

# Panicle Blight A Thorn In The Side Of Harvesting Rice Growers

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

The field-size crew cuts in the Arkansas Delta mean the rice harvest is moving along but growers are seeing the shadow of this summer's high heat show up in yields.

In Arkansas County, "we are 70 percent harvested on rice, but this past week was very slow due to spotty rain showers and cloudy days,"

ton verification fields except the double crop field in Lee County have received the first defoliation shot and a couple of fields received the second last week."

Severe thunderstorms that developed late Sunday afternoon brought heavy rain to parts of Arkansas, spawning high winds and baseball- and golf ball-sized hail, including some

## Golden grains pile up on this harvester in Lonoke County.

U of Arkansas Division of Agriculture photos by Mary Hightower



said Brent Griffin, Arkansas County extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "Rice yields continue to drop due bacterial panicle blight and quality – milling yields – continues to drop."

Bacterial panicle blight thrives in high nighttime temperatures, infecting the flowering parts of the plant and aborting kernel formation, known as "blanking."

Yield reduction in his county so far isn't as drastic as last year, but "still 40 to 60 bushels off from normal and we are hoping for improvement on later plantings," Griffin said.

Corn harvest was nearing completion statewide and all of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture verification plots have been harvested. Kevin Lawson, extension verification coordinator for corn and sorghum, said that, as expected "the yields on the cornfields had a wide range. The cornfields ranged from 227.4 to 132.9 bushels per acre."

"The majority of the problems, or lack of problems, was caused by the weather," Lawson said. "In southeast Arkansas, the weather cooperated fully, and the yields are showing it."

"In northeast Arkansas bad weather occurred when corn was setting yield hit some fields hard," he said. "Some fields were destroyed by straightline winds from several storms that passed through the area all year long. The River Valley suffered the heavy drought and some bad winds also."

Cotton harvest is starting to get off the ground, said Blake McClelland, extension verification coordinator for cotton.

"A lot of cotton in northeastern Arkansas is still in the field," he said. "Most of acres have been defoliated for the first time and I assume the rest will be defoliated this week when the ground dries up."

"There have been a few dryland fields picked in extreme northeast Arkansas, mainly Mississippi County," McClelland said. "All of the cot-

## Yellow ripening grains contrast with green levees in Lonoke County.



that broke the windshield of a storm spotter's car in Arkansas County. The National Weather Service was investigating a possible tornado in southeastern Arkansas.

The severe cells that moved across northeastern Arkansas, dropped a "small amount of cotton on the ground," said Scott Stiles, extension economist based at Jonesboro. "Growers will appreciate a week of sun and 80s. Too bad they have to spend some of this week watching and waiting for things to dry out."

In Lonoke County, "We had just enough rain to stop harvest yesterday afternoon," Keith Perkins said on Monday. Perkins is a Lonoke County extension agent for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "Farmers will be back in field as soon as dew is off."

Perkins said harvest time is also the time crop growers use to reflect "about why certain fields or parts of fields did not yield as expected. That's what makes American agriculture the best in the world – learning from the past and planning for the future."

The latest crop progress report from the National Agricultural Statistics Service had corn 92 percent harvested; cotton at 6 percent harvested; rice at 56 percent harvested; soybeans at 17 percent harvested and winter wheat was 5 percent planted.  $\Delta$



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