

VALLEY AG MATTERS



Cotton and Grain Producers of the Lower Rio Grande Valley

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Growers Should Understand Consequences of Failed Cotton Acres

With dryland planting moisture across most of South Texas ranging from light to non-existent, all growers planting cotton into dry soil should be aware of the rules and implications for failed cotton acres.

TDA Steps Up Enforcement on Volunteer Cotton

The Texas Department of Agriculture classifies cotton as either commercial or non-commercial. All cotton grown on farms for the purpose of making a crop is commercial cotton and is defined as: "Cotton grown for the purpose of processing and sale for economic profit". By default, any cotton that does not fall under the definition of commercial cotton is non-commercial cotton, and is therefore defined as: "Cotton grown for other than processing or sale for economic profit, including cotton grown for ornamental or research purposes".

The big difference between these two classifications is that TDA has jurisdiction over commercial cotton primarily during the host-free period (from September 1 to February 28 in the LRGV), but TDA has year-round jurisdiction over non-commercial cotton. A TDA permit is required for each location of non-commercial cotton, and is typically granted for cotton grown for research and breeding plots. Michael Euler, with the San Juan TDA office, says that TDA only issues non-commercial permits for legitimate research and breeding plots and does not issue non-commercial permits for volunteer or residual cotton.

As boll weevil eradication progresses in South Texas, control of volunteer cotton has become more important in order to limit food and reproduction sources. Sometimes, volunteer cotton emerges in other crops that are not labeled for malathion use and can not be sprayed to control boll weevils. With recent problems in the Uvalde area due to volunteer cotton, TDA is stepping up enforcement for fields that are in violation of the non-commercial cotton regulations.

Beginning in 2009, volunteer or residual cotton growing in other crops will be classified and treated as non-commercial cotton by TDA.

Euler explains that cotton planted from seed changes from commercial cotton to non-commercial cotton at the time that another crop is planted over the failed cotton crop. Even if a second crop is not planted, residual cotton remaining from a failed cotton crop will be considered non-commercial cotton after the field has been adjusted and released, and the crop has been abandoned. Euler says that TDA will work with growers and they will have ample time to get failed cotton fields cleaned up. Volunteer cotton sprouted from the previous year's seed is non-commercial cotton when growing in any crop or location other than a current cotton crop.

The bottom line of the stepped up enforcement is that TDA now has authority to issue fines for volunteer cotton during the hostable season. Producers can be fined up to \$5,000 per day for each violation, and TDA has authority to destroy fields if necessary to control the cotton.

All Planted Cotton Will Be Assessed For Boll Weevil Eradication

Boll weevil eradication assessments of \$14 per dryland acre and \$28 per irrigated acre will be assessed on all cotton planted in the LRGV Eradication Zone, regardless of whether the cotton emerges to a stand. Cotton must be certified through the USDA FSA office to qualify for farm program benefits and crop insurance benefits. Once certified, the cotton acres will be assessed for eradication fees.

Producers should be aware that planting cotton seed obligates them for the eradication fees. However, cotton that is failed by May 15 can qualify for a \$5 per acre failed acres rebate if certain conditions are met. First, the field must be kept free of fruiting cotton from May 15 until December 31. If fruiting cotton is found at any time during that period, the field will lose eligibility for the \$5 rebate. Second, the grower must provide vehicular field access to all of his cotton fields for the entire season. And third, the grower must be current on all his eradication assessments.

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If fields do not qualify for the \$5 rebate, they can still qualify for a \$2 per acre early termination rebate if the field is clean of all fruiting cotton by August 18 and kept clean until December 31, and the additional two conditions above are also met.

Rebates will be on a field-by-field basis, and a grower will receive the larger of the two rebates that a field qualifies for, but not both. However, to receive any rebate, the grower must provide vehicular access for all fields and be current on all assessments.

Crop Insurance Rules Complicated on Failed Acres

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation policies renew automatically from year to year, unless the producer cancels the policy in writing. This means a crop is automatically insured as soon as the seed is put in the ground. Growers should keep this in mind when deciding to plant a second crop behind a failed first crop. The second crop can not be planted until the first crop has been adjusted. Doing so is considered destroying the first crop without consent from the adjuster, and can invalidate all of a grower's crop insurance coverage, while leaving the grower still liable for the premium.

The final planting date for cotton in the LRGV is March 31st, and the late planting period extends till April 7th. Following the late planting period, there is an additional eight day

waiting period before cotton can be adjusted based on the stand count. If rain is received during the late planting period, and the cotton emerges during the waiting period, the grower must be prepared to grow and care for the crop in a normal manner.

If the cotton is adjusted and released based on the stand (or lack of), a second crop can be planted behind the failed cotton crop, but the crop insurance rules are complicated. If the second crop is uninsured, the first crop indemnity will not be reduced. If the second crop is insured, the indemnity on the first crop will be reduced to 35 percent until production and any potential claim on the second crop are determined. Be sure to discuss planting of a second crop with your crop insurance agent and adjuster.

Seed And Trait Companies Share Risk Through Drought Relief Program

Through their drought relief program, Monsanto will rebate the technology fees on cotton acres that are failed early due to drought, or yield less than 150 pounds per acre due to drought. Beginning this year, cotton seed companies will also rebate 50 percent of the seed cost on transgenic varieties. There are several conditions and deadlines that must be met to prove the crop loss due to drought and qualify for the rebates. If any fields are adjusted due to drought, be sure to contact your seed supplier soon afterwards. There is no rebate on conventional varieties, as their up-front cost is much lower already.

Producer Information Exchange Tour Goes to Southeast in July

The National Cotton Council and Bayer Crop Science will be sponsoring the Producer Information Exchange Tour (PIE Tour) again this year. Each summer, a group of cotton growers from each of the four major production regions tours cotton operations in one of the other regions to discuss production problems and techniques with innovative growers and get a first hand look at their operations.

Some of the recent tour participants from the LRGV were: 2004, Laura Harbison, Far West; 2006, Glenn Wilde, Mid-south; 2007 Israel Salazar, Jr, Far West.

A tour spot is available each year for one cotton producer from the Rio Grande Valley. For the 2009 PIE Tour, producers from Texas and Oklahoma will tour operations in the Southeast US from July 12 to 17.

Nominations for the PIE Tour are encouraged. To nominate a LRGV cotton grower for the PIE Tour, please contact any C&GP board member or officer. The prospective participant

should be a member of the National Cotton Council finance plan.



2004 PIE Tour to Arizona and California

Jarrett Lassig Awarded Cotton Boll License Plate Scholarship

Congratulations to Jarrett Lassig, son of Daryl and Diane Lassig of Lyford, Texas, on his receipt of one of the first round of Texas Cotton Boll License Plate Scholarships. Lassig is a senior in Agricultural Engineering at Texas A&M University in College Station.

The Texas Cotton Boll License Plate Scholarship Program is funded through a \$30 fee for the specialty Cotton Boll License Plate. Of the \$30 fee for the specialty plates, \$22 goes to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and is made available for scholarships to students at Texas A&M and Texas Tech Universities. The scholarships are awarded by the Texas Cotton Producers Association to undergraduate students majoring in an agriculture related discipline with an interest in cotton.

To purchase the Cotton Boll plate and contribute to the future of the Texas cotton industry, go to the Texas Department of Transportation website at www.txdot.gov and click on the links in the following order: Vehicle Registration - License Plates - Specialty Plates - Organizations - Cotton Boll. Then follow the directions to order the Cotton Boll Plates.



Boll Weigh Buggy Purchased for Benefit of LRGV Cotton Growers

A new weighing boll buggy has been purchased for the benefit of LRGV cotton growers. The buggy was financed through the generous contributions of Rio Farms, Inc., DeltaPine Business Unit of Monsanto, and Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The buggy was custom manufactured by the West Texas Lee Company of Idalou, Texas, and is outfitted with load sensors that will weigh seedcotton to the nearest 10 pounds.

Weighing boll buggies are very useful for weighing cotton variety or other test plots where the area is to be harvested mechanically, but the area or amount of seedcotton is not enough to make a module. In the past, extension agents and cotton researchers had to borrow a seed company boll buggy or extension service buggy from other parts of the state.

Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agent, says having a



dedicated boll buggy for test plots will improve our efficiency and timeliness. “A weighing boll buggy allows us to get a much more accurate and representative sample than hand harvesting. We hope to generate a lot of useful data for LRGV cotton growers”, added Cowan.

Brad Cowan will be coordinating the use of the new boll buggy.

Advanta US Will Be Major Player in Sorghum Seed and Genetics

In 2008, Advanta bought all assets of the Hereford, Texas sorghum company, Garrison and Townsend. Acquisition of the Hereford operation gives Advanta a strong presence in the grain and forage sorghum seed business.

Garrison and Townsend has been a hybrid grain and forage sorghum research, breeding, seed production, seed conditioning, and seed marketing company. The company markets sorghum seed under their SG brand, and also produces seed under contract for other companies.



With the acquisition of GT, Advanta US now offers research and development programs featuring germplasm for forage sorghums, hybrid grain sorghums, sunflowers, and sudangrasses.

Advanta is an India based global seed company with operations in India, Thailand, Argentina, Australia, and the US. Advanta is a subsidiary of the United Phosphorus Limited group of companies, also based in India.

John Oppelt of Georgetown, Texas was recently promoted to the position of business development manager with Advanta US, and was formerly with United Phosphorus, Inc., another subsidiary of UPL India.

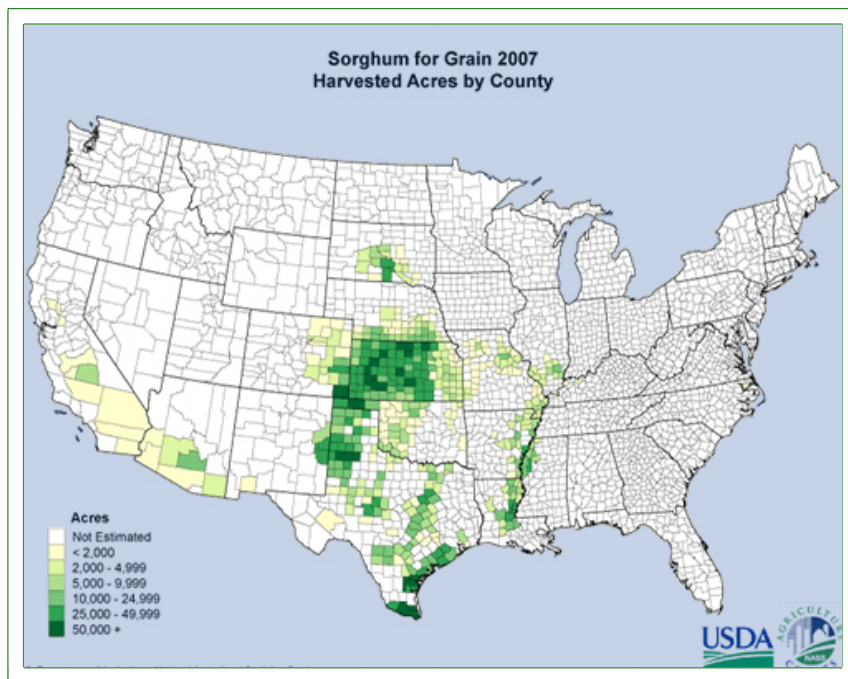
Advanta recently announced their collaboration with Arcadia Biosciences of California to jointly develop Nitrogen Use Efficient (NUE) sorghum. Nitrogen use efficiency is one of

several traits that biotechnology companies are working on for the next generation of stress-tolerant traits for field crops.

Arcadia developed the NUE technology covered by the agreement, and Advanta will license the technology from Arcadia and develop improved sorghum varieties having the NUE trait.

The nitrogen use efficiency trait will allow crops to be more productive than conventional varieties in low nitrogen environments, or to yield equal to conventional varieties with less supplemental nitrogen applied.

Information for this story was obtained from the Advanta and UPL websites.



Cotton and Grain Producers of the Lower Rio Grande Valley is a not-for-profit, producer association, and seeks to promote and protect the interests of cotton and grain producers in the Valley.

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