

Large Hail Shreds Arkansas Corn, Cotton

GRADY, ARK.

As if flooding wasn't enough hardship, large hail hammered thousands of crop acres in southeastern Arkansas, the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture said.

A funnel-producing cell seemed to linger over Lincoln County, pummeling fields with large hail.

Kevin Lawson, corn and grain sorghum research verification program coordinator for the U of A Division of Agriculture toured cornfields up and down the southeastern part of the state.

"One of the farmers said, 'it's not good when you pull up to your cornfield and it smells like someone just mowed the grass'," he said. "And it did. It smelled just like someone had cut the grass."

The storm had "a very long and a very wide hail core that hung out for about 45 minutes," said Chad Norton, Lincoln County Staff Chair for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

Norton said a rough estimate was that 5,000 to 6,000 acres of cropland was damaged, including one farmer who lost 700 of his 900 acres of cotton.

"We've got little bean fields and cotton fields that are nothing left but these little stems from seedling plants," he said. "We've had some wheat that was hailed on, been drifted on by herbicides, been flooded and got hailed on again. I don't know how bad it's going to be."

The National Weather Service said it had received a report of hail up to 1.75 inches. However, most of the damage came from hail that was "was the size of mothballs or big marbles that was really, really heavy and lasted a long time," Norton said.

"We lost 75-80 percent of the leaves in some cornfields and the producer is going to have to let insurance do what it's supposed to do - go keep these guys from taking a big loss."

Lawson said there would be survivors of the hailstorm, but the prognosis wasn't good.

"Much of it will survive, but the ones where the stalk was actually broken off - green snapped - they're done," he said. "The others that have three to four

leaves to come out, they'll survive."

Lawson said he and Jason Kelley, wheat and feed grains specialist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said: "both think there will be about a 50 percent loss on that field."

Ralph Mazzanti, rice verification coordinator for the Division of Agriculture, also toured fields in Lincoln County, including cotton fields in which hail left a few inches-high barren sticks, with leaves scattered around the rows.

On Tuesday, corn growers in Logan County saw damage to their crops from hail that accompanied deadly twisters. Δ

Just tiny stems and scattered leaves remain following a May 25 hailstorm that stripped crops.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture photo by Ralph Mazzanti.



This closeup shows hail damage to young corn on a farm in Lincoln County, Ark., from a May 25 hailstorm.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture photo by Kevin Lawson.



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