

Rice Growers, Think About Next Season Now



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With the hot and relatively clear summer that we received this year the combines are rolling earlier than normal. Compared to last year, this seems to be a blessing. Many customers who last year harvested rice on wet

ground in the middle of September have already started harvesting rice. Lack of rain SO FAR is allowing for quick and efficient harvest without the terrible ruts we got to know so well last fall. I don't mean to wish a rain away for the soybean crop, but we are now at the point where the rice crop will be better served without bad weather!

Since crop management is pretty well over for this season in rice, I want to encourage growers to begin thinking about next season. Planning for the crop next season begins now. It is important to remember which fields (and what areas of the fields) had red rice and weed escapes. Begin building an action plan to take care of those areas next year. If they are allowed to continually go uncontrolled you will just allow the problem to multiply. With the current state of the CLEARFIELD rice acres as they are, everyone should have stewardship on the front of their minds. CLEARFIELD fields that had any weed or red rice problems need to be rotated – either into soybeans, or at the very least another crop with an alternative herbicide program that offers control with a different mode of action. We understand that growers know their fields better than anyone, but if RiceTec can be of any assistance please give your local RiceTec rep a call.

In addition to the dire need of better rotation practices, growers need to manage their fields after harvest to help alleviate any weed or red rice problems. With wheat prices where they are currently, a larger than average wheat crop is expected in the MidSouth – meaning many rice fields will be immediately worked up and planted into wheat. For fields that do not go into wheat, growers should attempt or at least consider holding a shallow flood all winter, without working the weed seed back into the ground. Doing so, and avoiding rolling the stubble or working the soil until spring will allow a high percentage of weed or red rice seed to germinate this fall or rot over the winter, which will reduce

their population next season. When it begins to warm up in the spring, the stubble can be fluffed with a rake or harrow and burned, further reducing the amount of viable weed seed. If the burn is clean enough, the grower is then set up for a great no-till situation to plant into, other than knocking down levees. This approach is great for duck hunting, too, which could also be a good source of off-season income!

Yields seem to be the talk of the town in the rice industry right now. Conversations have gone from “what do I do about this” to “how are things yielding”. With our immediate area at less than 10 percent harvested it is still hard to tell how the heat affected rice this season. Reports from the gulf coast seem to say that yields are down 10-15 percent from last year. That area had high heat and untimely rains, as well as heavy disease pressure that seem to be holding their yields back some. RiceTec's favorite part, however, is that so far it appears our products are still holding their yield advantages when compared to varieties. The same is expected in the MidSouth, despite how yields turn out. The few yield reports we have heard so far in the MidSouth vary from excellent to okay.

The earliness of the crop and the expected continuation of warm weather is bringing new opportunities to several in Arkansas this season. At this point, we know of several fields of hybrid rice that were harvested the first week of August that were fertilized and flooded back up with the intention of producing a ratoon crop. We have reports of this in several areas of Arkansas, with the northernmost being Paragould and Pocahontas. We hope this is successful for the growers, and will report how the Arkansas ratoon fields turn out.

As combines continue to roll, we also encourage those considering planting RiceTec hybrids in 2011 to plan which products are needed for next season. While this isn't the most popular thing to say, we will begin our fall sales campaign in the very near future. Our best products have a history of selling out quickly, so growers should be in contact with their local RiceTec Service Partner or RiceTec representative soon to book their seed for next season.

We hope everyone has a safe and happy harvest season. If your RiceTec representative can help answer questions, give any of us a call. Δ

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