

State's Ag Producers Set Multiple Records In 2012

MISSISSIPPI STATE, MISS.

Significant production levels and high market prices combined to give Mississippi's agricultural commodities over \$7 billion in total value.

Mississippi State University agricultural economists gathered preliminary data from crop production reports, world agricultural supply and demand estimates, industry resources and U.S. Department of Agriculture outlook reports. They predict a \$7.3 billion annual value of the state's top crops, excluding government payments. Final figures will be available in the spring of 2013.

Their calculations held some surprises and a 9.4 percent increase over 2011. Poultry and eggs remained the top agricultural commodity at a predicted \$2.53 billion. Soybeans, with an estimated record value of \$1.16 billion, moved past forestry to claim the No. 2 spot in the state's rankings for the first time. No. 3 forestry saw a 7.7 percent increase and estimated value of \$1.03 billion.

"The fact that soybeans surpassed forestry is indicative of the year that we had," said John Michael Riley, agricultural economist with MSU's Extension Service. "The jump has everything to do with production and prices for soybeans, and the general economy as it relates to housing starts and the use of forest products. We saw a small growth in forestry value, but it wasn't enough to overcome the huge gain in soybeans."

In addition to its record value, Mississippi's soybean crop set a record for average yield. Mississippi fields averaged 42 bushels per acre, and the state produced 82.3 million bushels. Soybeans also benefited from record prices in 2012, averaging nearly \$14.55 per bushel, according to USDA estimates.

This year's corn crop came in at No. 4 with an estimated production value of \$891 million, the highest on record. As of mid-December, corn had the highest-ever yield per acre at 156 bushels. The number of bushels harvested – 1.22 million – is the highest since 2007, and the second highest in Mississippi's history.

Cotton moved down one spot to No. 5, with a decrease in production values of 43.9 percent in cotton lint and 19.6 percent in cottonseed.

"We're moving away from heavy cotton production and have been for five years or more," Riley said. "High corn prices and low cotton prices compounded the issue this year and resulted in the drop to \$397 million predicted this year for cotton lint and cottonseed combined."

In the livestock sector, cattle and calves saw an increase of 38.7 percent, with an estimated production value of a record \$329 million, which pushed it up in the ranks to No. 6.

The state's catfish industry continues to feel the pinch of high feed costs and has an estimated 23.4 percent decrease from 2011. With an estimated value of \$165 million, catfish fell to No. 7.

Hay moved up one spot to No. 8 this year, in part because of drought conditions in Arkansas and Missouri, which caused a spike in sales. The value of hay produced in the state set a new record at \$145 million.

"The amount of hay produced increased due to favorable weather conditions in many parts of the state," said Rocky Lemus, forages specialist with the MSU Extension Service and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. "We also saw an increase in the num-

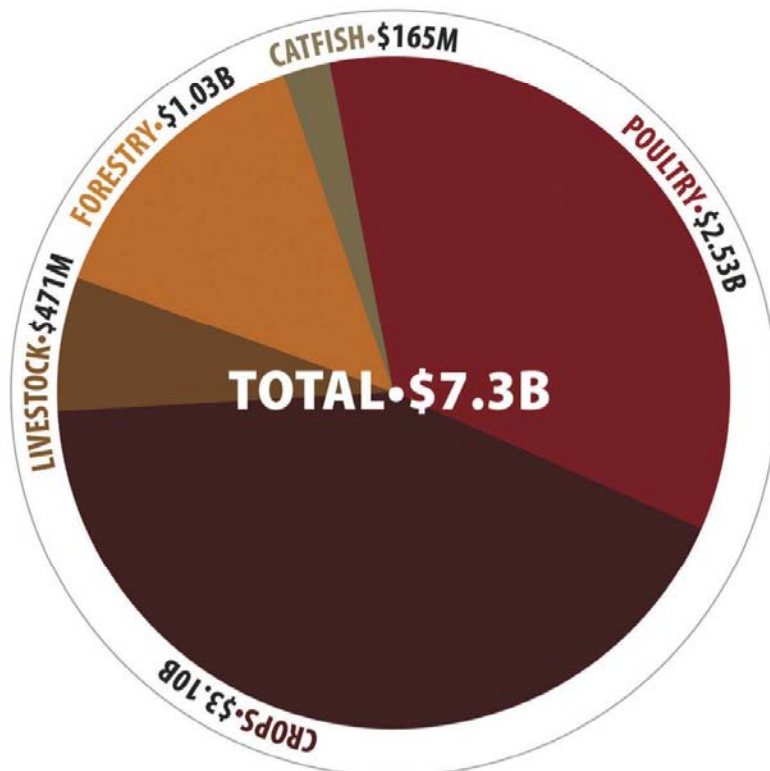
ber of acres in hay production by about 30,000 acres compared to 2011."

Wheat moved up to rank ninth among the state's agricultural commodities, valued at \$134 million.

One of the most noticeable declines was in rice, which decreased 14.8 percent compared to 2011. It slipped from No. 8 to No. 10 in spite of the highest yield-per-acre average since 2007, at 7,100 pounds per acre.

"Rice growers in 2010 and 2011 were chal-

MISSISSIPPI 2012 ESTIMATED VALUE OF AG PRODUCTION



lenged with below-average yields and high input prices," said Nathan Buehring, rice specialist with MSU's Extension Service and MAFES. "With corn and soybean prices at historical levels, traditional rice growers planted more corn and soybean. Mississippi was only estimated at 125,000 acres of rice this year – the lowest acreage since 1977."

Hog producers saw a 7.6 percent decline this year, with the industry's production value estimated to be \$102 million. This keeps hogs ranked at No. 11, the same as 2011.

The No. 12 commodity is horticultural and specialty crops, including nursery and ornamental plants, valued at \$96 million, up 2 percent.

MSU Extension Service agricultural economist Ken Hood said the estimated value of the state's sweet potato crop is about \$79 million for 23,000 acres of sweet potatoes harvested in 2012, putting the crop at No. 13.

"This represents a 9.7 percent increase over the final value reported for the 2011," Hood said. "Mississippi is third in the nation in sweet potato production when comparing hundred-weight production per acre."

With a 192.6 percent increase in production value, peanuts jumped over milk and grain sorghum to take the No. 14 spot.

"Farmers are looking at opportunities," Riley said. "They saw that peanut prices were strong, and that led to an acreage response – from 15,000 acres planted in 2011 to a record 52,000 acres planted in 2012. The jump in acres, along with decent prices, led to an estimated \$52 million in production value."

Milk and grain sorghum rounded out the annual rankings. No. 15 milk saw a decrease of 12.1 percent, with an estimated value of \$40 million. Grain sorghum increased 7.2 percent, with a predicted value of \$23 million for the 46,000 acres harvested. Δ



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