

RiceFax: Midsouth/Texas Edition

Introduction:

Here is your second 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:

● Rains predicted for late last week in the Midsouth didn't materialize, which gave fields a chance to dry out. Planting has started through much of the Midsouth. Some areas are at least two weeks behind the norm.

● In Texas and coastal Louisiana, a majority of the crop has been planted, and stands generally look good, especially on later

fields.

● Rains are predicted through a wide part of the Midsouth in the second half of the week. Parts of Texas are dry enough that some fields may have to be flushed to trigger emergence, though rain is predicted there later this week, too.

● Our contacts continue to report that the downgrade in the crop insurance program will reduce the final amount of rice acreage compared to projections made over the winter. Sharpest falloff will be in parts of the Midsouth where some farmers expected to shift land from cotton to rice. One Mississippian estimated that insurance changes trimmed his growers' anticipated acreage by 33% compared to February projections.

Texas/La. Gulf

Johnny Saichuk, Louisiana Extension rice specialist, Crowley, La.: "We're 70-75% planted in the southern part of the state, but far less in the northern areas. One farmer south of Crowley told me today (Tuesday) this was the best start he's had in

24 years. Another joked that the weather has been so cooperative that he's nearly forgotten about the lousy price situation. The remaining acreage to be planted in southern Louisiana is mainly being delayed to spread out planting dates. About 100,000 acres is in rotation with crawfish, and producers are still harvesting those fields. Herbicide recommendations are being made down here and some floods are being established."

DeWayne Dopslauf, field representative, Terra, Inc., Wharton, Texas: "We're finishing up planting now. We had a pretty good run before the last rain, and the majority is going in right now. It looks like we'll be through planting by the end of this week if the weather cooperates. A 50% chance of rain is in the forecast Wednesday, and everyone's hustling to get it all done. We're close to 75% planted today (Monday), and some growers probably have finished. I've looked at some early rice going on its fifth leaf and starting to tillar.

Continued on next page

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That's pushing it, though. Of the rice that's up, most is at the three-leaf stage. Herbicides have been going on about a week now. Cypress is the main variety we're seeing along with Jefferson and a little Lemont and some Maybelle."

Arlen Klosterboer, Texas Extension rice specialist: "As of last week, 35-40% of the total state crop was planted, and it's probably moved up to 40-50% today (Monday), and it might actually be higher than 50% planted. Stands, overall, look very good."

Gary Bradshaw, Bradshaw Ag Consulting, Brookshire, Texas: "In my area, we're probably 85% planted and a third is emerged. Stands look fair. We have some thin stands on our very earliest fields. Rains caught us at the wrong time, and we got crusting with some seed planted too deep. Later stands, though, look fine. But it's getting dry real fast, and we're running out of good moisture to plant into. Normally, we don't flush, but we may have to do some if it doesn't rain soon. There's a chance of rain Wednesday and Thursday."

Midsouth:

Bill Killen, Bill Killen Consulting Services, Cleveland, Miss. "We're on the lighter soils today (Monday) and probably will get on the black ground by mid-week if we don't get the rain in the forecast for Wednesday and Thursday. Rice is being planted right now near Cleveland on mixed ground. I've got customers in Washington Co. airing out black ground right now so they can plant later in the week. The majority of what we're planting is Lemont and Priscilla."

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Darrell Hess, consultant, Jimmy Sanders, Inc., Wynne, Ark.: "On one field planted March 25, we're starting the DD-50s today (Monday), but that's the exception. We're just in the early stages, with about 10% planted. We're planting rice wide open today. We ran all weekend after getting into the field Thursday in some cases. There's still quite a bit of field work to be done. Predominate varieties are Drew and Lagrue."

Ronnie Helms, G&H Associates, Stuttgart, Ark.: "Some rice was seeded late last week and through the weekend, and a few fields are finished. I suspect, though, that 7 out of every 10 fields today (Tuesday) are still too wet. Everyone is going fast, working ground, planting rice where they can and getting levees up before the next rain. We've been wet for two weeks, and there's an 80% chance of rain Thursday."

Keith Shelton, consultant, Farmland Technical Services, North Little Rock, Ark.: "We're still a little wet in the area I mainly work (around England, Ark.). People are gearing up to plant, but it's been so warm and wet, and ev-

erything has grown up. If it doesn't rain this week, it will be the end of this week or the first of next week before planting really starts. Most of our acreage will be Cypress or Drew with a little Jefferson. The change in the insurance program affected acreage. At one point, it looked like everything that could have rice was going to have rice. Now, though, acreage may be up very slightly."

Wayne Dulaney, field representative, Helena Chemical Co., Clarksdale, Miss.: "We're trying to get some burndown chemicals out where fields have gotten so grown up with all the rain and warm weather. A small amount of rice was planted around the Duncan area Saturday. Around Clarksdale, people are just planting a few acres today (Monday). In Tunica Co., we applied a lot of Roundup late last week and over the weekend. Some farmers there won't be able to plant until late in the week if it doesn't rain. We're expecting some cooler temperatures, and the idea in some cases is to apply the burndown, then wait until next week to let the material work. That way, the grower can catch warmer weather so rice will be growing good when it comes out of the ground. At most, we've only got 1% planted, and that's mostly on precision graded fields with good slopes."

Bruce Beck, Missouri Extension regional agronomist/rice, Butler, Mo. "I had two calls last week from growers wanting to know if I thought they could go ahead and plant. But April 15 is still the earliest recommended date. So far, I haven't seen any planting or heard about any in my counties."