

Texas crop, weather

Dryland cotton failing; irrigated faring better

June 17, 2009

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COLLEGE STATION - Most of the 750,000 acres of dryland cotton in the Texas High Plains looks "very rough," said a [Texas AgriLife Extension Service](#) agronomist.

But irrigated cotton, though late in many areas, has dodged the bullets of hail and high winds and looks "decent," said Dr. Randy Boman, AgriLife Extension cotton agronomist, Lubbock.

There have been rains in his area, which encompasses an estimated 3.4 million acres of cotton, about 45 percent of which is dryland, Boman said. But most of his area has yet to see any substantial rains. On June 16, Boman toured fields from Lubbock south to Brownfield, then north to Levelland and Littlefield.

"I could tell there had been some rain in some areas, but still the majority of the dryland looks to me to be in pretty bad shape," he said. "I did find a few irrigated fields that had been beat up by weather events, perhaps high wind and some hail, but nothing that I saw was completely destroyed."

Boman said there were about 750,000 acres of dryland cotton that won't emerge and will probably be soon released by crop insurance companies.

Other dryland fields did receive rain, but without more in the next week or two they will be lost too, Boman said.

"As near as I can tell, perhaps another half a million acres or so of dryland received some rainfall," he said. "That rainfall could have been enough to maybe cause the seed to germinate, but to essentially 'sprout and die.'"

Farther north into the Texas Panhandle, Dr. Brent Bean, AgriLife Extension agronomist, said the picture for cotton was better, but mainly because most cotton north of Amarillo is irrigated.

"Cotton is in really good shape, though the dryland is kind of lacking and needs more rain," Bean said. "It's been fairly cool, but it's coming along."

Panhandle corn was also doing reasonably well, Bean said.

"The corn is certainly off to a very good start," he said. "In the Panhandle, 99 percent or more is irrigated."

In Rolling Plains, the wheat "stunk," said Dr. Todd Baughman, AgriLife Extension agronomist in Vernon.

The triple whammies of drought and two late freezes resulted in extremely low yields and quality, he said. The high yields were about 15 bushels per acre; most yields were 10 bushels or less.

Cotton or sorghum in his region is late, having been hampered by wet, cool weather, he said. But peanuts, for which Baughman has statewide responsibility, are doing very well.



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In South Texas, extreme drought continued to devastate any crops not under irrigation, according to reports from AgriLife Extension personnel.

More information on drought in Texas can be found at the Web site of the Drought Joint Information Center at <http://agrillife.tamu.edu/drought/>.

The following summaries were compiled by AgriLife Extension district reporters:

CENTRAL: Soil moisture was short to very short. High temperatures and wind quickly dried out soils. Hay baling continued. Some sudan hay was baled early out of fears the hot, dry weather would lessen quality. The wheat harvest was nearly complete.

COASTAL BEND: Hot, dry weather continued and the drought worsened. Temperatures were above normal, adding to the stress on plants and animals. Some failed crop fields were deep-plowed so that when rain does come they will trap rainwater. Livestock were given supplemental feed or sold.

EAST: Significant hay harvests were under way in all counties except in Henderson where heavy rains fell. In most areas warm-season grass pastures made good growth, but most counties could use more rain to maintain that progress. Cattle were in good condition. Producers worked calves and began re-breeding programs for spring-calving cows. Vegetable harvests were ongoing with some reports of disease problems on tomatoes. Blueberries and watermelon harvests began in some areas. Nacogdoches County reported that peach crops failed due to the late frost in April..

FAR WEST: Widely scattered showers were reported. Hot, dry conditions stressed crops, livestock and pecan trees. Fall-planted onions finished bulbing and should be ready for harvest in early July. Though it's late in the season, area farmers continued to try to plant cotton. There were reports of cotton seedling disease issues where there was rain, and problems getting cotton to emerge where it was dry.

NORTH: Soil moisture was adequate. The temperatures were well into the 90s with high humidity. Some areas had scattered thunderstorms. High winds were more of a problem than the rain for some. Corn was in fair to good condition and tasseling. Some corn fields were in standing water for part of May and probably won't produce. Fields with good drainage looked better. The wheat harvest began, though late because of the storms. About 40 percent of the wheat was damaged by late freezes and rains. Some producers had about average yields, but most reported far-below average yields. Soybeans and sorghum were in fair to good condition. Cotton and rice were in fair condition. The oat harvest was nearly complete. Rangeland and pastures were in fair to good condition. Hay harvesting was ongoing. Livestock were in good condition.

PANHANDLE: Warmer temperatures and some rain allowed the planting of most crops to be completed. Corn and cotton looked good with irrigation in full swing. Thrips were found in cotton in some areas. The wheat harvest began. Although the first wheat yield reports were initially low, higher ones were expected as the harvest continues. Some areas received hail, but damage assessments were not complete. Cattle were in good condition.

ROLLING PLAINS: Rain improved pastures across the region and enabled cotton growers to establish good stands. Sudan was expected to respond well to the rain too. The wheat harvest was as bad as expected with low yields and poor test weights. Local wheat seed will be scarce. AgriLife Extension county agents reported that with the improvement in pasture conditions, some producers were already considering buying back into the cow business. The rain also helped raise stock-water tank levels but most were still low.

SOUTH: Windy, hot and humid days dried out top soils. Moisture levels were rated short to very short. Rangeland and pastures that greened up from early June rains were already dry. However, in the eastern and western parts of the region, the hot, humid weather was favorable for warm-season grass growth. Hay grazer fields were established but were subsequently hurt by drier conditions. The only crops that were doing well in the northern and southern parts of the region were those under irrigation. Grain sorghum under irrigation was turning color. Livestock producers continued to provide supplemental feed, but stock tanks and ponds were running low or drying up. Hay supplies were short.

SOUTH PLAINS: From 0.5 to 3 inches of rain fell. Spotty hail was reported, but damage appeared to be minimal. Soil moisture was short to adequate. Corn was in good condition thanks to the hot, humid weather. Sorghum was in fair to good condition. The wheat harvest was ongoing. Cotton was in fair to good condition. Most of the dry-planted cotton was yet to emerge. Pastures and rangeland were in fair condition. Cattle were in good condition as producers continue to supply supplemental feed.

SOUTHEAST: The region was extremely hot and dry; the drought continued to worsen. Producers were feeding hay, but supplies were short. Many hay growers quickly sold all their first cutting. Conditions continue to worsen for most crops with the exception of rice. There were no reports of crop insects or disease. Livestock were doing fair. Pond levels dropped

SOUTHWEST: Dry southerly winds and temperatures above 100 aggravated the drought and plagued agricultural production. The region missed the spring growing season and entered summer with only about one-third of the long-term cumulative average rainfall of the last nine months. The heat stressed livestock and wildlife. The soil profile remained very dry. Forage availability was in short supply. Pastures, rangeland and dryland crops made nearly no progress. Crops under heavy irrigation made excellent progress. Growers continued to harvest cabbage, onions, green beans, sweet corn, cantaloupes and watermelons. Irrigated corn was in the soft-dough stage, but producers expected below-average yields. Irrigated sorghum headed.

WEST CENTRAL: Scattered showers were reported in many areas, improving rangeland and pastures, but others were hot and dry. Storm damage to crops and structures was reported. Some wheat was harvested for grain. The hay harvest was in full swing. Many stock tanks and ponds remained very low. Livestock were in fair to good condition.

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