

Texas Crop, Weather

May 07, 2008

Editors: The corn/cotton planting acreages in the earlier version of this story were incorrect. We apologize for the inconvenience. -- Robert Burns

COLLEGE STATION – Most of the western parts of the state remained drought-stressed, while the northern and eastern parts of the state saw some relief, according to reports from [Texas AgriLife Extension Service](#) agents across the state.

"Well, I guess I could be accused of sounding like a broken record, but I can't help it that Mother Nature won't allow me to report on anything else," said J. D. Ragland, AgriLife Extension agent in [Floyd County](#), near Lubbock. "It's dry, dry, dry; There's just no two ways about it."

"Pasture conditions continued to improve after recent rains and warming temperatures," said Josh Blanek, AgriLife Extension agent in [Somervell County](#) southeast of Dallas. "Hay producers are busy fertilizing fields. However, most are fertilizing at reduced rates or only fertilizing the better hay fields, grazing the others."

"Conditions are good in [Navarro County](#)," said Derek Scasta, AgriLife Extension agent for in Corsicana. "Recent rains have improved soil moisture. Row crops are growing quickly. Wheat and oats are starting to dry down, and combining is just around the corner."

"Large range fires are raging east of Fort Stockton with moderate winds and dry conditions," said Jed Elrod, AgriLife Extension agent in [Pecos County](#). "Livestock and wildlife are both stressed by the continued lack of moisture."

Either too much rain or too little has hindered corn plantings throughout the state. Although there are scattered reports of corn still being planted, the window of opportunity has mostly shut. As a result, despite corn prices being at an all-time high, the National Agricultural Statistic Service estimates Texas plantings are only slightly up at 2.25 million acres this year, up from nearly 2.1 million acres in 2007. AgriLife Extension crop experts say those farmers who couldn't get corn planted have opted for soybeans - hoping to take advantage of high prices for them, too.

Cotton acreage currently stands at about 4.7 million acres, but it's early yet, with producers in some regions just now preparing fields. So it's quite possible we'll exceed the 4.92 million acres planted in 2007.

The following summaries were compiled by [AgriLife Extension district](#) reporters this week:

CENTRAL: Pasture conditions continued to improve after recent rains and warm days. Hay producers fertilized fields. Condition of livestock was improving and supplemental feeding slowed. High winds hindered spraying for weeds in some counties. Row crops were doing well.

COASTAL BEND: Rain came to most of the region. However, windy and dry weather followed. Low soil moisture levels slowed the growth of cotton and small grains. The wheat harvest continued in some counties. Most counties reported that livestock producers are still having to give cattle supplemental feed because of lack of forage.

EAST: Dry weather prevailed for most of the week with high winds and cool nights. The windy conditions rapidly dried out soils. Cooler night temperatures slowed the growth of warm-season forages. High fertilizer prices continue to worry producers; there is a marked reduction of fertilization of summer pastures for this time of year. Some producers in San Augustine County used broiler litter. Calving and calf working began.

Cattle were in good to excellent condition. There were more reports of feral hog damage to many pastures and hayfields, as well as reports of beaver problems in farm ponds in Nacogdoches County. Vegetables made good progress with only a few reports of insects and diseases. Blueberry and blackberry crops were also doing well.

FAR WEST: Conditions across the region have worsened. It has been hot, dry and windy; wildfires were burning in several counties. Corn was in fair to good condition. Sorghum was in fair condition. Winter wheat and oats varied from very poor to excellent condition. Precipitation from 0.1 to 0.75 inch was reported.

NORTH: Soil moisture levels are adequate. The past week was windy with light rain. Corn was planted, and it emerged in good condition. Grain sorghum planting was more than 50 percent completed and in fair to good condition. Nearly all wheat and oats were headed but were a little behind schedule. Wheat and oats were harvested for silage and some ryegrass. Stripe and leaf rust pressures on wheat were relatively low, except in susceptible varieties. In some areas, a few soybeans were planted, but there will probably be no cotton planted this year. Hay producers were preparing fields but were worrying about high fuel and fertilizer costs. Yields are good for hay that was harvested this week. Winter pastures were peaking and clovers were beginning to seed. Growth of summer pastures slowed because of cooler weather. All livestock pastures were lush and green after recent rain. Body condition of cattle was excellent. Fly population increased. Peaches and strawberries looked good.

PANHANDLE: Soil moisture was short to very short, with most areas reporting very short. A few acres of corn were planted. Wheat was very poor to good, with most areas reporting very poor. Range conditions were mostly poor. Cattle were in fair condition, but producers were still aggressively providing supplemental feed.

ROLLING PLAINS: The region remained dry. Although pastures were starting to green up and look great, ranchers worried protein levels will be low. They were concerned for livestock as grazing will remain much longer without moisture. Wheat fields were 100 percent headed out and appeared to have escaped damage from a late-April freeze. Yields should be about average for this area. Peanut producers were busy planting. Cotton producers were still preparing land for this year's crop. The small amount of moisture received a few weeks back has boosted producers' spirits and made field preparations easier.

SOUTH: Temperatures continued to be mild, with short to very short soil moisture. In the mid-parts of the region, some crops and pastures benefitted from recent showers. From 0.5 to 1.5 inches of rain came to parts of the region, halting irrigation. In the western parts of the region, area landowners reported between 0.75 to 1.25 inches of rainfall, but it may have come too late to save dryland row crops. Citrus harvesting wound down, while the spring onion harvest continued. Corn and irrigated sorghum made good progress as days warmed.

SOUTH PLAINS: Days were warm to hot with 20 to 50 mph winds. Soil moisture was very short to short. Corn planting continued at a hurried pace. Cotton planting began in some areas. However, most producers are still pre-watering to raise soil-moisture levels high enough to plant. Planting of sunflowers and grain sorghum began. Winter wheat was in very poor to poor condition. Producers had to pump irrigation wells non-stop to irrigated wheat just to keep up with the water demand needed during this drought. Some dryland wheat was cut for hay due to low yield potential. Pastures and ranges were in very poor to poor condition. Condition of cattle was mostly fair to good with supplemental feeding continuing.

SOUTHWEST: While parts of the region received about 1 inch of rain, most counties only saw a trace. April ended with less than 0.2 inches of rain, compared to the long-term average of 2.3 inches. High, dry winds are desiccating soils. Forage availability remained below average. Corn, sorghum, spring vegetables, sunflowers and cotton made good progress under irrigation. It may already be too late to plant dryland crops. Small grain production will be minimal. The cabbage and carrot harvest was almost complete. The potato and onion harvests were slowly gaining momentum, and contractors were preparing for the pickling-cucumber harvest.

Pecans, sod, grapes, cantaloupes and watermelons made good progress under heavy irrigation.

WEST CENTRAL: A few areas received isolated and scattered showers. Soil moisture levels were raised by rain. Producers prepared ground for cotton planting and spraying spring weeds. Small grain fields were being cut and baled. Grazing continued in pastures that are already thin and short. Renovation of improved warm-season pastures was in full swing. Body condition of livestock improved.

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