it varies quite a bit. In the southern part of Chicot County where we got 2" of rain last week, we're just getting started. Farther north, the rain tapered off to less than an inch. At Cummins Prison, it looks like about half the 1,900 acres has been planted already. We've had some heavy winds, and it's really crusted the ground. Some acreage is going to need to be flushed to gain emergence. A lot of field work is going on, and in just a few early fields growers already have pulled levees."