

July Rain Gives Big Boost To Soybeans

MISSISSIPPI STATE, MISS.

Three weeks of cool, rainy weather in July were just what the state's soybeans needed, breathing new life into the struggling crop.

Trey Koger, soybean specialist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, said weather extremes have affected the crop. Cold, wet spring weather delayed a lot of planting. Most of June was hot and dry and most of July was wet and cooler.

"The majority of the crop was planted late, and the last three weeks of wet weather has really helped the crop," Koger said. "We've got a lot of yield potential in much of this crop that we did not have three weeks ago."

Soybeans in Mississippi are at many different growth stages. Koger said some soybeans in the Natchez area were planted the last week of July, but most of the crop was in the ground by June. So far, the late planting has helped the crop.

"The hot, dry weather in June really took a toll on a lot of the early-planted crop, especially the acreage in the South Delta," Koger said. "Some of that crop was burned up and so hurt that by the time we got into the wet cycle three weeks ago, it was too late."

The late-planted fields, which accounted for the majority of the state's 2.45 million acres this year, made it through the dry June and were rejuvenated in July.

"Producers farming irrigated acreage have been able to turn off irrigation and save a lot of money over the past three weeks. There's nothing like rain," Koger said. About 60 percent of the state's soybean crop is irrigated.

Soybean harvest will begin with some early-planted acreage in the south part of the state that survived the May rains, but the bulk of the crop will not be ready for harvest until mid-September. Despite the late planting, harvest should come only a few weeks later than usual.

"The late planting does not directly correlate to a late harvest," he said. "The late-planted crop moves faster but will encounter more disease and insect pressure than early-planted acreage."

Angus Catchot, an Extension entomologist, said insect numbers build up naturally late in the summer. Stinkbugs, soybean loopers and bollworms tend to be soybean's biggest pests.

"Stinkbugs tend to be worse later in the year. Soybean loopers are migratory and come out of Southern latitudes to attack the crop," Catchot said.

Soybean fields in many areas of the state have already seen significant pressure from bollworms, and many producers have already sprayed for these pests. But the late-planted crop is again working to the pests' advantage this year.

"Anytime you have a late-planted crop, it hasn't had time to canopy when it flowers late in the season," Catchot said. "Bollworms are highly attracted to soybeans that are flowering and have open canopies."

Catchot advised producers and consultants to scout carefully for pests and stay current with insecticide treatments. It only takes a short time for insects to severely damage a field left untreated.

"These insects are treatable, and we can take care of the problem, but it is more expensive to produce the crop," Catchot said.

John Michael Riley, Extension agricultural economist, said soybean prices have remained favorable so far this year despite a record number of acres planted to the crop and favorable growing conditions.

"The weather has taken a slight toll on prices of late, but strong exports have added a boost in the past few days," Riley said. "Futures prices are about \$11 per bushel." Δ



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