

RiceFax: Midsouth/Texas

APRIL 11, 2007

Here is our first issue of RiceFax for 2007.

Our thanks to the field staff of Dow AgroSciences for once again sponsoring our early-season reports. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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- Owen Taylor, Editor (888-327-6329)

OVERVIEW

Assessments are still being made about how much of a hit the Midsouth rice crop took from the Easter freeze. More will likely be known in a week.

In parts of the Midsouth, dry conditions may have helped growers avoid more freeze/frost injury, since seed had not germinated or seedlings had not emerged. Overall, there's more concern right now about the effect on wheat, followed by the effect on corn.

This week, we called rice specialists for a spot check on planting progress. We will begin broadening our call base in a couple of weeks.

A reminder: we now publish a Southern grain report covering corn, soybeans, wheat and grain sorghum. To receive it, please write RECEIVE GRAIN on your cover sheet and fax it to 601-992-3503.

PLANTING REPORTS

Johnny Saichuk, Louisiana Extension Rice Specialist, Crowley, La.: "We're kind of stalled out at the moment. Anything that was planted and up took a hit from

cold weather over the weekend. In south Louisiana, it doesn't look as bad as we were afraid it might. The temperature here got down to 37 one morning, but that still wasn't as cold as some forecasts predicted. I'm not saying we won't have injury or see the crop slowed down some, but things were not as bad as we expected. We even got sleet here and in Lafayette, and that's the first time I've seen it in this area in April.

"I haven't been to north Louisiana yet to see exactly how rice there was affected. One north Louisiana grower who's in our verification program flooded a field to give it a blanket. That was in West Carroll Parish. Our field in East Carroll Parish was going to have to be flushed to bring up the rice unless they got enough rain.

"Because the warm-season weeds were also hit by the cold weather, I don't see any reason to hurry up and spray. We need to wait for both the weeds and the rice to recover. It's suppose to be about 80 by Friday, and that will help a great deal."

Chuck Wilson, Arkansas Extension Rice Agronomist, Stuttgart, Ark.: "We may be up to 30% planted by now. The report Monday said that 5% has emerged, which is a little less than I anticipated. We don't have a good feel yet for the extent of the damage from the cold weekend weather. I think we will fare okay in some fields.

"I've been talking to consultants and Extension agents for the last 2 days, and reports are mixed. In some cases, the part above the ground does not look good but the grow-

(Continued)

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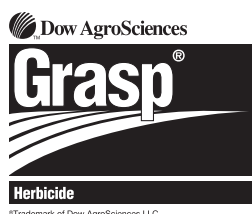
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ing point appears to be okay. But one agent said he had a few fields with growing points that look brown. The difference in some cases could be a function of planting dates and how close to the soil surface the seed was planted. Plants that start in shallower depths may have been hurt more than those that started deeper. We don't need to jump to conclusions. Let's wait a week and see what happens.

"Rain is in the forecast, and it's been sprinkling this morning (Tuesday). But some planting is underway right now in south Arkansas and around Stuttgart.

"I've already heard reports of lespedeza worms. Greenbugs also were severe in some cases last week, with 5 to 10 per plant, but we don't know what the freeze did to them. I heard about the lespedeza worms today. We're also picking up some seedling disease. The bottom line is that we need to keep an eye on these fields and see what happens."

Garry N. McCauley, Extension Rice Production Specialist, Eagle Lake, Texas: "The planting intentions report had Texas up 7%, but nobody here can figure out how USDA arrived at that number. The feeling among farmers and other people in the field is that we will be down 10%. Of course, we won't know for sure until everything is in the ground. The overall price of rice isn't encouraging, and we've had one traumatic event after another that has really worked against any increase. About the time growers got past the loss of Cheniere, the Clearfield 131 thing blew up. Fuel and fertilizer prices are up. And water availability could be an issue. The highland lakes above Austin – which supply the Colorado River where we draw a lot of water – have been running 20 feet below normal. So, there may not be enough water to meet all of our needs.

"Across our rice belt, we're approaching 50% planted. Progress is probably somewhat below that in areas east of Houston and something above that on the west side. No one is planting right now. It's wet from Beaumont to Victoria.

There was some planting late last week, but most areas did not dry out from the previous rains before it started raining again Friday night. That rain continued all day Saturday. The west side of our rice belt probably has the best chance to plant later this week if it doesn't rain again. But we've been on about a 7-day rain cycle, and that's killing us.

"That last cold front also shut the rice down. If temperatures drop into the 50s, rice goes into shock, and we were actually in the 40s. It will take a few days of warmer weather until plants start growing again, so we should probably hold off on herbicide applications for a few days."

Nathan Buehring, Mississippi Extension Rice Specialist: "Planting started in the south Delta about March 20, and we also planted some here at the station (Stoneville) at about that same time. The rice that was up had reached about the 1-leaf stage last week before cold weather hit, but that may have only been 5,000 to 10,000 acres. For the most part, those fields had been flushed up. That rice looks something like the corn right now – pale and yellow. It's not dead by any means, it just needs warmer weather.

"Rice that hasn't emerged isn't moving much and won't be until the weather warms up again. We're getting showers right now (Tuesday morning) but really need 2 to 3 inches of rain to get things sealed and going again. Some growers are flushing to try to get rice up. We're probably 20% to 25% planted, but most of that was dry-planted and is waiting for moisture. A lot of growers have levees up and gates in place, and they'll probably start flushing if it doesn't rain enough."

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