

RiceFax: Midsouth/Texas Edition

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Here is this week's issue of *RiceFax: Midsouth/Texas*, sponsored by the Midsouth and Texas staff of Valent U.S.A. Corporation, maker of Regiment® and Bolero® rice herbicides.

OVERVIEW

Parts of Texas and south Louisiana received their first measurable rainfall in 2 months, giving growers a brief respite on pumping. While dry conditions are generally associated with low disease pressure, it's been tough to keep a flood on many fields.

The rain, though, came in some pounding amounts east of Houston. Hail also battered some areas. The system still missed a wide part of the Texas production region (see McCauley's comments).

In the Midsouth, dry conditions for about a week helped growers catch up with pre-flood nitrogen applications on a wide basis. But a good deal of that work still remains unfinished. The rain also could further delay recovery in parts of the upper

Midsouth that experienced flooding in May.

The following reports were made Monday and Tuesday.

TEXAS/S. LA.

Garry N. McCauley, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Eagle Lake, Texas: "Small sections of our rice production area got rain Monday, but it wasn't all good. North and east of Houston and about halfway to Beaumont they got pounded by 6-8" of rain plus golfball-size hail. It also rained on the other side of Victoria just past our rice. In the major part of our production area, it rained little, if any. We're 9-12" behind now for the year in many locations. We've gone nearly 75 days here without measurable rainfall.

"There's a lot of evaporation, and people are having trouble keeping up with the pumping. A majority of our fields are under flood now, and the rice is looking better. We passed PD on our earliest rice in the last 7-10 days. With the low humidity and low rainfall, there's much less chance of disease coming in, so perhaps that

will offset some of the extra costs we've had this year with flushing and pumping."

Shane Theunissen, Extension Associate, Crowley, La.: "We saw a little sheath blight in St. Landry Parish last week, but that's still the only real sign of disease that has appeared in the research verification fields. We're past the green ring on a lot of rice in south Louisiana. I saw some rice today that had about a 1" panicle, so in another week we could have a few heads emerging.

"We had hit-and-miss showers yesterday (Monday). The station got 1.1", but other areas had just a few tenths. They're calling for more rain today, and I've been hitting showers here and there along the highway.

"Stinkbugs are waiting on the borders of rice fields in some places. They're on barnyardgrass and vasse grass that's already headed."

Howard Cormier, Vermilion Parish Extension Agent, Abbeville, La.: "It's finally started raining. We've gotten scattered showers, from .5" up to 4-5" in the north-

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ern part of the parish. Most of Vermilion hasn't seen rain since April 7. With these dry conditions, we've had difficulty keeping up with pumping. Days have been hot and dry, plus the wind has been increasing evaporation. Several farmers tell me they've been going 24/7 with the pumps, so whatever rain we get now helps with that cost, at least for a few days.

"Rice is looking good now. It's standing up tall, has a healthy green color and is really smiling. There's something about rainwater that really makes rice do better. It dilutes salinity where some might have gone into fields with surface water.

"The drought has kept us from planting beans, so far, but drought years tend to be our better rice years due to lower disease pressure. It's too early to know if that will be the case this year. Sheath blight has been spotted in a few fields, but it won't spread quickly with the dry conditions we've had."

MIDSOUTH

Joe Street, Mississippi Extension Rice Specialist, Stoneville, Miss.: "Rainfall amounts Monday ranged from .4" to 1.5". We're still looking at cases of herbicide drift. It's not all Roundup, apparently. In some situations the rice wasn't growing well due to cold weather in May, and that made it less able to metabolize materials. With better conditions, some of this might not have been a concern.

"Also, the problem has been compounded by pythium. One grower in Coahoma County lost most of his crop. Out of 1,400 acres, 1,200 acres isn't viable.

"We're in all stages with this crop. Some rice has just been planted, while our earliest fields are at midseason. A little midseason nitro-

gen went out last week."

Cecil Parker, AgriServices, Ltd., Vidalia, La.: "On some of our rice that didn't have an Icon seed treatment we're spraying for rice water weevils. We've also made our midseason fertilizer application on a little of our earliest rice. No disease pressure, so far."

Charles Denver, Denver Crop Consulting, Watson, Ark.: "We're mostly cleaning up and trying to get the flood on more fields. With a lot of our fields, it took quite a while to get them dried out to the point that we could do pre-flood nitrogen. Planes got pretty backed up, but most of the immediate work was finished before it rained Monday. We've still got some grass that needs attention."

Chuck Wilson, Arkansas Extension Rice Agronomist, Stuttgart, Ark.: "Rainfall this week has been scattered, ranging from none up to a couple of inches. Parts of north Arkansas got rain where they sure don't need any more. But places in south Arkansas also got 1-2". It was needed in a lot of places where people are trying to plant beans behind wheat and had started running out of moisture.

"The rain is delaying pre-flood fertilizer applications. That's our biggest challenge right now. We're pushing the limit in some fields in terms of how long we can delay the flood. But on a lot of rice we're not there quite yet. Growers would rather be a little early than too late, I suppose, and that's making some folks feel pushed.

"We're getting scattered reports of zinc deficiency, which cool weather tends to aggravate. Some growers are trying to flush or fly on a little fertilizer to jump start slow-growing rice, but the main cure right now is warmer weather. Probably

20% of our crop is at flood.

"Based on our DD-50 program, our varieties for 2003 pretty much break down like this: Wells is at 49%, Cocodrie 20%, Bengal at 9% and Francis at 6-7%. Clearfield 161 comes in at about 4%."

Brent Lassiter, ProAg Services, LLC, Newport, Ark.: "Rain Monday varied quite a bit. We got about a tenth on the south end of the county and 2" on the north end. This will slow us down a bunch where it rained the most. That area also happens to be where our heaviest ground is. This could delay things another week if it doesn't rain again. Altogether, we've probably got pre-flood fertilizer and a flood on 30% of our rice.

"We made an early start on a lot of this rice, so we're still not in bad shape in terms of where we should be at this time of the year. The people feeling the real pressure are the aerial applicators. They're mostly catching up now, but they had a lot of work backed up due to the weather conditions."

Reynold Minsky, Minsky Consulting Service, Lake Providence, La.: "Rice looks pretty fair. We made green ring fertilizer applications on a few fields yesterday, but we're 10-14 days from green ring on most of it. With Icon we haven't had too many early insect problems. Our biggest problem right now is pressure from grass and weeds. Herbicides are going out. We've probably got a flood now on about 80% of our rice."