

# Late Planting May Affect Arkansas Rice Yields, But Some Growers 'Cautiously Optimistic'

**LITTLE ROCK, ARK.**

Some early rice harvests have yielded 200 bushels of green weight an acre and University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture personnel are anticipating a long harvest to match the extended planting season brought on by heavy spring rains.

"We had a lot more late-planted rice than usual and that will bring our yields down, but I think we're going to be about 150 bushels an acre state average," Dr. Chuck Wilson, extension rice agronomist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said Thursday. He added "there's a lot of blast present because of the weather."

The state average yield last year was 148 bushels an acre, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The state average yield is calculated on dry weight, as opposed to green weight, which is rice straight from the field.

Grant Beckwith, Arkansas County extension agent for the division, said producers in his county began harvesting rice early last week.

"With the weather conditions we've had this year, it's an average year and we're ready for it to be over with," he said. Beckwith said he'd like to see more of the crop headed at this point and expected that "around the first of November it may be ready to cut."

Scott Meins, who farms 2,200 acres, including 820 acres of rice, near the Rice Research and Extension Center in Arkansas County, said Wednesday was his ninth day into the harvest and he was pleased – so far – with the yield.

"We were real fortunate (to plant) between all those rains," Meins said.

He said he averaged 200 bushels of green weight rice to the acre on two fields, 185 bushels on a third and 195 bushels on the fourth.

A second Arkansas County producer, Brook Davis, who has more than 1,000 acres in rice near the Almyra community east of Stuttgart, said he has cut several fields and the yield has been average.

"We were pleasantly surprised," Davis said. "It was given to be a disaster. It's a little better than we expected."

He blamed the extensive rains for some insect

problems, in addition to evidence of blast and smut.

A number of producers in the northern half of the state have moved into the fields to begin harvesting the early rice, extension service personnel said, noting they don't expect the harvest to hit full stride until Labor Day.

"The early stuff looks really good," said Randy Chlapecka, Jackson County extension staff chair, noting one producer in his county began harvesting Tuesday.

"Who knows when it will end?" he added, noting that a large portion of the rice planted in June has not yet headed in Jackson County.

Branon Thiesse, interim extension staff chair in Craighead County, said some producers are moving into the fields.

Mike Hook, who farms near the St. Francis River in Craighead's Eastern District, cut 200 bushels of green weight rice earlier this week, Thiesse said.

"We'll have some good rice," added Eric Grant, Craighead County extension agent for the division. "It'll be the earlier rice, not the later rice."

The harvest has started in earnest further south in Jefferson County, said Don Plunkett, extension staff chair. He said there were decent yields in early-planted rice.

Still, "it's been a long planting season and going to be a long harvest season," he said.

The rice crop in Desha County in the state's southeast corner ranges from "harvested to just now starting to head," said Wes Kirkpatrick, extension staff chair. "We have a decent potential for good yields and are cautiously optimistic about harvest, unless we get bad weather."

While the wet weather raised the specter of disease, the accompanying cooler-than-normal temperatures resulted in fewer insect problems, Kirkpatrick said.

Rains forecast for Friday and Saturday could be a major concern for rice farmers, in addition to another round of cooler than normal temperatures.

For the week ending Aug. 23, the agricultural statistics service said Arkansas rice crop ended the week at 75 percent headed, 4 percent behind 2008, and 16 percent behind the five-year average. △



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