

Dry Weather Causes Problems For La. Corn, Cotton Crops

BATON ROUGE, LA.

A lack of rain in early summer has affected Louisiana's corn and cotton crops, according to experts with the LSU AgCenter. "Farmers are harvesting corn, and yields vary dramatically," said LSU AgCenter extension associate Rob Ferguson. "Some farmers are getting nearly 200 bushels to the acre – near record levels, while others are seeing yields as low as 50 bushels to the acre, he said."

Ferguson said that even fields short distances apart from showed yield differences, which often depended on when they were planted, the soil type and simply overall growing conditions.

Corn prices are down slightly and so is acreage. The state's farmers planted around 500,000 acres of corn this year – high for Louisiana but down from record-setting acreage in recent years.

Fertilizer is a big expense for growers, and they were relieved to see lower prices that saved them production costs, Ferguson said.

"Fertilizer prices have dropped, and they kind of follow the same trend as fuel prices, so input costs have been down slightly this year," Ferguson said.

Most of the state's corn crop will be harvested in the next few weeks, wrapping up just as farmers start harvesting cotton.

Dry weather hurt some cotton fields, and farmers have reported heavy insect infestations, but overall the crop looks good, said LSU AgCenter cotton specialist Dr. Don Boquet.

"We'll probably be better than average this year," Boquet said. "Our actual predicted yields right now are almost two bales to the acre. So our expectation is we're going to have good yields statewide."

Boquet said insects have been a problem in some fields, which meant growers had to spray more insecticides.

"We started early with spider mites during the dry weather," Boquet said. "Then as the corn matured, a lot of insects came out – both plant bugs and stink bugs."

Growers are anxious to get the crop harvested because the later the season progresses, the greater the risk of storms or quality issues, he said.

"We're not seeing a lot of boll rot yet, but if we would start getting a lot of rainfall we could," the LSU AgCenter cotton specialist said. "And if we get a hurricane – and I hope we don't – we could lose a lot of the crop. So until it's actually in the warehouse, we have a lot of concerns."

Cotton acreage is low in Louisiana. Farmers planted around 230,000 acres. △



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