

# Harvest Time Hardships: Aphids In Rice, Split Pods In Soybeans

PINE BLUFF, ARK.

At a time when they should be gearing up for harvest, Arkansas rice, soybean and cotton producers are seeing insect and disease problems, as well as water, accumulating in their fields, Don Plunkett, Jefferson County extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said Friday.

Meanwhile, Clay, Conway, Greene, Mississippi, Randolph and White counties were confirmed for soybean rust, bringing to 28 the total with confirmed cases of the yield-damaging fungus, said Scott Monfort, extension plant pathologist for the division.

Plunkett said growers and consultants are giving him an earful about weather-related problems.

"One is that the rain stopped harvest," he said. "Second is that the rains have prevented timely fungicide applications as well as insecticide applications."

"A third problem is soybeans are splitting along the suture of the pod and beginning to sprout," Plunkett said. "These split pods also allow infections."

As of Sept. 13, only 5 percent of the soybean crop, 20 percent of the rice crop and none of the cotton crop had been harvested according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Last week, Plunkett said he was alerted to a field where aphids, a variety that normally infest wheat and other crops, were sighted in rice. Since then, the problem has spread within Jefferson County and to other areas of the state.

"Some folks are seeing five to 20 aphids per head on late-planted, and therefore late-maturing, rice," Plunkett said. "These small insects are sucking the milk and juices from the kernels and this will impact both yield and quality."

Lonoke and Jefferson counties are also reporting lodging – where the stalks fall over due to heavy rain or high winds.

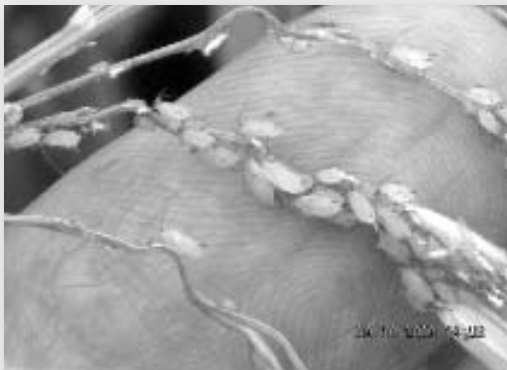
Jeff Welch, Lonoke County extension staff chair for the U of A Division of Agriculture, said: "Our yields are not as high as they need to be because we've had diseases such as blast that have really hurt us. We're hoping for a mediocre crop."

Corn yields were lower as well.

But not all is dark in Lonoke County, Welch said. "We've harvested a small amount of soybeans and Group IIIs in particular might be the bright side of the whole thing," he said. Soybeans are grouped by

how quickly they mature.

Soybean growers were already scouting fields over the last three weeks for rust and other diseases that thrive in wet conditions. As of Friday, the following counties had confirmed soybean rust: Arkansas, Ashley, Chicot, Clay, Conway, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Desha, Drew, Greene, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Mississippi, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Pulaski, Randolph, St. Francis, Yell, White, and Woodruff.



A severe infestation of over 25 aphids on a rice panicle are feeding on the milk or juices from the young, tender kernels.

Division of Agriculture photo by Don Plunkett

Cotton growers, who planted late due to heavy spring rain, are now seeing some of their yield disappear the longer the rain lasts, thanks to in-boll seed germination, boll lock and boll rot, said Tom Barber, extension cotton agronomist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

In 2008, the Arkansas 123.5 million-bushel soybean crop was valued at more than \$1 billion, according to the NASS. The rice crop's production value was pegged at \$1.5 billion last year, and cotton lint was valued at \$349 million.

Although some parts of Arkansas saw a little sunshine on Friday, a 20 percent to 50 percent chance of rain remained in the forecast through next Thursday.

For more information about control of fungi and insect pests, contact your county agent, or visit [www.uaex.edu](http://www.uaex.edu) and search for MP144, "Insecticide Recommendations for Arkansas" and MP154 "Arkansas Plant Disease Control Products Guide."

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