

# Cotton Hopes Fall Temps Will Come Slowly

**LITTLE ROCK, ARK.**

**A**s the calendar speeds toward harvest, Arkansas' cotton growers are hoping the mercury will remain above 60 degrees at night for just a little longer.

"We need some warmer weather," said Tom Barber, extension cotton agronomist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "If we can see highs in the 80s and keep the average above 65 degrees overnight, we'll probably get everything to work out like we want them to."

Cotton is a tropical crop that revels in high daily temperatures, but also needs cool evenings for optimal development.

"It just seems to be a little cooler this month," he said from the middle of a cotton field on Friday. "I'm wearing long sleeves."

So far this month, using readings at Pine Bluff, there have been six days that peaked at

90 degrees or higher with an average daily maximum temperature of 85.6 degrees through Sept. 18. However, the average low is well below that optimal 65-degree reading at 59.9 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. In 2010, the average September daily maximum temp was 91.4, with the average daily low being 63.9. Two years ago the average daily high was 91.4 and the low was 63.9.

Cotton growers have been prepping fields for harvest since the second week of September, applying defoliants that will allow the harvesters to grab the bolls. Low temps below 65 degrees reduce the effectiveness of the defoliants.

"In general, we'll have an average crop," Barber said. "Some of it will be a little light due to late planting."

Still, Barber said he expects "we'll be pleasantly surprised" with what comes out of the state's cotton fields. Δ

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