

2009 Louisiana Wheat Acres Down By Half

Farmers are planting the 2009 wheat crop, which will be on significantly fewer acres than the 2008 wheat crop, according to LSU AgCenter wheat specialist Dr. Ed Twidwell.

In 2008, because of record high prices, farmers planted around 400,000 acres.

"This year we're looking at about 200,000 acres," Twidwell said. "But that number is still high when you look at the 10-year average for acreage planted in Louisiana."

Falling prices caught many people off guard, and Twidwell said that is the main reason many people decided not to plant wheat this fall.

"Prices looked real good all during the summer up until about a month ago, and the price declined pretty rapidly," he said.

Planting started in mid-October in north Louisiana and the beginning of November in south Louisiana. The specialist expects the planting season to wrap up soon.

"It looks like we'll have clear weather, so I anticipate most of the wheat getting planted in Louisiana in the next week or two," he said.

Twidwell said wheat requires two conditions during planting – well-drained soil and proper seeding depth. Wheat does not like wet conditions, and seeds should be planted about an inch in the soil.

"Some people broadcast their wheat and disk the seed in, and that's fine as long as we get it covered an inch or so deep," Twidwell said.

During the growing season, wheat needs an appropriate amount of fertilizer.

"As a ballpark figure, we try to shoot for about 100 pounds of total nitrogen during the growing season – a little in the fall and a higher rate in the spring."

With the high prices last year, some wheat was grown on marginal land by novice wheat farmers, but Twidwell said the state still had a good crop.

"Overall, the statewide average was around 50 bushels per acre. That was extremely high."

Wheat contributed nearly \$89 million to Louisiana's economy in 2007, according to LSU AgCenter agricultural economists. Δ